



## ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

August 6, 2025

Transfiguration of the Lord

Dear Parish Families of St. Mary's, St. Augustine's, and St. Elizabeth's,

The parish is the vital place where Catholics gather to be nourished by Word and Sacrament so as to become the living presence of the Risen Christ for our neighbor. Here we are invited to experience the Church born of water and the Spirit and its accompanying mission to: *"Go out to the whole world; and tell the good news."* Certainly, a crucial component in our parishes is the priest. Without the priest, there is no Mass; and without the Mass there is no Eucharist...no food for the journey.

With the recent assignment of Fr. Joe O'Connor to seminary work, I know you have been wondering what is next for the Baldwinsville parishes, even with the very capable Fr. Ben Schrantz as Parochial Vicar! Well, today, I am able to share the news that I will be your new pastor. When Fr. O'Connor asked me this past Spring to celebrate with you the Mass on August 16<sup>th</sup> on Paper Mill Island, I had no idea it would be the inauguration of my ministry as a member of the Pastoral Teams of the Baldwinsville parishes. Although I was called to be the Bishop of the Diocese of Syracuse six years ago, it has always been with the hope of continuing to be a parish priest and I guess God has taken me at my word!

Importantly now, a pastoral plan built around the needs of the Baldwinsville area must be fully developed while considering both pastoral and financial resources. In addition, I will still be the Bishop of Syracuse and even with Fr. Ben's help and that of our parish deacons, there is still a need to adjust the Parishes' Mass schedules both for the weekend and weekdays. Fr. O'Connor was going to make this move during the upcoming school year. However, the timing of his departure and my coming onboard necessitates that we make the adjustments now. The biggest reason is that this will allow me to fulfill my duties on a weekend in the Baldwinsville parishes while still attending to the Sacrament of Confirmation and other liturgical celebrations that are often scheduled on Sunday afternoon.

I am committed to providing the best pastoral care for the Baldwinsville area within the means we possess. Nonetheless, I am aware also that I must take into account the age, health, spiritual and emotional wellbeing of our priests. An important step in the pastoral planning for the Diocese must allow for balanced lifestyles for clergy and parish staffs, as well as the ability to serve Christ's faithful both in our urban and rural settings.

With this background, I announce a new Sunday Mass schedule that I have worked on with Fr. Ben and in consultation with the Parish Deacons, the Parish Trustees, and the Presidents of the Pastoral Councils prior to this announcement. This schedule will allow that no more than two priests will be needed for the celebration of Sunday Mass (each being permitted by Church law to celebrate a maximum

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(3) Sunday Masses) each weekend. And, in a pinch, one priest might be able to cover all Masses with a slight adjustment and the bishop's permission (which is needed) if a priest in an exceptional moment needs to celebrate a fourth Mass.

The new weekend Mass Schedule **effective August 30/31 (Labor Day weekend)** is as follows:

- Saturday, 4:00 pm, Vigil Mass at St. Mary's Church, Baldwinsville
  - Saturday, 5:30 pm, Vigil Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, Baldwinsville
  - Sunday, 7:30 am, Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, Baldwinsville
  - Sunday, 9:00 am, Mass at St. Mary's Church, Baldwinsville
  - Sunday, 10:30 am, Mass at St. Augustine's Church, Baldwinsville
  - Sunday, 10:30 am, Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, Baldwinsville
- (The above time slots of 10:30 am are correct as stated. The Mass time at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton was seen to combine the two Masses while allowing for Religious Education sessions on Sunday mornings.)*

The weekday Mass Schedule will be the one that has been in effect this summer, with the resumption of Daily Mass on Monday mornings. I am doing it this way because I am planning to be present in the parish offices and the parish school on Mondays – covering any funerals, allowing Fr. Ben to have a day off each week. The other days when I am on site will be dictated by the needs of the parishes, but also my diocesan calendar. It is not planned that I will be moving my living quarters out to Baldwinsville since the Diocesan Bishop has an apartment in the Cathedral rectory. However, I will use space in one of the parishes to have a place to retreat to when present in the parishes.

The weekday Mass Schedule will be:

- Monday, 9:00 am, Mass at St. Mary's Church, Baldwinsville
- Tuesday, 7:00 pm, Mass with Confession available on alternating weeks at St. Mary's Church, Baldwinsville
- Wednesday, 10:00 am, Mass with Confession available on alternating weeks at St. Augustine's Church, Baldwinsville
- Thursday, 6:45 am, Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church
- Friday, 9:00 am, Mass at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church (Morning Prayer and Adoration begin at 7:30am)

On Saturdays, the Sacrament of Penance (Confession) will be available at St. Mary's Church from 3:00 – 3:45 pm and at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton from 4:30 – 5:15 pm.

This past Monday, the Universal Church called to mind St. John Vianney, the patron of diocesan clergy and parish priests. We certainly ask his prayers for our churches as we begin this new venture together and that the Lord will give success to the work of our hands! God's blessings and peace be upon you!

In the Name of Jesus,



Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia  
Bishop of Syracuse