

**CHURCH OF
ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX**
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As we look back to 8 months ago, who would have thought how much our lives would have changed and about the incredible challenges we would have faced? There are some of you who suffered the devastating loss of a loved one or the loss of employment. Without a doubt, as your pastor, living through this pandemic has challenged me greatly as I know it has challenged you too. I have had to go deeper in my own spiritual journey as a priest to realize how God is calling me to serve more wholeheartedly and selflessly, with real confidence that He is guiding us. I realize I have to be the first to renew my trust in His call to follow Him, to make sense of this moment and to choose hope, and I must challenge you to do the same.

In recent months, despite the fact that we were not able to gather, St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish has remained more relevant than ever. With the help of many of you, we quickly established daily livestreamed masses; we found ways to open our church for visits; we established a weekly video update to stay connected; we had some emergency baptisms, and we worked to anoint the sick (with an abundance of PPE and caution!). We continued help to our community with financial assistance, food & housing directly as well as through Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) and Samaritan Homeless Interim Program (SHIP). When the time came, we gathered for parking lot masses so we could share the Eucharist and we finally began the process of re-opening with public masses. While we were never closed, we certainly were challenged with how ministry could continue!

The mission of St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish cannot be taken for granted or underestimated. The power of the Holy Spirit continues to guide us, as Jesus promised. But we, like God's faithful people up and down the ages, must make our renewed response. Our parish is unique. I know your dedication, faithfulness and generosity. I have found great inspiration seeing your faith in action during these past months in so many varied and amazing ways. So many of you went out of your way to make sure your weekly contribution found its way to the parish, while I worked to trim our expenses and maximize your gifts. It could have been disastrous, but thanks to so many, it was not. Our collections for the first 6 months were down only about 2.6% over the same period last year, which is something to celebrate, given the extraordinary circumstances.

Yet, I know too, we are called to be more and do more for the Lord. We exist to bring light and healing and hope to all who come to our parish and all who are looking for answers and refuge in the storms of life. We need a strong vibrant parish---now more than ever as we face an unknown future together!

All of us are on different points of our ongoing faith journey. So, I invite you to reflect on your own gift of faith. Your faith is the foundational building block of St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish, and Jesus is the cornerstone that holds us all together. He needs you – we need you, and your gift of faith and your commitment as His disciple to be co-responsible with me for the ongoing mission of St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish.



In order to continue and strengthen us to be a source of hope, care and meaning to our community and beyond, please consider the following:

Prayer Intentions

Spiritual connection is vital to new life and necessary to meet the current challenges according to the Gospel. You are invited to submit a prayer intention by emailing them to prayer-intention@stbernardbridgewater.org or by writing them on the response card. These intentions will be gathered and a regular petition will be offered for them during our daily and weekend masses. Prayer changes everything!

Our Parish Resources

Part of missionary discipleship is to ensure that we provide St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish with the necessary resources to fulfill our mission. As your pastor, my goal in the coming months and years would focus our mission on strengthening and expanding our Religious Education programs for our youth and our adults. Secondly, I would like to strengthen our youth ministry program and help our young members become stronger in their faith. Lastly, I would like to continue to strengthen our financial position for the future and, in particular, our Upkeep Reserve account so we are well prepared to maintain the beautiful facilities we have. Through these efforts we will be able to continue to promote Christ's saving message of hope and love. To accomplish these goals, I need your help. At this time, I would ask you to prayerfully consider increasing your financial support to the parish, and if you are able to do so, complete the attached reply card and return it by mail or drop it in the collection box when you come to Mass.

While some may think this is not a good time to ask people for an increased commitment of financial resources, I fear it would be irresponsible of me as pastor not to appeal to you. I know you too love St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish and you too want us to be the ongoing light we need to be in our world. The reality is---without your support---our light will not be as bright. While we were only down about 2.6% for the first 6 months of the year, our annual collections over the past 3 years have decreased nearly 10%, prohibiting us from making the investments mentioned above. Please help me strengthen our commitment to evangelization by prayerfully completing the attached reply card and returning it by mail or dropping it in the collection box when you come to Mass. I promise that I too will do what I am asking of you. Together we can be stronger!

Please know of my daily prayers for all of you. It is such a great joy to be your pastor—and please pray for me too.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rev. Randy Vashon".

Rev. Randall Vashon