

March 29, 2020

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH, MILLHOUSEN, IN

Immaculate Conception Parish Community strives to live the Gospel by worshipping God, deepening our understanding of the Catholic Faith, and serving the needs of others.

Bulletin information is due by Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. sisterdonna@millhousenchurch.com

On Ash Wednesday, less than five weeks ago, each one of us pledged to “give up” certain pleasures for the duration of Lent, or chose to take on chosen sacrifices, to practice self-discipline, to spend more time alone and in prayer, to strengthen our faith, to draw closer to God and to each other. Little did we know, of what was to come in the weeks to follow, that we would be giving up social gatherings, concerts, televised sports, eating in restaurants and virtually every other aspect of ordinary life. The coronavirus has given new meaning to a season of self-sacrifice. And the global pandemic has upended religious traditions. As Lent has progressed, churches have rapidly gone from pondering more sanitary ways to distribute Holy Communion to closing their doors altogether. Most have cancelled Masses and all services, our Archdiocese included. I recently saw a sign that said “When they told us to give up something for Lent I didn’t know we had to give up everything.” Some believe the directives imposed are actually fitting for a season of suffering and abstinence, the ultimate Lent. Some see a parallel between the isolation of quarantine and Jesus’s forty days alone in the wilderness. And some see “sheltering in place” or the “stay at home” mandate as an opportunity for each of us to be in the desert like Jesus, with time for solitary prayer. And, remember that first Sunday, when we were reminded, that we were not in this alone? How many times have we heard that line in the past few weeks?

Again, this week we have been bombarded with information, from national, state and local leaders, in addition to our Holy Father and Archbishop Thompson. There are daily changes, but at present, restrictions continue to increase rather than decrease. The number of Covid-19 confirmed cases continues to rise, even as our country has emerged as the epicenter of this global pandemic. We are now told that we haven’t hit the height of the curve yet, that we have another three weeks to go, before we see declines. In other words, we won’t be going anywhere soon. So, this Lenten season may be a long one! But faith tells us, that Easter will come. We may not have the egg hunts and big family gatherings. The solemnity of Holy Week may be replaced by other kinds of deaths and losses, but new life has been promised. And surely it will come. Hopefully we will make good use of this time. And hopefully, each of us will be transformed, made new. We may never have an opportunity like this again!

There were two significant releases from The Archdiocese this week, and both are presented as attachments or bulletin inserts. The first is concerning Holy Week; there will be no public celebrations. The second is relative to the Rite of Penance. One guiding principle for all directives is to try to encourage people to stay home for their own safety, and for the safety of others. Another guiding principle is to try to protect one of our most valuable resources, our elders. When you feel inclined to minimize the danger, when you decide that enough is enough and you can’t abide any longer, when your patience is tried, and you feel ready to disregard all mandates and orders, please remember those two principles. And please remember to pray for those in power, both in church and state, who are struggling to make the best decisions for all involved.

Some remain greatly concerned about funerals. As mandated by the Governor and as directed by the Archdiocese, we are to have **no visitations, brief burial** services only, by invitation only, with not more than 10 people total. Later, as the restrictions are lifted, we will have Memorial Masses for each deceased parishioner, to celebrate their life and legacy.

There have been several phone calls from caring parishioners offering to make runs for the elderly or infirmed, to get meds, to deliver groceries, or serve as needed. We are most grateful for these offers, and will be maintaining a list of possible volunteers should the need arise. Please remember that we are to protect anyone over 60 from unnecessary contact, and to promote a safeguard for those most vulnerable, the elderly and those already sick with other disease processes.

We will update our prayer list weekly and ask you to keep each one in your mind and heart. Family members are encouraged to call the office anytime to add names or remove names, and to give any information you may want posted to the parish.

Remember in Prayer: Pat Schwering, John Kuzman, Marilyn Horan, Martha Fry, Elizabeth Downey, Nell Ann Pfeifer, Velma Ortman, Judy Zapfe, Sherry Weberding, Pauline Schoettmer, Lori & Joe Bierhaus, and a special intention. In addition, please remember the families of parishioners Barbara Hoeing, buried on Tuesday, Roman Johannigman, Sr., buried on Saturday, and Mark Wittkamper, to be buried on Monday.

Stewardship of Treasure: Our Sunday Collections: March 22, 2020

Needed each weekend to meet budget: **\$2,800.00**

Sunday Envelopes (and loose): \$110.00

Catholic Home Missions: \$ 60.00

Total Collections: \$170.00

Note from the Finance Committee: Re: the importance of Sunday Collections during this time of uncertainty: We wanted to reach out to all parishioners about the importance of still sending in your Sunday Envelopes to the parish office, even though we are unable to get together each Sunday for Mass. Just like at our homes, the bills still arrive in the mail and need to be paid! There are three ways to make your contribution, weekly or monthly. You can mail a check to the church at 2081 E. County Road 820 S. Greensburg, IN 47240; you can donate on-line at www.millhousechurch.com; or you can personally deliver your envelope to the parish office. Please note that when donating on-line through our website, a portion of your contribution will be subtracted for on-line fees, therefore your entire donation will not be made to the church. This on-line platform will allow you to select to “give once” or “give multiple times.” If you choose to personally deliver your donation to the parish office, please contact Sister Donna at 812-591-2362 to schedule a drop off time, so that it can be received. It is not recommended to leave contribution envelopes in the mailbox. Thank you in advance for continuing your gift of Stewardship to our parish.

Steeple Notes: The State of Ohio, which is the home of our steeple contractors, issued a “stay-at-home order” prior to our own state of Indiana. So, on Sunday evening, a week ago, we received a call informing us that they would be unable to begin set-up of the work site, with equipment and supplies on Monday morning as planned. Stay tuned for updates as we move through this uncertain time. More steeple money arrived by mail this week, leaving only three pledges yet uncollected, totaling \$1,700. As the end of March is almost upon us, we expect the remainder to be realized this week. Work on the steeple will always be suspended when safety becomes an issue, especially during high winds or rain. Your continued prayers for this project are much appreciated.

The **Spring Work Day** scheduled for Saturday April 4th, will need to be officially cancelled due to the “stay-at-home” order issued by Governor Holcomb this week. Until further notice we may not gather or congregate for any reason on the Church grounds. Routine maintenance, and outdoor work are permitted if those involved (less than ten people), practice safe-distancing, and hygiene precautions. We may move into the mowing season before this precaution is lifted, and general clean-up of our cemetery and grounds is necessary prior to mowing being initiated. So, as you begin to crave time in the sun, consider an hour of “pick-up-sticks” in the name of our parish. To help us move in the right direction, we request families assist by removing weather worn, or out

of season decorations from the graves of their loved ones. Remember that all flowers or adornments need to be on the gravestone or on a shepherd's crook. We trust that anyone who has symptoms, or has been in contact with anyone with symptoms, will self-quarantine. Thank you for caring for one another.

Bids for the mowing season. We are accepting bids for the parish grounds and the St. Denis Cemetery mowing seasons. Because the unemployment rate is climbing steadily, we anticipate a heightened interest from outside contractors for this year. During the past week, Mitch Nobbe has signed the contract for the Immaculate Conception Cemetery mowing. He has served us well in the past and will keep our cemetery in top shape for the summer. The other two areas, the Parish Grounds, and St. Denis Cemetery, are open to internal bids until the end of March, at which time we will open them to the public. Stop by the office and pick up a bid sheet to review the contract. Insurance and equipment provided by the bidder.

Please see the Criterion this week, page 9, for the daily Mass readings. Using this resource and your family bible, allows for a great opportunity to unite with the universal church. Note also the Archdiocesan web-site listed at the top of the frontpage, with the suggested option of viewing the Sunday Mass from the cathedral chapel Archindy.org/Mass. Create a new Sunday ritual: establish a time to gather your family and have your own personal prayer. Read the readings together, and discuss your insights. Then pray the creed together, followed by petitions of your own making. Pray the Our Father together and then have a quiet time for "Spiritual Communion." See bulletin insert of last week.

Pope Francis urges us to remember that COVID-19 is **not God's judgment** on humanity, but rather a call on people to live differently. A time to choose what matters. A time to get our lives back on track with regard to God and others. He shared a reflection on a scripture passage from Mark's Gospel account of Jesus calming the sea. He asks us to invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. He encourages us to hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples on the stormy Sea of Galilee, he said, "we will experience that, with him on board, there will be no shipwreck" because God turns everything into good. The passage begins with "When evening had come," and Pope Francis reflects that "a thick darkness has gathered over our cities and towns." It has taken over our lives, filling everything with a distressing void. "We find ourselves afraid and lost," he said. "like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm." The pandemic storm has brought us to the realization that "we are on the same boat, all of us, fragile and disoriented." And it has shown us how each person has a contribution to make, at least in helping and comforting each other.

Pope Francis says that the pandemic has exposed "our vulnerability" and has uncovered the myths around the importance we place on our daily schedules, our projects, our priorities. In the midst of this storm, he says, God is calling us to faith, which is not just believing that God exists, but turning to him and **trusting** in him. In the boat, when the disciples plead with Jesus to do something, Jesus responds, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" His prayer for us is this:

"May God's blessing, come down upon you as a consoling embrace. Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak, and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm."

The Angelus: Among our many Catholic devotions, the Angelus has long been a part of Catholic life. Around the world, three times every day, as the clock or church bell rings 6:00 am, 12:00 noon, and 6:00 pm, Catholics stop what they are doing and begin this simple yet beautiful prayer. While it evolved over time, it was first published in 1560 and reminds us of the Angel Gabriel's annunciation to Mary, the feast celebrated on March 25th each year. Because we celebrated The Annunciation this past week, and because we often need to be reminded of those things that tie us to each other, making us all one throughout the world, the words of the prayer are attached for your use.

The Angelus

V. The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, etc.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection through the same Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Statement of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis Regarding Holy Week

Out of great concern for the health of our people and as it is a celebration of the entire archdiocese and the opportunity for the priests to renew the promises of their ordination in the presence of the archbishop and the faithful, the Chrism Mass will be postponed until the current health crisis subsides. Newly blessed Holy oils will be distributed at that time. Until then, the Holy oils blessed at the 2019 Chrism Mass may continue to be used.

Palm Sunday and Holy Week Liturgies will not be celebrated publicly in our parishes.

- There are to be no public celebrations, even outside – including live Stations of the Cross on Good Friday.
- There is to be no distribution of blessed palms; however, if a priest blesses palms privately, those palms may be reserved for distribution at a later date to be determined.
- Easter sacraments for RCIA candidates and catechumens and for Catholics who are to be confirmed at the Easter Vigil are to be postponed – guidance will be provided later on when they might be celebrated after this crisis subsides. (Please note: If a member of the elect is in danger of death, please follow RCIA Part II, no.3, “Christian Initiation of a person in danger of death.” The ritual book *The Pastoral Care of the Sick* also contains the rite for Christian Initiation of the Dying. Also, Canon 1183 §1 states, “when it concerns funerals, catechumens must be counted among the Christian faithful.”)
- The Mass of the Lord’s Supper (without washing of the feet), the Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion, and the Easter Vigil will be celebrated by Archbishop Thompson and 2 or 3 concelebrants in Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral without a congregation and will be livestreamed on www.archindy.org.
- Directions for priests celebrating the liturgies of Holy Week have been provided.
- There should be no distribution of Holy Communion in any way outside of Last Rites currently or during Holy Week until we are cleared to return for public liturgies.
- Please continue to follow the stay at home order of Governor Holcomb.

The guidelines of the **statement from March 17** regarding funerals remain in force. Please adhere to these, as well as the ongoing suspension of ALL public liturgies, which includes all Masses AND Communion services.

Again, these guidelines and all current liturgical guidance, developed in line with that of the CDC and competent authorities can be found at www.archindy.org. Please reference this page often to remain familiar with how best to serve the people of God during this pandemic.

Statement on the Care of Souls and the Forgiveness of Sins During this Pandemic in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

The following directives are being issued by the archdiocese, including those things decreed within the normal law by Most Rev. Charles C. Thompson, Archbishop of Indianapolis:

The necessary and prudent measures enacted by government officials to prevent and slow infection rates during this current pandemic come with a great many sacrifices. As in all areas of life, these measures also affect the Church in her mission for the care of souls. The faithful have been overwhelmingly understanding in adapting to the restrictions of public gatherings and the temporary cessation of public Masses by attending Eucharistic celebrations virtually and participating in spiritual communion. Another crucial aspect of the spiritual life is the forgiveness of sins, which is ordinarily accomplished through individual and integral confession to a priest followed by individual absolution.

In the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson suspended the public celebration of the Mass as well as all other liturgical services and gatherings of the faithful and that was effective Wednesday, March 18 and until further notice. This resulted in the cancelation of many Penance Services and group gatherings for confession in our archdiocese. One of the guiding principles in all decision-making is to try to encourage people to stay home for their own safety. In fact, now a stay at home order has been given by the governor that is effective on March 24 at 11:59 pm. The reality of our situation is dangerous and unsafe for many right now. If regularly scheduled opportunities for confession were hosted, then that would create opportunities for people to put themselves in harm's way by potentially putting them in dangerous contact with others. In our statement from March 17, priests were instructed on how to respond to minister to individuals who are in danger of death and to administer Last Rites. It was also indicated that they may respond to individual requests for confession but with the caveat that those who can be encouraged to postpone that celebration of the Sacrament of Penance should be strongly encouraged to do so. Ways need to be found for people to be cared for spiritually but also to keep them and their priests safe physically. This will create some instances where an individual is not able to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance in some of the days ahead. And so, at this time priests and penitents are reminded of the Church's teaching in these cases. When a person finds themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution because they can't connect with confession, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, (1) flowing from their love of God, (2) expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (like praying the act of contrition) and (3) with the intention to go to sacramental confession as soon as it is offered, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (cf. CCC, no. 1452)."

The current pandemic and the measures taken to combat it make responding to individual requests for confession very difficult. Therefore, out of great concern for the health our people and until further notice requests for individual confession should be postponed unless it is requested by one who is in imminent danger of death. The guidelines of the statement from March 17 regarding ministering to those in danger of death remain in force. For all others, they are to be asked to rely on perfect contrition described in the three steps above.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson may, in the current situations, determine that the circumstances warrant the use of the third form of the Rite of Penance, often called "general absolution." However, it has been determined that this scenario has not yet presented itself, and this form may not be utilized at this time. Not having the opportunity for individual confession or general absolution will make some of the faithful anxious, especially during this Lenten season of penance. To help in this, the Holy See, through the Apostolic Penitentiary, has offered this

additional recourse for the faithful:

- “The gift of special Indulgences is granted to the faithful suffering from COVID-19 disease, commonly known as Coronavirus, as well as to health care workers, family members and all those who in any capacity, including through prayer, care for them.”
 - This is a time of suffering, especially for those who have contracted COVID-19. As such, it may be a time for us to “rediscover ‘the same redemptive suffering of Christ’ (*Salvifici doloris*, 30).” Trusting in Christ, a *Plenary indulgence* is “granted to **the faithful suffering from Coronavirus**, who are subject to quarantine by order of the health authority in hospitals or in their own homes if, with a spirit detached from any sin, they unite spiritually through the media to the celebration of Holy Mass, the recitation of the Holy Rosary, to the pious practice of the Way of the Cross or other forms of devotion, or if at least they will recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, offering this trial in a spirit of faith in God and charity towards their brothers and sisters, with the will to fulfill the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions), as soon as possible.”
 - “**Health care workers, family members and all those who**, following the example of the Good Samaritan, exposing themselves to the risk of contagion, **care for the sick of Coronavirus** according to the words of the divine Redeemer: ‘Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends’ (*Jn 15: 13*), will obtain the same gift of the *Plenary Indulgence* under the same conditions.”
- An indulgence is “the expression of the Church's full confidence of being heard by the Father when - in view of Christ's merits and, by his gift, those of Our Lady and the saints - she asks him to mitigate or cancel the painful aspect of punishment by fostering its medicinal aspect through other channels of grace” (John Paul II, *General Audience, September 29, 1999*).
- A plenary indulgence removes all the temporal punishment due to sin (*CCC*, 1471).

Promotion and catechesis on these remedies during the absence of the sacrament of reconciliation can be a source of great consolation for all the faithful. A short catechesis on how the faithful can participate in both the indulgence and the act of perfect contrition will be coming shortly to the USCCB website usccb.org. For further reference, please see:

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/20/200320d.html>

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/20/200320c.html>

Please join us in prayer. Below is Pope Francis' prayer to Mary during the COVID-19 pandemic.

O Mary,
you always shine on our path
as a sign of salvation and of hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,
who at the cross took part in Jesus' pain, keeping your
faith firm.

You, Salvation of the Roman People,
know what we need,
and we are sure you will provide
so that, as in Cana of Galilee,
we may return to joy and to feasting
after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform to the will of the Father
and to do as we are told by Jesus,
who has taken upon himself our sufferings
and carried our sorrows
to lead us, through the cross,
to the joy of the resurrection. Amen.

Under your protection, we seek refuge, Holy Mother of
God. Do not disdain the entreaties of we who are in
trial, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and
blessed Virgin.

