

April 12, 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@millhousechurch.com](mailto:sisterdonna@millhousechurch.com)*

**A BRIGHT AND BLESSED EASTER SUNDAY TO ALL OF YOU!**

*"He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said."*

*"Do not be afraid. Go tell . . ."*

. . . so, it is our job, as disciples, to go tell the world, that he is risen! That we are redeemed! That a new day has come! That all will be well! Alleluia! The world needs to hear our message! We can be the bearers of the best news of our time! We can celebrate VICTORY! The battle is over! Let the celebration begin! The promise has been fulfilled! God has a new Covenant with his people! A covenant based on LOVE. He is rebuilding the temple as he said! Let us be glad and rejoice! Offer your thankful praises! Let us then feast with joy! Amen! Alleluia!!

Even as we celebrate, there are those among us who grieve. Parishioner Dennis Horan lost his Mother, **Teresa**, on Wednesday of this week. I'm sure Marilyn will miss her sister-in-law as well. A private burial service was held at St. Mary's. Please remember this family in prayer.

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, Nell Ann Pfeifer, Velma Ortman, Judy Zapfe, Sherry Weberding, Pauline Schoettmer, Fr. John Geis, and a special intention.

Update on Fr. John: He just had his first day without a high fever. Reports he feels SO much better, but remains very weak. Please keep him in your prayers. Pauline also reports feeling stronger and making improvements.

**Stewardship of Treasure: Our Sunday Collections:** April 5, 2020

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

Sunday Envelopes (and loose): \$730.00

**Total Collections: \$730.00**

**Our total is much better than last week!** We haven't made up for the deficit, but more checks have come in since this recorded deposit, and will be reflected in the total for today, printed in next Sunday's bulletin. Thanks to all of you for stepping up to the plate! Our average monthly expenditures are around \$10,500. and we try to

keep a three-month balance in our checking account for times like this. We will ride the wave!! But we do need everyone to continue giving with your “pre-virus” generosity which enabled us to just break even each spring. 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](http://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.**

**Mowing Contracts** – I am pleased to announce that Ken and Steve Stone have agreed to take on the mowing and trimming of the parish grounds for the current growing season. They began on Wednesday of this week, and gave our campus a much-needed haircut! Mitch and Lori Nobbe have also been busy cleaning up the cemetery. And just when we thought all was shaping up, another strong wind threw everything upside down. There are cemetery decorations and flowers in every lot, including the pond. We are grateful the tornadoes moved on by without damage to our campus. But, Mother Nature has a mind of her own, keeping it all stirred up.

The **hand sanitizer** ordered in January has finally been delivered. When we finally return to use of our buildings, you will find hand sanitizer dispensers installed at each entryway, in each building. A small dime sized amount will be sufficient to kill all bacteria and viruses. Please get in the habit of using it each time you enter to protect each other. Yes, our lives are permanently changing!

**Funeral Meals** – when the time comes for us to resume serving funeral meals, or, for that matter, any meals or any food, served on our campus, all kitchen workers and volunteers will need to use gloves and good hand washing hygiene to protect themselves and to protect our customers, those we serve. This **requirement** will be enforced and will not go away. Gloves will be provided.

**Steeple Update:** Just as the construction crew was planning to set up the crane two weeks ago, they received word that the shingles for our steeple were sitting on a truck in Pennsylvania, ready to be shipped. The only problem is that the state of Pennsylvania would not let the truck cross their border. They cannot begin until materials arrive. And then we went under a red alert travel ban. Barring any new problems work will begin in the near future.

Again, we encourage you to frequently visit our Archdiocesan web-site for updates and for Sunday liturgy. In addition, Fr John, at St Mary, Greensburg, is taping Sunday Liturgy in advance and offers it for your use. To access it, just go to the St. Mary’s website.

“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.”

6 April 2020

Dear Sisters & Brothers in Christ,

I bid you grace, peace and hope in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen! As the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic continue to take a great toll on our lives, especially the livelihood of so many, let us not allow our spirits to succumb to the virus or other any enemy visible or invisible.

In addition to the great efforts of healthcare workers and first responders, there are many unsung heroes continuing to provide care, assistance and encouragement to others. Though there has been a great shift in the way in which we provide spiritual and pastoral care, necessity has spawned much creativity in reaching out to individuals and families particularly through the internet. Many thanks to those who manage our archdiocesan and parish websites, and to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for providing so many wonderful resources.

There has been quite a bit of speculation on social media about the closing of churches during the pandemic in many dioceses throughout the country and world. Some have been supportive while others have been critical of these decisions. To be sure, this is quite unprecedented in our lifetime. It is most painful for all, clergy and laity. As human beings, we are social by nature. As Christians, we are drawn to gather as a community of believers. As Catholics, gathering for Mass is our greatest form of prayer and worship. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our identity and mission.

Each bishop is responsible for his decision in this regard. With that in mind, if it will help to bring about some understanding and appreciation for such action, I take this opportunity to explain the reasons for churches remaining closed in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

First and foremost, please be assured that the closing of churches and the celebration of Mass without community is a painful reality for everyone. I know of no one among the clergy or the laity who does not lament this sad and difficult hardship. Celebrating Mass in an empty cathedral or church is a surreal experience, especially during the apex of the entire liturgical year—namely, Holy Week, the Triduum and Easter. So much in our Catholic culture has been disrupted during these special weeks such as Fish Fries, Stations of the Cross and Penance Services. We can't get these things back from this year. Pope Francis has reminded us that the Church is missionary by nature. As Church, rooted in memory of the past and assurance of divine promises made, we must always be readings the "signs of the times" in the present and looking toward the future of eternal life. We have not lost what matters most; namely, the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. With the Father and the Holy Spirit, He remains forever with the Church, His Body, carrying forth the mission for which He was sent.

The decision to close churches here in central and southern Indiana had nothing to do with fear or pressure from government. Despite being dispensed from the obligation of Mass and being encouraged to remain at home just prior to the suspension of public Masses, many elderly and vulnerable persons attended Mass in very risky ways. Crowds of people continued to

gather closely together. This was the same for communal celebrations of penance. A number of people told me that their elderly parents or grandparents would not stay home unless everything was suspended and churches were closed. Maintaining our primary focus on *salvation of souls* does not mean turning a blind eye to reason and prevention of serious harm.

As the data has shown, people who are asymptomatic, that is, not showing signs of having been infected, have passed on the virus to others before being diagnosed with Covid-19. While it was first thought to be transmitted through touch, evidence now reveals that it is being transmitted by air (e.g. coughing, sneezing and even breathing). There is further evidence that the virus can remain on various surfaces—wood, metal, paper, cardboard, plastic, etc.—for hours or days at a time. That means everything being touched or breathed by someone unsuspectingly carrying the virus may be left for the next person coming along. This may be the case in a pew, a confessional, a chair, a doorknob, a missalette or even palm. A priest who wants to hear confessions or take communion from car to car in a parking lot cannot guarantee that he would not be an agent for transmitting the virus from one person to another or, even more devastating, from one family to another. In the case of an invisible and vicious enemy like coronavirus, as I have said before, there can be a fine line between being heroic and being an agent of transmitting disease.

Our priests continue to respond to sacramental and pastoral needs in danger of death, including entering hospitals and other places to hear confessions and administer the anointing of the sick, Viaticum and Last Rites. We are most grateful to those hospital chaplains that are on the front lines to provide spiritual comfort and assurance to both patients and their families.

Finally, trying to do all that we can to support our healthcare workers and first responders, maintaining close churches at this time is one means of lessening the curve of cases in our communities. Marion County, as would be expected, has by far the most diagnosed cases and deaths from the virus. While outlying counties within the archdiocese do not have so many cases, healthcare facilities in those areas are ill-equipped for any type of spike in such cases. We owe it to them and one another, especially in light of the Church's preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, to do all we can in support of this effort to overcome this pandemic.

Our Catholic faith, while we have some beautiful cathedrals and churches throughout the archdiocese and world, is not confined to buildings. It is in buildings that we gather to pray, worship, learn Church teachings and gather in fellowship. But the living of our Catholic faith takes place in all facets of society such as homes, places of work, schools, neighborhoods, athletic events, political arenas, cultural venues and on the streets. While there has been a disruption in our ability to gather as a community of believers, we continue to be Catholic, Church, the Body of Christ, missionary disciples and stewards of God's grace by carrying on the mission in whatever form circumstances make possible. We need only think of the creative ways the first disciples were able to worship, learn and proclaim the faith in carrying out their call to holiness and mission in Jesus Christ.

There are great challenges before us during this pandemic and, no doubt, "staying in place" and "social distancing" is taking its toll on us. But there is also unique opportunity for us to delve deeper into prayer, spiritual reading, enriching our sense of devotion (via the Rosary, the

Divine Chaplet of Mercy, the Stations of the Cross, Litanies, etc.), meditating on the Word of God (Lectio Divina), examination of conscience, learning more about our Catholic faith and discerning how to become more involved in the Church's mission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Whether inside or outside any given church structure, above all, may we remain Christ-centered in all we say and do.

With assurance of my prayers and blessings for everyone throughout the archdiocese, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

**+*Charles C. Thompson***

Archbishop of Indianapolis