

May 3, 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

Because many people were unable to access the bulletin last weekend, much of the information is repeated here with updates.

We start with the most frequently asked question - **how is everyone on our prayer list doing?** We have good and bad news. Marilyn Horan, who was down with the virus for several weeks, is doing well, and finally out of isolation. That is a big hurdle! Fr. John Geis has also crossed the same hurdle! He is feeling so much better and back to eating well. His nieces are keeping his refrigerator stocked and he is enjoying it, but remains weak and not quite able to get back in the swing. He is grateful for your prayers. Pauline is improving in leaps and bounds! She is one determined lady! Luckily, she has escaped the virus, and is focused on therapy and strengthening. She is proud of her progress! **Pauline's birthday is Friday this week, 5/8.** Cards may be sent to Morning Breeze. Nell Ann survived another round of chemo and is regrouping. While staying inside, and at home, is difficult for many, it is especially hard for those in nursing facilities who continue to be quarantined, cut off from all visitors. Two, who are outgoing, but find themselves suffering from this extended "imprisonment" are Velma Ortman and Teresa Bruns. They both have supportive families, but have only window or telephone contact. Continue to remember them with cards or calls. Martha Fry has had a very difficult two weeks, as her disease is progressing. Her children are staying with her around the clock, and they are most grateful for everyone's prayer and support. However, Martha is unable to receive visits or calls at this time. We all know she would welcome if she could. **Martha turns 98 on May 14th.** While a birthday party is impossible, she still enjoys mail, and a card shower for her birthday would be most appreciated! Could we manage 98 cards in the next few days? Two of our close neighbors have been sited in wheelchairs, visiting the parish grounds with family members, and enjoying the warm fresh air. They are Ruth Hamilton and Carl Moorman. I don't know which one had the biggest smile! Please remember all of these folks and more!

Call the office anytime to add or remove names, or 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, Cindy McCullough, and a special intention. (Cindy McCullough had a double lung transplant, hospitalized in Louisville).

The next most frequently asked question is: **how are we doing financially?** Not as good as we would like, but as always, there are a few faithful contributors that we are indebted to! We are most grateful for your continued support, weekly, monthly, or in whatever way is possible. Many are still unemployed, and stretching to meet their own bills and needs. Others are more able to help and are keeping us afloat. Some are volunteering their time and talents, which is equally necessary to help us maintain. We are grateful for ALL!

Stewardship of Treasure: Our Sunday Collections: April 26, 2020

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| Needed each weekend to meet budget: | \$2,800.00 |
| Sunday Envelopes (and loose): | \$2,197.00 |
| Catholic Home Missions: | \$5.00 |
| Holy Places (Good Friday) | \$5.00 |

Total Collections: \$2,257.00

Steeple Notes: The Steeple crew arrived bright and early on Friday morning April 24th! The crane was unloaded and situated. Materials arrived and were unloaded and stored in the garage. And by 9:00 am the work had begun! It didn't take long for those passing by, to take note, and some stopped for pictures of the man in the lift bucket. Rain took over the weekend, and interfered several times this week, but the men are not discouraged by rain. They are counting on your prayers to keep the winds at bay! Drone pictures were taken today and will be posted on our website when received.

Ken and Steve Stone took advantage of the fair weather on Saturday to **cut the grass** and trim up the parish grounds. And Mich & Lori Nobbe cleaned up the cemetery on Saturday before the sunset. Volunteers, Jerry Fry, Donny Fry, Tim Scheidler, and Tom Johannigman, cut up and cleaned up a **fallen tree** on the edge of the woods. All very much appreciated! And some are working to clean up the insides of the buildings: Sarah and Donna Schwering rid the office building of all **ladybugs** on Saturday, and I did the same for the school building, **cleaning classrooms**, and restocking paper supplies. LaDonna is laundering all **server's cassocks**. There are numerous jobs still waiting for a volunteer. It is not hard to practice social distancing while contributing an hour or two of much needed labor to maintain our large property and campus.

Imagine my surprise when the phone rang on Sunday afternoon, last week, and when I picked it up, I heard the Archbishop's voice! He was doing the same thing I was doing, calling his flock to check up on how we were doing. He had no agenda, but really wanted to know how many deaths, and how many were diagnosed, and how we were coping. He was concerned about his people, and about the finances, and the outreach. I summarized our statistics, our numbers, and our spirit. I also took the opportunity to inquire about Confirmation for our candidates, and afterward wrote a letter to them concerning the setback, and the Archbishop's desire to ensure safety for all. He asked us to inform all of you that the sacraments may be a long time in resuming, and even then, may be transformed in style. The bishops across the country are meeting to re-evaluate what is safe, and how to proceed. More importantly, the bishops of Indiana are conferring frequently and want to present a unified approach. We were scheduled to have **Confirmation** this past Saturday. But due to the "stay-at-home" order, the Bishops are now several months behind on all schedules. He is still hoping to get us back on his schedule for the fall, but honestly cannot be certain that it won't take until spring again before he catches up. Our candidates are prepared. They have completed their service hours, developed new awareness of the needs within our own parish and within the local community. They have chosen a saint to emulate, to be a model and name for their own life. They have written a letter to the Archbishop to request this sacrament, and now they are waiting for the gifts of the spirit to strengthen their resolve, to deepen their insight, to increase their generosity of time and talent and treasure! Please continue to pray for them as they begin to take on adult roles within our parish, out church and our community.

Concerning First Communion, as soon as we are able to resume the sacraments within our parish community, we will schedule and follow through with First Communion for our four candidates. They too are prepared and ready. We might ALL need to be making modifications on how we receive the Eucharist. We might need to refrain from receiving the blood of Christ. But whenever we receive the new norms, we will include these young people as well. God bless the bishops as they sort through all of this! In the meantime, God is with us. Please pray for all of us, that we might be open and accepting of the changes that must be put in place to keep everyone safe! Our faith does not change, but how we practice it, and how we open ourselves to it, may look very different. Never lose site of the fact that God is first within us. And then also within each one we encounter, within nature, and the sacraments, and all about us. His love never changes. We have only to receive it, to trust in it, and to share it.

About a week ago we received our **Gaming License for Auction 2020!** Can you believe that thought is even in our minds? We have scheduled the annual "Auction Start-Up" meeting for Sunday May 17th to begin the discussion, to put our heads together to plan. Will we be able to pull it off this year? The date set for this grand undertaking is August 8th, 2020, just three months away! We either need to "put our wiggle on" very quickly, or consider putting it off a year. And if we put it off, can we survive financially? We certainly need to weigh our needs against the needs of the greater community. 9:00 am school building. Scatter – six feet apart.

Today we celebrate the feast of the “**Good Shepherd.**” The Gospel reminds us of the merciful love of God, and uses the sheep and shepherd theme to convey our dependence on his voice and call in our lives. Psalm 23, from our liturgy today, never fails to remind me of funerals, as it is so commonly chosen for that use. It speaks of that same merciful love, and our response to it, living in hope. “The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.” We live through suffering, and live through dying, always trusting and hoping in the glory of the resurrection and new life. Our lives are an ongoing embrace of God’s will for us, **preparation for death** and new life. It brings peace and comfort to know that Jesus’ death and resurrection have created a way for us to be united with God our Father. Like our living in God, so also our dying in the Lord, will be noticed, and serve as a witness to those around us.

In the first reading, Peter says “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” But how do we do that? We follow the voice of the Lord in our lives, the **Shepherd’s voice**, who shows us the way, and **IS the Way**. In the second reading Peter calls Jesus “the shepherd and guardian of” our souls. We follow the one who has shown us the way to endure suffering, and share in his death and resurrection. We live in an up-side-down time. Not just with the Coronavirus, but with the Church, politics, the economy, current moral upheaval, competition, nothing seems stable. Evil is influencing our world. But, Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. These words are also meant for those of us today who are dying. They are words of hope. Today, may we rest in his compassion, in the comfort of his voice, praying for those walking through the valley of the shadow of death. May they lack for nothing, and find peace in the hope that Jesus’ resurrection promises.

May is the month of Mary! We usually celebrate that reality with May Crowning. We may not be able to do a public May Crowning this year. But this is a perfect opportunity to revisit the custom of creating a **May altar** in our homes. Gather some flowers and blooms and put Mary in the center. Make devotion to her a constant reminder the next few weeks. The bishops of the U.S. and Canada have consecrated both countries to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of “Mary, Mother of the Church.” We extend the invitation to all of you, her faithful children, to participate in this devotion for the month of May. You may want to gather as a family to pray the rosary on Sunday, or use your favorite Mary prayers and hymns. Mary truly listened to the voice of God in her life, and is the perfect example of humble obedience to God’s will. Pray for Our Lady’s continued protection of the vulnerable, healing of the sick, and wisdom for those who work to cure this virus.

In 1792, the first bishop of the United States, Bishop John Carroll, consecrated our nation to Mary under the title **Immaculate Conception**, and in 1846, the bishops of the country unanimously chose Mary under that title as the patroness of our nation. In later years, the National Shrine in Washington DC was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. We, here at Immaculate Conception, Millhousesen, depend on her continued protection! Pray that she may plead with her divine Son, as she did at Cana, so that the families of the sick may be comforted and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.