

May 10, 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

Happy Mother's Day to all Mothers and Grandmothers celebrating with us today! May God bless each and everyone of you for your nurturing, patient and loving care! Hopefully that care will be returned to you today in the love and admiration of your children and grandchildren! Since we are not meeting each other in person today, you will have to imagine the customary carnation being handed to you as you leave church today. May it be instead a spiritual bouquet blessing you for your gifts to us!

Update on our elders: everyone seems to be doing well, either maintaining or improving, and all hoping for an end to the severe restrictions. Pauline was surprised for her birthday by all the cards and visits through her glass window. She had very high energy! Ralph H. and Jim K. send the greetings to all of you. Please remember to send Martha F. a card if you have not yet done so. She turns 98 on Thursday!

On Thursday of this week we buried former parishioner, Alfred Barhorst. Please remember him and his family in prayer. 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.

We are most grateful for your continued financial support. Our end of April numbers are a bit better than was end of month in March. Thanks to those who mail or drop off checks. And how wonderful to find three people who ventured out to begin the on-line giving option. That is three more than last month! We are grateful!

Stewardship of Treasure: Our Sunday Collections: May 3, 2020

Needed each weekend to meet budget:	\$2,800.00
Sunday Envelopes (and loose):	\$745.00
Maintenance Fund:	\$60.00
Catholic Home Missions:	\$20.00
Holy Places (Good Friday)	\$20.00
Catholic Relief Services:	\$10.00
Total Collections:	\$855.00

Total on-line giving for the month of April was \$220.00

For those who may have misplaced the link, it is: www.archindy.org/Giving Remember to choose Immaculate Conception, Millhousen, from the drop-down menu. It was very easy to access this information on-line to validate your contributions, and each of you should have already received a statement directly from the Archdiocese for tax purposes. Hang on to that letter because that giving will not be reflected in your giving statement from here in January.

Reminder: Next Sunday, May 17th, is a special collection for our cemetery fund. Envelope in box. Thanks!

Steeple Notes: The Steeple crew is very pleased with their progress. While all is going well, they have uncovered a few minor surprises, and will need to add a bit of new lumber and labor to the project. The entire picture was not so evident from the drone pictures nor from the inside view. But every project is an opportunity to learn, and meet the challenges as they present themselves. Note the pictures available for viewing on the bulletin board inside of church, taken 5/6/2020. Several, maybe four days, remain on the removal part of the project. Please continue to pray for fair weather. We have had a lot of rain and wind since they started! But shingles will be coming soon.

Murder in the Church! Imagine my surprise yesterday when I was completing work on the bulletin board and suddenly realized I was not alone in the entryway! Judging by the noise that ensued, I was not the only one surprised! I quickly escaped behind the swinging doors, only to look back and find my predator to be banging on the windows, trying to escape in the opposite direction. I relaxed behind the glass partition. He continued struggling but could not do the same. Finally, some minutes later he disappeared again, going back into the ceiling by the same route that he had entered, the hole used for the bell rope. The squawking continued. I called for help . . . and the posse arrived to survey the damage, and I thought, to release the poor critter. More noise, this time pounding, and while I did not witness the murder, I can attest to the death having seen the corpse. My Grandfather would have said “put that in your pipe and smoke it.” There is never a dull moment.

Some of you have heard of the PPP, the **small business loan** that the government promised. I had no idea if we would qualify, but after checking with our advisors, I went ahead and made application. Every other small business had the same idea, and we soon found ourselves in a very long waiting line (on-line). Some parishes did not go through the long process, thinking it was not worth their time. It took so long to process, I presumed we did not qualify. The impetus to continue was derived from the report that “it probably will not need to be repaid.” About a week ago I received a call that asked for a signature on the closing document. And our bank statement now reflects that we have been loaned \$3,800. to help us “stay in business.” Every little bit helps!

Concerning all meetings or gatherings: if you are 65 or beyond, or in compromised health, please observe the stay-at-home orders. Nothing on our agenda is more important than each one’s health and safety. We encourage the use of face coverings for all gatherings to protect the other. And we will stay six feet apart. On the one hand, we shouldn’t be gathering. But on the other hand, we have some important decisions to make.

Dates to Remember:

- May 17 – 9:00 am, school basement, **Auction** “Start Up” Meeting. Should we do it nor not?
- May 20 – 7:00 pm, school basement, **Buildings & Grounds Committee** Reviewing cemetery upkeep.
- May 24 – 9:00 am, office meeting room, **Finance Committee**. Project & approve annual budget.
- May 31 – 9:00 am, office meeting room, **Parish Council**. Criteria to re-open.

The week was full of surveys, financial and statistics, Zoom conferences, and on-line discussions. There were follow-up phone calls, and hundreds of emails. So many aspects of returning to life as we used to know it, only to discover that we may never go back to that way of life. So many different entities have a voice in HOW we resume functioning. One thing is certain, it will look different than we might expect.

Since the Governor laid out a plan, many folks are asking when will we have Mass again? We have the Gov’s permission to begin now. But that is only the beginning. The Archbishop met with all of the other Bishops in Indiana to formulate a united plan, to proceeding in like manner, cautiously. The big fear is that the re-opening decision is based on economic facts, but in reality, the virus is still pretty active. The death rate has plateaued but has not begun to decline. If we begin coming together, we could easily be putting each other at risk. And if we take the risk, and begin, can we trust that everyone else will be cautious and careful and respectful, and take the necessary precautions? And what will we do if we take a step forward, only to raise the numbers, and have to take another step backward? Everyone can probably agree that we want to move ahead. The question will be, when? How long will it take us to “get our ducks in a row?”

The deans all collected data from the pastors and PLC's. They met with the Archbishop on Tuesday, after the Bishops met on Monday. The Priest Council then met on Thursday of this week. And tried to hammer out a plan that would work for all of us. One of the important pieces to remember is that a high percentage of our priests and parish leaders are in the high-risk group of over age 65, and according to the Gov's plan, may not venture out until at least May 24th. So that is the Indiana starting point. The Bishops created their own "starting point" for all parishes in Indiana. The following is their statement:

PROVINCE OF INDIANAPOLIS

The five Catholic dioceses of the Province of Indianapolis will **begin** resuming public liturgies (e.g. Mass and Sacraments) by 30 May 2020, the Vigil of Pentecost, with restrictions outlined by each diocese and provided to the parishes within their respective jurisdictions. The dispensation from the obligation to participate at Mass on Sundays is extended throughout the State of Indiana until 15 August 2020.

Note that the operative word is **begin**. That means we may, but only some. It is hoped that openings will be staggered, some first, then a few more, and all will be open before the end of the dispensation on August 15th. Each diocese is now creating their own plan. And then each Pastor or PLC will be responsible for creating individual parish plans. The parishes within a local area are asked to work together to create opportunities to work together and assist one another. We have been in continuous dialogue with our neighbors at Greensburg. And Fr. John Meyer has been picking up a bit of the load, doing anointings, burials and offering lots of support. We know already that Greensburg will be opening first, and we will follow when we are able. The initial plan (which is subject to change) is for St. Mary's to open for its first public Sunday Mass on the eve of Pentecost, May 30th. All of us are invited to join in that celebration, either in person, or by way of the recorded video.

There will be limitations on the size of the crowd. The churches all need to be marked for seating, with six-foot distances between people. The isles may be marked for six-foot segments for communion lines. Ushers will need to be trained on how to seat folks and everyone will need to learn to follow directions for seating. No longer will there be reserved pews. We need to continue social distancing, and we need to strongly encourage everyone over 65 to please continue to stay at home. Remember the dispensation is effective until August 15th, and even that could change. Time will tell. Hopefully the numbers will begin to drop. But, please accept the age disability as a very serious consideration. Allow those a little younger, with a more active immune system, to be the first to lead the way.

In the next few days the Diocesan plan will be revealed, and hopefully the Greensburg area will come to some resolution as well. By bulletin time next week, hopefully you will find more detail here. But in the meantime, there is a lot to be done. We need to begin cleaning and sanitizing our worship space. And we need to formulate a plan to continue cleaning and sanitizing after every gathering. Not just once a month. And we need to ensure that every single person who enters our church has, and wears a mask. According to the Gov.'s plan, masks become "optional" on June 14th. In the meantime, we need to wear them, not to protect ourselves, but to protect those vulnerable around us. Masks can be homemade, or purchased. We encourage everyone to get one and to wear it when you come. I know there are sewers in our parish. I am hoping that some of them will volunteer to make a few masks for their friends or neighbors, or any other parishioner who might need one. We have ordered a supply of disposable masks as well.

We need some volunteers. Now is the time to come together and help this parish to get back on its feet. We need volunteers to mark and measure and figure out seating. We need volunteers to learn the new ushering responsibilities, to assist everyone to find a seat and be safe. We need volunteers to help clean, and then to take turns sanitizing after each service. We need volunteers to make masks and to distribute them. And we need everyone to begin a new pattern of staying six feet away from each other.

We are not a parish that enjoys or easily embraces change. In fact, we don't like change. So, this may be a very challenging time for us. But there will be rewards. We can do it, and we will! Much more detail to come.