

**May 17, 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](mailto:sisterdonna@millhousenchurch.com)*

Very early on Monday morning, after celebrating Mother's Day with her children and grandchildren, Martha Fry heard heavenly music. She recognized it as a waltz, and as she embraced all of life, went dancing off into heaven, probably on the arm of Omer. Martha arrived at the pearly gates just three days before her 98<sup>th</sup> birthday. What a party she must be having! On Friday of this week her family laid her to rest. Please remember all of them in your prayers this week.

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, Nell Ann Pfeifer, Velma Ortman, Judy Zapfe, Sherry Weberding, & Cindy McCullough.

We are most grateful for your continued financial support. 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 10, 2020**

Needed each weekend to meet budget:	<b>\$2,800.00</b>
Sunday Envelopes (and loose):	\$2,103.54
Maintenance Fund:	\$10.00
Catholic Home Missions:	\$25.00

**Total Collections: \$2,138.54**

**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](http://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 the parish in January.

**Reminder:** Today, Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, a special collection for our cemetery fund. Envelope in box. Thanks!

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!

**Steeple Notes:** Note the pictures available for viewing on the bulletin board inside of church, taken 5/6/2020. Several days remain on the removal part of the project., and then we'll move into replacement. Please continue to pray for fair weather. We have had a lot of rain and wind since they started! Shingles arrived on Tuesday.

Another new accomplishment: thanks to the very dedicated service of Ken and Steve Stone, we now have new **garage doors**. They spent a long rainy afternoon installing them. Not only do they give considerably easier access, but they greatly improve the appearance of our buildings as well.

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 probably shouldn't be gathering because so many are over 65, 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.

**PROVINCE OF INDIANAPOLIS – statement from the Indiana Bishops:**

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**. Some will begin early, others will follow. As reported in the bulletin last week, there will be a staggering of openings, as each geographic area is tasked with creating opportunities for the sacraments and liturgies to begin again, in the meantime, working together and sharing our resources. It is hoped that all be able to meet the opening criteria, before the end of the dispensation on August 15<sup>th</sup>. Each diocese has created individualized plans. And now each Pastor or PLC is responsible for creating individual parish plans based on the Archdiocesan guidelines. We have been in continuous dialogue with our neighbors at Greensburg, and we know already that they will be the first to open in this area, and we will follow when we are able. The initial plan (which is subject to change) is for St. Mary's to open for it's first public Sunday Mass on the eve of Pentecost, May 30<sup>th</sup>. All of us are invited to join in that celebration, either in person, or by way of the recorded video. Please remember that this is an invitation, an opportunity, but all of those over 65 are strongly encouraged to stay at home.

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 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 break out.

Because information will be changing day by day and week by week, this might be the very best time to encourage everyone to begin reading the weekly **bulletin every week. It is the lifeline for communication here in the parish.** While many parishes dropped the bulletin during this “stay at home” time, we have continued it weekly, because we feel it is so important to the process of reaching out to each other. But each person, and each family will have to take the responsibility to access it routinely, by stopping by the white mailbox outside of church, or by going to our website or even Facebook to get the latest news for our parish. The changes will be many and varied, and will be a lot to adjust to. But we will offer explanations and rational and try to prepare you to enter into this new way of worship, which will continue to evolve and change as the restrictions are lifted or put back in place.

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. That is probably the one most important change! We need to create a very safe worship space for all, but especially for our most vulnerable members, the elderly, folks over 65, and those dealing with other major disease processes, whose immune systems are already compromised. We are working on a contract with an outside cleaning service to do the initial deep clean, and the carpets will be shampooed as well.

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 14<sup>th</sup>. But they will not be optional in our churches for quite some time. 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. An unidentified donor has given us about 50 homemade masks that are in the entryway. If you need one please pick one up, use it, and then take it home and wash after each use. There will also be a box of disposable masks available if you happen to forget to bring your mask along. Everyone will wear masks. Even Father as he comes and goes. The only **exceptions** will be the priest and lector **after** they are in the sanctuary. In order for us to hear and understand the readings, masks will be removed for those with speaking parts. And while these participants are in the sanctuary, they too will need to stay six feet apart, and practice social distancing. As participants leave the sanctuary, masks will go back on.

There will be no servers. There will be no sacristan. Father will help himself from a new side credence table. There will be no Entrance procession, there will be no Recessional. There will be no Offertory procession. There will be no sharing of a sign of peace. Rather than let it to chance, the rite has been deleted at present. And we will not hold hands during the "Our Father." These are hard habits to break. But we will do it together, and some may need the reminders from others. If we act out of respect and care and concern for each other, we can break the habits.

All hymn books have already been removed. That means we cannot follow the readings in our books either. We will have to listen carefully to the readings, and the Lectors will have to project their voices and speak clearly and slowly so all can hear and understand them. This is why Father and the Lectors will not be wearing masks, the masks would muffle the words. There will be no singing. Even if there is some organ music provided it will be without voices. When we sing, (and when we talk behind masks), we project our voices, we breathe deeper, and we excrete more virus and bacteria. The masks are designed to hold the virus and bacteria, and create the needed barrier between us and everyone else. For years we have said "sing, participate." Now we are saying "don't sing, speak quietly."

We need "more than a few" 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 according to the new guidelines. We need volunteers to learn the new ushering responsibilities, to assist everyone to find a seat and be safe. And we need everyone to begin a new pattern of staying six feet away from each other. Yes, family units, that is "households", may be seated together, but the six-foot regulation will apply to anyone not living within the same household.

Next week we will talk about receiving communion, and all that will be changed with that ritual. But please save these bulletins for future reference, and refresh your memory as we get near to opening. If you know someone living alone who needs this information, please feel free to drop off a copy for them. When we have dates finalized for reopening, we will circulate a more formalized letter to the parishioners. Did I mention that all members over 65 are encouraged to stay at home? Please emphasize that to our elders. Some have asked, if I stay home can someone bring communion to me? The answer to that question, at this time, is a very clear No. It comes up and is asked at almost every Zoom conference. They feel the risk is still too high. Remember that God is within you, and listen carefully to the familiar voice of the Good Shepherd. You will know his voice. 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. We can do it, and we will! Much more detail to come.