



IMMACULATE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONCEPTION

March 18, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

In the last few days we have seen and heard of our Archbishop and Governor taking some dramatic steps to ensure that the Church and State does its part to protect against coronavirus and the growing health crisis. We know the implementation of these steps can cause confusion and frustration. Like you, we are concerned over the health and safety of our families and neighbors. The steps we take to do so are out of an abundance of caution.

Taking into consideration the guidelines set forth by the Archdiocese of Dubuque and our education, health, and emergency management partners, we have implemented the following precautions and protocols:

1. All public celebrations of Holy Mass are cancelled. All Catholics in the Archdiocese of Dubuque are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.
 - a. Note that I will continue to offer private Mass for all the intentions that have been scheduled through the parish office.
 - b. A number of places are offering Mass online:
 - i. Word on Fire, by Bishop Barron or Fr. Steve Grunow:
<https://www.wordonfire.org/daily-mass/>
 - ii. Blessed Sacrament Church, Waterloo, IA, Fr. Tony Kruse:
<https://www.blessedsacramentwaterloo.org/blesac-live>
 - iii. EWTN: <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/daily-readings> or on their TV channel multiple times per day.
 - iv. Magnificat is providing complimentary access to their online versions of Morning Prayer, Mass Readings, Meditations, etc., at: <https://us.magnificat.net/free>
 2. In the event of a funeral, we will meet with the family and have a private Mass of Christian Burial or other service for the deceased. Unfortunately funerals will not be open to the general public.
 3. Confession will be available by appointment only.
 4. The Parish Office is closed to the public. During business hours you may reach us by phone (641-228-1071). At times, staff availability during business hours may be limited. Please leave a message if we are unable to answer the phone. Staff will be answering calls and emails and may be available to meet at the office if a face-to-face meeting is necessitated.
 5. The church will remain open for individual prayer and devotion as in the past. (Please note there can be no more than 10 people in the church at one time.)
 6. All church programs and activities (including but not limited to Faith Formation/Religious Education and the April 1 Communal Penance Service) are cancelled.
 7. The celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation will be rescheduled through the Office of the Archbishop. Updates regarding the celebration of First Communion are still up in the air.
 8. Weekly Donations: Weekly donation envelopes may be mailed to or dropped off at the parish office. There is a tote that will be placed outside the front office door when staff are in the building. Weekly donations can also be set up at the following website (<https://iccharlescity.weshareonline.org/>) and clicking on "Sunday Collection."
 9. The school will directly communicate with parents their plans.
 10. The Knights of Columbus have announced that the remaining Lenten fish fries have been cancelled.

As we receive more information that could impact any of our operations, we will share it as soon as possible. Please continue to watch our website (www.iccharlescity.com) and facebook page (www.facebook.com/iccharlescity) for updates and resources.

Please join me in praying for those who are infected with the corona virus, or who live in fear of contracting it, and for the health care workers ministering to those who are sick, and for those who are mourning the loss of a loved one from the illness.

Prayer to St. Michael

Saint Michael, the archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into Hell Satan and all evil spirits who prowl about the world for the ruin of souls Amen.

Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903)

Note the story behind using this prayer during times of sickness/disease infection/plague: In the sixth century a severe plague hit the city of Rome, even claiming the life of Pope Pelagius II. When Pope Gregory I was elected Pope he organized a massive procession around the city, with an ancient image of the Virgin Mary, inviting everyone to pray to God that the plague would be lifted. When they reached the Mausoleum of Emperor Hadrian, Pope Gregory saw an angel of the Lord standing atop the castle, wiping a bloody sword and sheathing it. Gregory understood that it put an end to the plague, as, indeed, it did. The castle thus became known as the Castel Sant'Angelo (Castle of the Holy Angel), when a statue of St. Michael the Archangel, sheathing his sword, was put on top of the castle.

In times and places where the availability of Mass has been scarce, many, including Saints, have turned to Jesus in the practice of Spiritual communion. Spiritual Communion is the practice of uniting yourself to Christ when you cannot receive the Eucharist.

Prayer of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.

*Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.*

*I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You.*

Amen.

While this is a confusing and frustrating time, please know the steps we are implementing are being done out of an abundance of caution – not fear. Our faith is at the heart of what we are doing and we will continue to serve you during this unprecedented time. Please keep everyone in your prayers.

Thank you for your efforts to help all of us as the body of Christ to stay healthy in the face of the present situation. I appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, pray for us!
Saint Michael the Archangel, pray for us!

Sincerely in Christ,
Rev. Gary A. Mayer, Pastor