



March 20, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

I just wanted to update you on a couple of items. The first is in regard to the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick or Last Rites, if they are warranted. Hospitals and care facilities are shutting their doors to all outside visitors. This, of course, is extremely difficult for families with loved one in these facilities, so we want to keep them in our prayers and support them in any way we can. Not only are families not allowed in, but now pastors are being excluded from most facilities, and I expect by the end of next week, all facilities.

Therefore, it is imperative that you contact the office if you or a loved one has become ill. Of course, this excludes allergies and runny noses and is reserved for folks who are truly, seriously ill. This includes surgeries, but I think most of those have been delayed. COVID-19 and other illnesses hit those with impaired or weakened immune systems harder so if you are in that group, don't be afraid to call the office to schedule an appointment.

The second item concerns us all. I know for most of us, it is still pretty hard to believe that we are here and that we are doing what we are doing. It seems extreme, but I just wanted to give you an example of how seriously we should be taking this. Currently, many states, including Indiana, believe that 1% of us are infected or are carrying the COVID virus. That doesn't seem like a lot, but if that 1% number is correct, that means that in our parish we would have around 25 people who are carrying this virus or will become sick in the next week or two. Of that 25, three will require hospitalization. This doesn't seem like a lot, but if we think of this in terms of our whole county, then we are talking about 700 of us being carriers or infected and 70 will require hospitalization. Seventy people will overwhelm the hospital here in Hancock County. This is a serious threat. In fact, for at least the next couple weeks we should assume we are infected and act accordingly.

The next two weeks will tell us how bad the outbreak will be. From there we can start to make decisions about how much longer we will need to continue social distancing. It is not unreasonable for us to believe that social distancing policies will continue through the end of April and possibly into May. We are not quite locked down, as other countries are, and I know many folks do not want to go to even more extreme restrictions than we currently have. Even in places like Italy, where there is an extreme lock down, groceries stores are still open. So while our life is drastically changing, it is not ending and panic is not helpful or just. We need to help each other even if it's from a distance. I think the challenge will not be in the next two weeks but in the weeks after that. That will be the time we all start to get cabin fever. Things

might look better, but it will still be a time that we need to maintain that distance so as to continue to slow the spread.

Know that during this time I keep you all in my prayers at Mass. I am offering Mass daily, even though there is not a congregation. I am also praying the Stations of the Cross daily as it seems a very fitting devotion during this time which falls during Lent. If you or your loved one needs help, don't be afraid to reach out to us at the parish at 317-462-4240. We will do what we can to help. One beautiful thing to remember is that all of us are experiencing this together. Every diocese in the United States has suspended public Masses. Almost every other church or faith group has done the same. Many things are being canceled and everyone's lives are being upended. God is using this time for His purpose, and if we allow Him the space, He can transform our lives during this time.

God Bless,

Fr. Aaron