

St. Michael's Catholic Church

March 20, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

I would like to share a few thoughts with you about the Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic. My first thought is the words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt at his first inauguration in March of 1933: "The only thing we have to fear, is Fear Itself." With those opening words as a new President to a nation living in the midst of a great depression he wanted to begin on a note of Hope. Hope is the most needed virtue at this moment of the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. How can we live in hope?

My second thought concerns the suspension of both Sunday and weekday Masses, and the State of Emergency declared by our health experts, elected officials, and our Bishops. It is universally accepted that communal interaction must be greatly limited if we are to hold down the spread, and shorten the duration of this pandemic. It is a difficult inconvenience not to be able to attend Mass and engage in various religious and parish activities (as well as school activities, restaurants, malls, theaters, and sporting events, etc. and countless other public activities which we have taken for granted). Let us then focus on our personal and private prayer and devotions. It might possibly be a blessing that this pandemic has struck during Lent when we are supposed to be involved in greater prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. One of my daily devotions for the past 15 years is praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet. In the past I have prayed for many various needs. Starting this week, my daily chaplet is for the end of the pandemic, and for its victims. I would like to propose that you concentrate and make a stronger effort in your various prayers and devotions to pray daily for the end of this pandemic. Another devotion that first Pope Francis proposed, and Bishop William Joensen is promoting is a special day for praying, fasting, and abstinence for the end of this pandemic. Pope Francis proposes this Wednesday, March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation. The Bishop has suggested this Friday, March 27, or any other day which is convenient for you. This is voluntary, not mandatory or obligatory. Regular, faithful prayer increases hope.

I have received some emails suggesting that we have Eucharistic Adoration or some other public Lenten devotions. In normal times I would say yes, but this is far from normal. The simple reason I can't offer these devotions is precisely because they are public/communal practices involving multiple people, and this will promote public spread of the virus, not the containment. St. Michael's Church is open daily, and will remain open daily, unless there would be a rapid rise in numbers of Covid-19 cases in Shelby County (thankfully as of now March 20, there are no cases) then I will have to close the church. Please feel free to come to the church and pray and use the Eucharistic Chapel for devotion, but only one person in the chapel at all times due to the tight, and close proximity of people, and please respect the six foot space distance between people in the church.

Please remember to keep in your prayers those who have died, including Irene Reischl, sister of Thelma Nelson; Richard Schwarte of our parish; and Roland Wegner whose Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated March 16, 2020.

We also ask that you continue to pray for the sick of our parish and all who have been made ill with COVID 19. We especially pray for: Connie Coenen Alexander, Jennifer Anderson, Wayne Broeckelman, Gay Burgod, Leslie Evans, Charley Falkena, Kelly Gaer, Verle Greer, Danielle Keninger, Gary Kenkel, Virginia Kruse, Charlotte Leinen, Maria Celina D. C. Marcon & Helio Marcon (parents of Ana Gil) Betty Markham, Bonnie Peterson, Tami Rueschenberg, Randy Smith, Phil Speck, Bernard Stein, Carol Thompson, Travis, Mildred Vandenberg, and Fr. Glen Wilwerding.

My final thought is that this pandemic, like all the pandemics in human history, will one day come to an end. Humanity has survived past pandemics and we will survive this one as well. Please obey the health experts, elected officials, and our Bishops in limiting public contact and the spreading of this virus. Remain strong in Faith, God is helping us to overcome this pandemic. Strong in Love, together in our love for neighbor we can help limit the spread of this virus. And finally, once again, strong in Hope, because with all bad things in life something good and positive can and will come out of this experience. Someone once said, "Where there is hope, there is life." Stay healthy!

God Bless You,

Fr. John Frost