

March 17, 2020

UPDATED MESSAGE FROM FATHER JOE DIERMEIER, PASTOR:

The status of the COVID-19 virus has changed since my last weekend message. Governor Evers, our Wisconsin governor, has issued new legislation which has influenced some decisions that Bishop Callahan has made in order to comply with the secular legislation. I will address them along with a couple of my own thoughts. The bottom line in all of this is for us to act with charity and concern – and to act in a responsible manner to the issues related to the virus.

Governor Evers has mandated that no public gathering of more than fifty (50) people should occur at the present time. Because of this, Bishop Callahan has stated that all Masses in the Diocese of La Crosse will be cancelled beginning on March 20. Therefore, our last public Mass here at St. Mary's will be on Thursday, March 19, the feast of St. Joseph. Our Diocese of La Crosse is placed under the patronage of St. Joseph and so this is a fitting feast day for us to celebrate. St. Joseph is also the patron of the universal Church – and many Catholics are placing the entire Church under his protection at this time. I would suggest that we do the same in our personal prayer.

Funerals, weddings and baptisms will continue but again, we are to make every effort to keep the public gathering to 50 people or less.

The church building will remain open in the daytime hours for private prayer. The Adoration Chapel will also continue with its regular hours where adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament will be available. While public Masses will be cancelled for a period of time, private prayer and adoration of Our Lord will continue. As sad as this is and as painful as it will be for some not to attend the Holy Mass as we normally celebrate it, we can hope and pray that the Lord will bring about something good resulting from this.

On most weekdays we have 50 people or less who gather for the daily Mass. Although we will not celebrate a public Mass for the time being, the rosary will still be prayed at 7:30 followed by Holy Communion and prayer for those who wish to receive Our Lord in the sacrament. This will occur from Monday through Saturday morning. If the gathering exceeds 50 persons, then we will have a second service to accommodate those who have come on any given weekday morning.

We cannot offer a weekend public Mass but we want to make sure that those who wish to receive Jesus in Holy Communion are provided with the opportunity. For this coming weekend we will make provision for those who desire to receive Holy Communion on Saturday at 4:00 and again on Sunday at 8:00, at 9:00, at 10:00, and at 11:00. If you come on the weekend at any of these times, I will have the Blessed Sacrament exposed so that you can adore the Lord and seek His continued help through this time. If you see that there are 50 people already in church, please

observe the Governor's mandate and refrain from entering. Those in the church are to remember that social distancing is the key phrase these days.

Confessions will be available upon request. I mentioned last weekend that just as we are concerned about our bodies due to the coronavirus, so we should be equally if not more concerned about our souls. Our bodies will eventually die; our souls are eternal and the promise of spending eternity with God should be our dearest desire. I will try to accommodate offering the sacrament of confession as much as possible during these days of Lent. Also, if anyone believes that his or her soul contains mortal sin, please avail yourself of the sacrament of confession. Remember the saying, "Confession is good for the soul."

Bishop Callahan has indicated that the cancellation of public Masses will be from March 20 until May 1 which is the feast of St. Joseph the Workman and after whom our diocesan cathedral is named. Bishop Callahan did indicate that the May 1<sup>st</sup> date is tentative because something could occur to either shorten or lengthen the period of time during which public Masses are cancelled. I will be corresponding with you through the parish and school website and in the bulletin as time progresses. We will be looking at various events like First Holy Communion, etc., which may or may not have to be postponed. We will keep you informed in due time. Please continue to check the bulletin racks of church for continued updates or you will find them also on the parish / school website.

If I could make a suggestion for those who would like to continue growing in your faith during these days, please avail yourselves of the CDs at the entrance of the church or in the Adoration Chapel library. Also, a very good website to check is the KofC.org (Knights of Columbus website). You will find several short videos in a series entitled INTO THE BREACH. I found them to be spiritually enriching and although they are primarily for men, I think that women may find them enlightening as well. Also, I was informed that Bishop Barron from Word on Fire will offer daily Mass online. The website is <https://www.wordonfire.org/daily-mass>.

What about your monetary contribution to the parish? Please either send it through the mail to the attention of Jen Switlick, our parish secretary, or give your envelope to whomever is offering Holy Communion at the Saturday and Sunday times that were listed (either to Deacon Bryan, Deacon John or me).

Please, let's keep one another in prayer. I will continue to offer a private Mass each day. First and foremost I will offer those Masses for our parish family and for the needs of all who are affected by the coronavirus.

Trust in Jesus who is leading us – and continue to call upon Our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph and the litany of saints who are interceding for us at this time. God bless.