

May 15, 2020

Dear Saint Michael parishioners,

I hope this finds well. This is a top-ten day—on the feast of Saint Isidore the Farmer, no less. The following is the latest from Saint Michael parish. I want to reiterate our practices for Mass this weekend. Much of this protocol has been implemented during daily Masses this week, which seem to have worked pretty well.

1. **Publicly-attended Masses.** Saint Michael parish resumed daily Masses May 11 at 7:00 A.M. and 5:30 P.M. and will celebrate weekend Masses on Saturday at 5:00 P.M. and Sunday at 8:00 A.M. and 11:10 A.M. All Masses will be in the gym. For the next several weeks, we will also continue to live stream the 8:15 A.M. daily Mass and 9:30 A.M. Sunday Mass. I ask that there be no one in attendance for the live-streamed Masses so we can control the setting for taping.
2. You may either come in through the main doors on the use of the building or the doors in the north side of the gym. The north entrance may be easier for our older parishioners or those with special mobility needs. Just a reminder that we have an elevator to assist in getting to the gym.
3. We will observe all safety measures and guidelines to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. That is, chairs are set six feet apart, and if you have a mask, please wear it, at least during Mass. We will have masks available for those who do not have one. Chairs will be sanitized after each Mass. Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the gym and building. Please use hand sanitizer as you come into and leave the gym, as well as just before you receive Communion. Tape has been applied to the main aisle at six-foot intervals for parishioners approaching Communion. Either Father Schwenka or I will provide more details before each Mass. I ask that for the duration, all parishioners receive Communion in the hand.
4. In addition, Archbishop George Lucas, the apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Lincoln, is continuing to suspend the obligation for Catholics to attend Mass in the short term. What that means for all Catholics is, the obligation to attend Mass continues to be suspended until further notice; thus, for now you are not bound to attend Mass but are invited and certainly welcome. It is your choice. Confessions will be heard one half hour before each weekend Mass in the bell tower.

Again, what this means is that the obligation to attend Mass remains suspended, but all parishioners who wish to are invited and welcome to join us for Mass. **Once again I emphasize, please use your judgment and the following guidelines in determining your attendance at Mass.**

5. **Ascension Thursday.** Masses for Ascension Thursday are scheduled this week for Wednesday, May 20, and Thursday, May 21. However, for this year, Ascension Thursday is not a holy day of obligation.

#### **Guidelines and Safety Measures for Parishioners During Mass**

The attendance at and celebration of Mass will follow appropriate behaviors and guidelines for containing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. We will do everything that we can to make sure that all surfaces, chairs, door handles, hand railings, etc. are cleaned and sanitized regularly. Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the parish.

These guidelines **are subject to change in the event of new instructions from local or state health officials and the Office of the Bishop.** If anything changes from the dates I have communicated, I will let you know as soon as possible.

#### **General Guidelines:**

- The dispensation from the Sunday and Holy Day obligation remains in place.
- Gatherings are limited to the Sacred Liturgy—Mass and other sacraments, so all forms of public liturgies in churches are permitted.
- **All other parish and school activities remain restricted**, including after-Mass gatherings such as coffee and rolls, funeral luncheons, wedding receptions, etc. The Archbishop has restricted outdoor Masses.

#### **Those Who are Encouraged to Stay Home:**

- The sick
- The elderly
- People with underlying medical conditions
- Family members who live with elderly people or those who are at risk
- People who have access to those at risk in nursing institutions
- People who have upper respiratory or flu like symptoms
- People who live with someone with upper respiratory or flu like symptoms
- People with COVID-19 or live with someone with COVID-19
- People who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19

#### **Requested “Containment Practices” for those Attending Mass:**

- Family members may sit together.
- Rows have been spaced six-feet apart.
- Cough in your sleeve.
- Place your contribution envelope in the basket provided as you enter or exit the church. The ushers will not “take up the collection” during Mass.
- No hand holding during the “Our Father.”
- Sign of Peace is omitted.
- Form a single file line with six-foot intervals when processing forward to receive Holy Communion.
- Follow the instructions of the ushers.
- Avoid gathering in the vestibule or near the doors of the church following Mass.

6. **First Communion and Confirmation.** As you know, both of these sacraments have been postponed. When details for rescheduling these Masses are available, we will convey them to you and try to determine what the best day(s) and time would be to schedule each of these sacraments. When circumstances allow, we are considering a “Week of Celebration” sometime during the summer to celebrate First Communion and Confirmation and eighth grade and high school graduations. Very possibly, we will arrange these celebrations over several days and Masses to accommodate as many people as possible. More details to come as they become available.

7. **Livestreamed Mass, Devotions, and Commentary.**

For the next several weeks, we will continue to live-stream Mass for those who choose not to attend Mass. Father Schwenka, Deacon Sasse, Christian Schwenka, and Joe Allen continue to do a

very, very fine job of capturing and conveying daily and Sunday Masses and *Coffee-N-Clerics*. The broadcasts just keep getting better and better. Seminarians Joe Allen and Christian Schwenka will live with us until the end of the summer.

8. **Father Sasse's Ordination.** Deacon Alec Sasse, a Saint Michael parishioner, will be ordained a priest Saturday, May 23. He is the first parishioner in Saint Michael's 111-year history to be ordained a priest. Because of Covid 19, attendance at the ordinations this year is by invitation only so people can spread out. Most of these six men being ordained can only invite their immediate families. If you wish to give Father Sasse a card or a gift for his ordination, you may either drop it in the collection basket or bring it by the parish office during the day. Father Sasse will celebrate all weekend Masses here at Saint Michael parish weekend of May 30/31.
9. **Charity and Stewardship Appeal.** Parish response to the annual Bishop's Charity and Stewardship Appeal has been unusually strong. I am so very grateful to all of you who have made a pledge. Revenue from this annual appeal is necessary for the parish's operations. If you believe this appeal and St. Michael parish worthy of your support, I humbly ask you consider helping me by making a pledge to the annual Bishop's Charity and Stewardship Appeal.
10. If any of our young people want to write me letters or draw pictures or write poems or stories about their experiences during this time, please encourage them to send them to me, and I will write them back: Fr. Kenneth Borowiak, St. Michael Parish, 9101 South 78<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68516.
11. Please know too about our sincerest appreciation for all of your expressions of support, prayer, and offers of help us all of the food that so many of you brought to the rectory. We are very grateful. Please be assured of our prayers for you. If there is anything that we can do for you, please let us know at your convenience. [frborowiak@cdolinc.net](mailto:frborowiak@cdolinc.net) or 402-525-2566.

The attached photos illustrate some of the practices that were following for the celebration of Mass in the gym.

**Chairs**—St. Michael CFO, Bill Graeve, sprays sanitizer on the chairs after the celebration of Mass.



**Masks and Hand Sanitizer**—Father Kipper prepares the gifts for Mass while wearing a face mask.



Hand sanitizer is available at the entrance of the gym, as well as at a table near the altar for use just before receiving Communion.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this communication.

Father Borowiak