



Sacred Heart Catholic Church

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March 14, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

May the peace of Christ be with you. Yesterday we received guidance from Bishop Rhoades with the [Current Diocesan Directives Regarding COVID-19](#). We also consulted the [Steps to Protect Public from COVID-19](#) published by Governor Holcomb this week. Regardless of one's personal opinion of the matter it is clear this must be taken seriously, and we have a duty to cooperate in help prevent the spread of the coronavirus so that medical facilities can keep up with the number of patients for COVID-19 and other medical needs.

Guided by the above directives, and after conversation with some of our office and school staff, the following is in immediate effect at Sacred Heart for at least the next three weeks (subject to change) at which point we will re-evaluate and publish new guidelines:

- Mass and Confession schedule will remain the same. Please consult the bulletin for details.
- An extra Mass will be celebrated on Sunday at 5:00 PM in order to thin out attendance at the other three Masses.
- We are working to providing live-stream to those who remain at home. This will also make it possible to stream into the gym and split between there and the church. This is pending.
- The Parish Penance service on March 31st has been cancelled. One of the precepts of the Church is to “confess your sins at least once a year.” If you have not confessed in a year then please check the schedule of regular confessions or email the office to make an appointment, church@sacredheart-warsaw.org
- Eucharistic Adoration will continue on Wednesdays but will be moved from the chapel to the church. Again, please keep distance from others.
- Sacred Heart School is closed until April 3. Families with children in the school will receive updates through our principal, Mr. Mike McClain. The teachers are excited to tackle the challenge of using e-learning to continue building relationships, getting the highest student achievement, and create the greatest culture & climate.
- Religious Education, RCIA and all extracurricular activities (bible studies, small groups, etc) are cancelled for the next three weeks. Families will receive a packet soon with information to continue faith formation from home, as well as good ways to spend the extra time at home growing in Christian charity.
- Parish office will be closed for three weeks. Staff will continue to work from home and are available through email.

What to expect at Mass on Sunday:

- Sets of pews have been blocked off for “social distancing” of about 6 ft between people. Please respect these signs and keep distance from others in the pew.
- The collection basket will not be passed around. Instead a greeter will stand with the basket before and after Mass so that you may still make an offering. Online giving is also encouraged.
- Limited liturgical ministers. There will be no altar servers, so that they do not wear a vestment that may have been contaminated.
- Hymnals have been removed to prevent spread of the virus.
- I will give more instruction on the care needed by everyone receiving Holy Communion, but either form of reception is still permitted; in the hand or on the tongue. Diocesan Directives note that both forms of reception have a risk of contamination. I am very well practiced in distributing communion without contact and therefore feel it best that myself and only one Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC) distribute communion.
- Holy Communion will only be distributed by myself and one (EMHC). I will distribute to both lines approaching by the center, while the EMHC will distribute to the two sections. Please be patient.
- Please **do not** congregate in the gathering space after Mass so that all may keep “social distance.” The weather has been nice and it would be appreciated if any socializing would take place outside.

All of the guidance and instruction that we have received makes a serious note that **the coronavirus poses a grave threat to anyone 60 years or older, and/or with compromised immunity** (including heart or respiratory issues, diabetes, etc.). If you fit this description, please seriously consider staying home. If you have a family member or good friend who fits this description please encourage them to stay home to avoid any spread of the virus.

Also, **anyone who has any symptoms of the flu or runs any kind of a fever should stay home**. Those with a fever should stay home until they are 24 hours fever free without medication.

This is why Bishop Rhoades has announced that...

“all Catholics in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, beginning the weekend of March 15 and continuing through March 29.”

This situation is temporary, please cooperate so as to give health care providers a chance to combat this virus. There may be other changes that happen in the coming weeks and I will do my best to communicate this as soon as possible.

Finally, please pray for all suffering from the coronavirus and any illness at all.

St. Roch, pray for us!

In Christ,

Fr. Jonathan Norton