

Fr. Thomas M. Niehaus

*Most Holy Redeemer Parish
206 Vine Avenue W.
Montgomery, MN 56069*

*St. Canice Campus
183 Maple Street
Kilkenny, MN 56052*

*St. Patrick Parish
7525 Dodd Road
Faribault, MN 56021*

June 3, 2020

Dear Parishioner,

As we enter into the summer months, we continue to marvel at the blessings offered to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. No one could have guessed at how all aspects of life would be upended by the COVID-19/Coronavirus, especially the practice of our Catholic Faith. I thank God for your faithfulness through prayer, generosity in supporting the mission of our parishes, and patience with each step of this process, which truly is unprecedented in human history.

As your parish priest here at Most Holy Redeemer/St. Canice and St. Patrick, I have been praying for our families daily, and long for the day when we can all attend the Holy Mass together as a family of faith in our area churches. As you know the obligation to attend Sunday Mass in person is still suspended, but the obligation to keep holy the Lord's Day is still obligatory, whether you attend a parking lot Mass, or watch Mass online/TV or listen to Mass on the radio. I encourage you to take the time you need to pray each day and spend some time sharing your heart with Jesus and asking Mary to intercede for your intentions. We continue to pray for the sick and dying as well as for our health care workers who help them.

Starting on May 25, 2020 it is now possible to attend Mass in our area churches, with up to 25% capacity. With the lifting of certain restrictions on public worship the following best practices are to be followed as it pertains to attending Mass:

- Use common sense
- If you are sick stay home
- If you are over the age of 65 and concerned stay home
- If you have underlying medical conditions stay home
- Use hand sanitizer
- If you need to wear a mask or gloves, wear them
- Practice social distancing
- Disinfect your surroundings often

An inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 exists anywhere people are present. This is an extremely contagious virus that can lead to severe illness and death. According to the CDC and MDH our senior citizens and those with underlying medical conditions are the most vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19. Most Holy Redeemer/St. Canice and St. Patrick Churches have taken steps to implement precautionary cleaning, disinfecting, sectioning off parts of the churches, implementing social distancing to help reduce the risk of exposure. However, Most Holy Redeemer/St. Canice and St. Patrick cannot guarantee that those who visit the churches are 100% safe from exposure to COVID-19. Therefore, when one comes to attending Mass you do so at your own risk.

We love our retired priests, yet during this time we need to recognize that most of the priests who are age 65 and older or who have serious health conditions cannot and should not be doing much in the way of public ministry. Our area Mass schedule up until March was dependent upon weekend help, especially from retired priests. There was already strong evidence in our area parishes of hardship in trying to find weekend help from the few retired priests willing to come out to our parishes for six Masses that were attended at about 25% capacity of our area churches. This cluster of parishes can easily support three weekend Mass times to serve the needs of the people here. On Friday May 22, 2020 Archbishop Hebda said he would back up pastors in our decision to formulate Mass schedules that meet the needs of the people and will not lead to burnout for priests during this time of COVID-19 and beyond.

Based on my observations while serving in the midst of the people here, I believe that working toward a restructuring of the parish cluster Mass schedule at this time would bring about the most good for current and future pastors and bring a lasting stability to the people of this area. The current COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic has already caused greater changes to be made to individuals, families, schools, workplaces, sports, business owners and employees, it would be naive to think that no changes could ever happen to our area churches. I share these topics with you in love and also with the responsibility of a spiritual father. I do not see this situation changing much during the coming months until a Coronavirus vaccine is found. Therefore the following weekend Mass schedule will be in force indefinitely for our Most Holy Redeemer/St. Canice and St. Patrick Area Cluster of parishes:

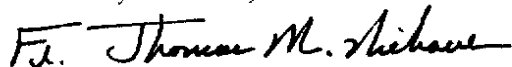
First Saturday 8:30 am St. Canice – Kilkenny, MN (Confession & Adoration)
Saturday 5:00 pm Most Holy Redeemer – Montgomery, MN (No Communion)
Sunday 8:30 am Most Holy Redeemer – Montgomery, MN (Livestreamed)
Sunday 10:00 am St. Patrick – Shieldsville, MN (Outdoors & Livestreamed)

The following topics concerning pastoral planning will continue to be discussed among our area leadership at our summer meetings as we continue to formulate our plans for serving the people of the Most Holy Redeemer/St. Canice and St. Patrick area:

- Outreach to the elderly and homebound in the time of Coronavirus
- Communication challenges and changes
- Support for Most Holy Redeemer School during COVID-19
- St. Canice and other area parishes achieving Oratory Status
- Southern Minnesota Lakes Region & summer Mass attendance increase at St. Patrick
- Ongoing efforts of safe-environment training & awareness for parish staff and volunteers

Please be assured of my continued daily prayers for your spiritual protection, safety, well-being, and healing during this time. As we find in the Letter to the Hebrews, “Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who is the leader and perfecter of faith (12:2).”

Sincerely in Christ,



Fr. Thomas M. Niehaus