



St. Joseph Church

P.O. Box 220
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Atkinson, NE 68713
402/925-2122

May 26, 2020

Dear St. Joseph Parish Family,

These past several weeks have not been easy as we have adjusted to life under the threat of COVID-19. As the Church, we have cooperated with the State in helping to keep people safe and to prevent a spike in hospitalizations that would overwhelm the healthcare system. Despite our physical separation from one another, we are confident of our spiritual communion. Nevertheless, we look forward to the day when we will be able to worship together again and to receive the Sacraments. Nothing less than actual reception of Holy Communion in the context of the Mass that is both the source and summit of Christ's abundant life can allow us to sigh and say, "**Ah, home at last!**"

On May 4th, new health directives went into effect regarding how churches may operate during this time of caution. Keep in mind that every parish is different and faces its own unique challenges in getting ready to welcome back parishioners under the new guidelines. This means that not every parish will be opening its doors on the same day. Please be patient over the course of the coming weeks as each parish prepares itself to reopen. The faithful are asked during these weeks of reopening *not to travel between towns and parishes to attend Mass* so that no church or parish is inundated with unexpected numbers.

We at the Catholic Parishes of Western Holt and Boyd Counties plan to resume Masses on Saturday, May 30th and Sunday, May 31st, the great Feast of Pentecost. In order to do this in the most responsible way, we need everyone's cooperation. Please be aware of the following policies and procedures that will govern our behavior the next several weeks.

MASS OBLIGATION DISPENSED

Despite the resumption of Masses, the obligation to attend Sunday and Holy Day Masses continues to be dispensed by Archbishop Lucas until further notice. Those especially encouraged to stay at home are the following: **the elderly, younger children, those with underlying medical conditions, those accessing hospitals, nursing institutions and care centers, those showing any signs of illness, and those who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.**

*Building and supporting this
part of God's family.*

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LIVESTREAMING SCHEDULE

The following liturgies will be livestreamed on our Facebook page and on YouTube until further notice. (You do not need to have a Facebook account to watch them—simply visit our Facebook page accessed from our website's homepage. You may need to reload it until the event goes live.) The livestreams schedule for the foreseeable future is as follows:

- Sunday Mass will be at 9:00 a.m.
- Daily Masses:
 - Tuesday: 5:15 p.m.
 - Wednesday: 5:15 p.m.
 - Thursday: 7:00 a.m.
 - Friday: 7:00 a.m.
- Saturday: 5:00 p.m. (Mass of Anticipation)

DAILY MASSES & CONFESSIONS

Daily Mass at **St. Joseph's of Atkinson** will be offered this week, Wednesday & Friday at 8:15 a.m. in the church and will be open to the faithful to attend. Confessions will be held 30 minutes before each weekend Mass or by appointment.

SUNDAY MASSES

Sunday Masses will resume next weekend, May 30-31, according to the usual schedule: Sunday at 8:30 a.m. Depending on attendance, this schedule may be adjusted as we go forward.

SOCIAL DISTANCING AT CHURCH

Until further notice, only every 3rd pew in church will be utilized for seating. Only members of a single household may sit together in the same pew/row. Seating should be arranged such that six feet of distance can be maintained between households. Children should stay with their families. At the conclusion of Mass, each pew/row will be released one-by-one. People should refrain from socializing indoors before and after Masses. Socializing outdoors after Mass is also discouraged as it would violate the rule of 10 or less people mandated by the current Directed Health Measure.

SEATING FOR MASS

Because of strict seating restrictions, all attendees will be seated by ushers as they arrive: from the front of church to the back. Attendees will not get to choose where they sit. We encourage all attendees to be in their seats at least five minutes before Mass begins. With social distancing in place, we can accommodate 108 individuals in church.

FACE MASKS IN CHURCH

We will require that **everyone wear a face mask at Mass**. However, children under 6 years of age will be exempt from wearing a mask. If you choose to wear protective gloves, they must be removed prior to receiving Communion on the hand.

RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

For Holy Communion, we will receive only the Body of Christ. Communion ministers will wash their hands with soap and water immediately prior to the start of Mass and will use hand sanitizer before and after distributing Communion. During this time, all the faithful are encouraged to receive Communion on the hand. Masks should be lowered when you are the next person in line to receive Communion. Gloves, if worn by the communicant, must be removed in order to

receive the Host in the hand. Those who choose to receive on the tongue are asked to present themselves at the end of the Communion line. Communicants, unless part of the same household, must keep six feet away from other communicants while in line.

MISSALETTES

The missalettes have been removed from church and will not be used. The Scripture Readings will not be printed. If you want to follow along with the Readings, please bring your own printed publication (e.g., *Magnificat*), missal, or mobile app to do so. Additionally, we will not have congregational singing at this time.

SINGING

For the immediate future we will not sing the Mass parts or have congregational singing. Music may be by accompanist and cantor or simply instrumental.

OFFERTORY PROCEDURES

The bread and wine will not be brought forward from the assembly at offertory. We will not pass the basket in church, and the children's collection will not be taken up. Upon arriving or leaving Mass, you may drop your envelope into the newly constructed collection box, located near the main entrance. Likewise, you may make your offering online or via electronic bank-to-bank transfer.

DISINFECTING AFTER MASSES

After each Mass, door handles, pews/chairs, and bathrooms will be wiped down with disinfectant. Because of this, parishioners are asked not to linger or visit with each other in the building before or after Masses.

Thank you for your patience as we adjust to this "new normal". As things change, we will continue to communicate to you from the parish office. If you have an email address, please share it with the parish office so we can communicate with you more readily. Those with no email address in our database will receive a letter in the mail.

We know that there will most likely be mistakes, challenges, and frustrations. Please be patient and kind as we do our best to provide a safe and prayerful environment for you to experience the presence of Jesus Christ. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit, the spirit of love and life, will come down upon our parish and fill us with renewed life and strength.

With every good wish I am, as always ...

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernard G. Starman", written over a horizontal line.

Rev. Bernard G. Starman,
Pastor