

Ss. Peter & Paul Catholic Church, Atlantic

St. Mary's Catholic Church, Anita

600 Locust Street, Atlantic IA 50022

March 18, 2020

My Dear People,

Yesterday we received guidance from Bishop Joensen as we move forward as a community together through these challenging days. Our sense of “together” will be different. There is no doubt about that. However, I firmly believe now, more than ever, it is precisely our sense of community which will carry us through these days. That sense of community will be somewhat reshaped and perhaps tested in the coming days as we seek to follow the protocols in place from the Diocese and local officials. However, I am confident we can find new and creative ways to join together, even and especially through prayer for one another. In this letter, I wish to outline exactly what our common life together will look like in the coming days. Many of you received these directives straight from the Bishop's office, but as your pastor, I feel it is fitting you hear them from me as well. Parts of what I have to tell you will seem drastic. We are living in days unseen in the lifetime of nearly anyone alive; days unseen in Iowa since the flu epidemics of some 102-103 years ago. None the less, we will prevail, and we shall be gathered together again physically. The following directives, as received from Bishop Joensen are in place now and until further notice.

- All Masses, liturgies, and public gatherings for prayer are suspended. I continue to pray for you, and I beg you to continue to pray for me and one another. I will continue to celebrate Mass for your intentions. Sunday Mass will be livestreamed at 10:30 via KJAN TV and then available on demand via KJAN's website: (<http://www.kjan.com/index.php/kjan-video-network/kjan-tv-2>)
- All parish activities are cancelled. This includes parish sponsored activities taking place off campus; parish activities on campus at the parish center, church, office, or rectory, and non-parish events using our space. A non-exhaustive list of cancelled events would include: Knights of Columbus & CCW meetings, Sewing Circle, Community Dinners, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, Fish Fries, Faith Formation, After School Program. The parish center is closed and no person should enter without explicit permission from the pastor.
- Quoting from the Bishop's directives, “Funeral Masses may be celebrated with less than 10 persons present.” This means that a funeral Mass will be limited to immediate family. I am ready and willing to work and walk with with any family that should find themselves needing to commend a loved one home to the Lord. It may be that we need to plan a memorial Mass and remembrance at a later date, even if interment happens on a more immediate basis.
- The same limitation to nuptial (wedding) Masses applies: no more than 10 people. At this juncture, we have no wedding Masses scheduled in either parish until summer.
- Communion for the gravely ill and dying remains available; please call the parish office or rectory. Other sacraments (baptism, anointing) remain available by appointment.

How are we going to move forward together? We will continue to be a community united in faith, prayer, and hope. Our community life will look different. But it will go on. Here is what we are planning for the days ahead.

- The parish churches will remain open for prayer from roughly 8:30 AM-5:30 PM every day. Please try and keep a limit to no more than 10 persons in the church at any one time, and spread out in the body of the church as much as possible.
- Confession remains available.
  - In Atlantic: Beginning Wednesday, March 18, I will be available daily for confessions from 12:00 PM-1:00 PM and again 4:30 PM-5:30 PM with the exception of Thursday when confessions will be 12:00 PM-1:00 PM only. If the weather cooperates, confessions will be heard on the sidewalk between the Church and the Rectory behind a screen, in case of rain, confessions will be heard inside the main body of the Church. I ask you to please keep as much distance as possible between each other.
  - In Anita: I will be available Thursdays from 4:30 PM-5:30 PM. Confessions will be heard exclusively behind a screen, and I ask you to please keep as much distance as possible between each other.
- No matter where you are, I invite you at 3:00 PM every day, to join together spiritually in praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Guidance on this prayer will be available on our parish website and Facebook page.
- Speaking of which: Please connect with us via Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/sspeterpaulandmary/>) and regularly check our parish website (<https://www.sspeterpaulandmary.org/>). Now more than ever, these electronic means of gathering will become important for us! I hope to post an evening video with prayers, thoughts, and updates on both the Facebook page and the website each day.
- Stay tuned for plans regarding Holy Week, the Sacred Triduum, and even events and liturgies beyond. It is too soon to say whether or not these, or events scheduled further out such as First Communion and Senior Mass will take place as scheduled. I promise you, as soon as we know, you will know.
- I will be in the parish office every day from 9 AM-11:30 PM and again 2:00 PM-4:00 PM. *Please only come to the parish office if you have urgent business that cannot be handled via the phone or email.*

Our parish finance council will meet in the coming days. Overall, we are in good shape, thanks to your generosity, but we are depending on you, just as you depend on us for the sacraments and pastoral care. You continue to humble me with your support and goodness. We will be setting up a secure drop box this week where you can leave tithing and support. Likewise, you may mail or drop tithing by the office; we ask that you leave your tithing on the little table just inside the door. Thank you for your courageous support.

Friends- these are unprecedented days. We must be united and firmly joined together in support, prayer, and common bonds to the same degree in which we now find ourselves physically distant from one another. My prayers are with you and I beg for your prayers in return.

In the Lord,

Fr. Trevor Chicoine

Pastor: Ss Peter & Paul, Atlantic & St. Mary's, Anita