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March 14, 2020

Dear parishioners of St. Charles and St. Patrick,

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with Thanksgiving, present your requests to God. -Philippians 4:6

In the midst of varying news reports and evolving advice concerning the spread of COVID19 (Coronavirus), our parish communities are attempting to safeguard public health while not overreacting, making decisions with prudence and appropriate caution at this challenging moment in history. The following decisions result from directives from the Office of the Bishop, the CDC, Governor Holcomb's office, and protocols established by local school systems and public health officials.

- 1) Bishop Doherty is dispensing all Catholics within the diocese from the Sunday Mass obligation until further notice, but ***public Masses will still be celebrated***. Anyone who is sick or at a higher risk of contracting the virus is especially advised to stay at home. In those cases, viewing televised/internet Masses and praying along as a family is encouraged.
- 2) ***Confession opportunities will still be offered***, but will be done "behind the screen," rather than face-to-face.
- 3) ***Religious education classes have been cancelled*** (effective immediately) until Palm Sunday (4/5), when the situation will be reevaluated. Confirmation classes are also cancelled. This is in accord with the Benton County School Corporation's closure and the diocesan policy.
- 4) ***The Passion of the Christ*** movie showing at the Fowler Theater on Sunday at 2pm will remain as scheduled, as it has less than 200 seats. The diocesan directive to cancel all parish "events" begins Monday, March 16.
- 5) ***The Knights of the Columbus St. Patrick's Day dinner*** on Tuesday, March 17th, will be cancelled.
- 6) As our diocese advises that "parish meetings and small gatherings may continue unless further recommendations are issued by the local health department," ***we will still hold RCIA class, Seminarian Matt's Lenten Prayer Series on Wednesdays, and the young adult small group meetings***, mainly due to the small nature of these meetings. As was mentioned above, anyone who is sick or at a higher risk of contracting the virus is especially advised to stay at home.

Rather than living in fear of the virus or allowing frustration and skepticism to harden our hearts, our Catholic faith presses us to pray for one another, care for one another, and not let selfishness prevent resources from going to those who need them most.

Because there will be a much higher demand in the coming weeks, ***there will be a second collection for the Benton County Food-Coop this weekend***. Let's keep the poor close to our hearts.

May God bless you for your faith and trust in Him!
Under the Mercy,
Father Haan