



NATIVITY OF OUR LORD CATHOLIC CHURCH

Friday, March 13, 2020

Dear Members of our Nativity of Our Lord community,

Our pastor Fr. Patrick Hipwell and school principal Kate Wollan met with other leading decision-makers on the parish staff yesterday to discuss the best way forward as the coronavirus continues to spread closer to home.

The well-being of our community members is our number one priority, and in particular the most vulnerable. Consequently, we feel compelled to act in accord with our leadership at the Archdiocesan level — in consultation with relevant expert recommendations in the medical field — to help ensure the safety of those under our leadership.

There is still, of course, much that is unclear about the threat that the new coronavirus poses (see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html>). Even still, we find it prudent, in the spirit of caution, to adjust our upcoming schedule and enact some temporary changes to our protocol.

Event Cancellations

Between now and Palm Sunday, April 5 we have decided to suspend all non-essential Nativity events which potentially reach 50 or more attendees, among other considerations (food service, close proximity, vulnerable population, et al.) At this time, **all liturgies will proceed as scheduled** (Masses, Confessions, Stations, et al.), and **school and faith formation classes will maintain their regular schedule** moving forward.

The following events have been suspended (some potentially to be rescheduled later):

- Both Fish Fry events - March 13 & April 3
- Donut Sunday - March 15
- Honor Roll Breakfast - March 18
- Parent Education Meetings on Belonging and Inclusion - March 23 & 30
- Family Service Morning - March 28
- Grandpa and Lucy Production - March 29
- NELC Grandparents Day - April 1
- 5th Grade Concert - April 2
- First Friday Fellowship - April 3
- School Field Trips between March 13 and April 3

Event Planning Restrictions

Similarly, we are asking that no new Nativity events be planned between now and April 5 which would potentially reach 50 attendees without expressed consent from the parish or school staff leadership. **We are suspending hosting funeral luncheons** on-site and will work with families on alternatives.

Generally speaking, events which will not approach 50 attendees may proceed, but please **encourage invitees, group members et al. to stay home if they feel ill or even uncomfortable** with attending. If you would like to

plan an event in the near future which would potentially reach 50 attendees, please contact Tim Huberty at the parish office (info@nativity-mn.org or 651-696-5401) before proceeding.

Liturgical Modifications

At this time, **the Archdiocese is not requiring parishes to modify their liturgical practices.** If that changes, we will certainly notify you. That said, pastors may in prudence enact modifications for the well-being of their parishioners. **This led Fr. Patrick to enact the following precautions** already, which will continue indefinitely:

- Sign of Peace and Communion from the Chalice suspended
- Holy water basins emptied
- Increased availability and directions of washing and sanitizing by Eucharistic Ministers
- Increased regularity of washing and sanitizing common areas by maintenance staff

At this time, **we also strongly recommend the following** in our liturgies:

- Stay home if you feel sick or have flu-like symptoms, **especially a fever, cough, or shortness of breath.**
- Avoid hand-holding during the Our Father.
- Receive Communion in the hand as opposed to on the tongue. **If you have a strong preference to receive on the tongue, proceed to a priest for Communion** (not a lay Eucharistic Minister). The priests will also continue to offer gluten-free hosts.
- Avoid making any contact with priests and Eucharistic Ministers during Communion.

Senior Care Visits

Another unfortunate but necessary health precaution — and one outside of our control — is a restriction on Pastoral Care visits to senior care facilities. Please keep our senior parishioners in our thoughts and prayers, especially those who will be without the sacraments for the immediate future, as we do our best to navigate these restrictions and continue to offer care to those in need. **Communion visits to the homebound will continue,** with increased diligence and attention to health and safety.

Archbishop's Sunday Obligation Dispensation

Archbishop Bernard Hebda announced yesterday his decision to dispense all Catholics in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis from their obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice. If the faithful decide that congregating for Sunday Mass would constitute a risk to themselves or others, they have the freedom not to attend. A dispensation is also extended to those who care for the sick. (You may also decide to attend Mass on a weekday instead when assemblies are smaller.)

This is a rare dispensation and a decision the Archbishop said he did not take lightly. His full letter is available at <https://www.archspm.org/covid19> as well as at <https://nativity-mn.org/news/coronavirus>.

For any of our community members who are unable to attend Mass, the Archbishop recommends the following, particularly on Sunday, which remains holy as the Lord's Day:

- Make a "spiritual communion" asking Jesus to enter your heart spiritually, if not physically. A prayer is available at <https://nativity-mn.org/prayers>.
- Watch or listen to Mass online, on TV, or radio (broadcast at 11:00 a.m. on KSTC-TV/45 and 9:00 a.m. on Relevant Radio 1330am).
- Pray the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, or other devotions.

Ongoing Communication

Please refer to <https://nativity-mn.org/news/coronavirus> for parish updates moving forward, along with a list of CDC-recommended everyday preventative measures.

Please also subscribe to our email newsletter (<https://nativity-mn.org/email-newsletter>) if you haven't yet, and updates will also be posted on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/NativityStPaul/>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/NativityStPaul>). Contact Tim at the parish office (info@nativity-mn.org or 651-696-5401) if you'd like to receive a bulletin by mail or help subscribing to our emails or social media.

Refer to <https://www.archspm.org/covid19> for Archdiocesan updates, as well as:

- CDC - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html>
- MDH - <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/>
- WHO - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Solidarity

Please join us in prayer for any and all of those affected by this illness, and that Our Lord may intervene to halt its spread. As the Archbishop says, “God’s providence is allowing this trial during the sacred time of Lent,” and “invites us especially to direct our spiritual exercises to benefit the sick and those caring for them, including the Church’s ministers.”

The Archbishop invites us to join him in **a special day of fasting, abstinence, and prayer** “invoking God’s help in these challenging days for our Archdiocese, our country and the world ...**next Wednesday, March 18, 2020.**” He asks those of us who are strong and healthy to replicate the Ash Wednesday and Good Friday disciplines — and all of us to pray, the rosary in particular — for those who are sick and those who care for them.

Please also remember our budgetary needs during this time. Online giving is available at <https://nativity-mn.org/online-giving>.

Finally, THANK YOU for your patience, understanding, cooperation, and collaboration during this challenging time. May Our Sovereign and Loving Lord, through the intercession of Mary Our Mother, protect and provide for us in this time of need. Amen!

Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick Hipwell, Pastor
Fr. Nick Hagen, Parochial Vicar
Kate Wollan, School Principal
Sandy Kane, Assistant Principal
Patrick Henning, Director of Liturgy and Music
Katie Schaitberger, Director of Faith Formation

May the sick be granted a swift recovery, the medical personnel receive the support they need, and those grieving the loss of loved ones be sustained by the hope of eternal life and the care of the Church. Amen!

— From the Office of Worship, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis