

Pastor's Voice

I am taking this opportunity to clarify the current situation with the COVID 19 outbreak that we are experiencing around the world and to bring some future plans to light. The Diocese of Portland is following the Governor's request to have no more than 10 people at any gathering by stopping all public Masses until further notice. Funeral and wedding Masses are still allowed but are limited to immediate family only. All other church related activities are also canceled including Religious Education, Bible Studies, and all other meetings. During this time, the normal Sunday obligation of Mass attendance, has been lifted by the diocese so not attending Mass on Sunday is not a sin. We are all encouraged to share in the celebration of Liturgy by watching the various Masses that are being broadcast and streamed on television and on social media. We may not be able to gather as community and receive the Eucharist in person, but by watching and listening to his Word, Jesus' graces can come upon us.

The questions of Easter services and the Sacrament of Reconciliation have been raised. Until the Diocese removes the ban on Sunday and weekday Masses, we will not be able to celebrate Liturgy. Since I do not know when this will happen, I can only wait. If this does happen before Holy Week and Easter, then the normal events will happen in their normal locations. This year, Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday services will be in Millinocket and Good Friday and Easter Sunday will be celebrated at each church site as usual. If someone wishes to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, I will be available by appointment to share this wonderful gift with you. For both parishes, St. Benedicts and Christ the Divine Mercy, please call the East Millinocket office at 746-3333 and leave a message and I will get back to you and set up a time and place for Reconciliation. Any other questions you may have can also be directed to there and we will try to get you an answer.

I believe that it is not a coincidence that I am writing this on the Feast of the Annunciation. We are in very scary times, not just in our country, but all around the world. We are feeling isolated, both physically and spiritually, very concerned about the health of ourselves and our loved ones, and very unsure of what the future holds. We need to remember that today's Gospel reading recalls the angel's words to Mary and how she was to be blessed by blessing us with the Savior of the World. Her answer was a very emphatic "YES" followed by an unflinching faith that God would take care of her and see her through this situation that was unfolding. We need to have that same faith! We need to embrace the God that loves us more than we can understand and ask him for his greatest gift, his Peace. We have always had the church buildings to go to and seek God's grace but they are closed now. We need to remember that while we know that God is present in the churches, he is also present in every room in our homes. And we can and should call upon him and continually ask for his grace and peace no matter where we are. So, on this day of Hope, may we too find faith and trust in God and his plan for us and seek his peace in our hearts. God Bless!

Fr. Bruce