

From the Pastor—March 15, 2020

Adoration Schedule Adoration this week in St. Mary's on Wed., March 18, 8:00 – 9:00 p.m. Adoration in St. Joseph's on Thurs., March 19, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Rebecca Kiessling Talk Postponed The Loving Life Coalition of Hamilton County regrettably but in God's providence accepted pro-life speaker Rebecca Kiessling's inability and unwillingness to travel from the Detroit area to be with us on March 14. Rebecca was also scheduled to speak in Seward and Hastings this March 14-15 weekend. Rebecca's not coming was because of the novel coronavirus. Pro-life leaders in Hastings, Seward, and Hamilton County are going to try to re-schedule her to come.

On My Heart It has been placed on my heart that I may have omitted Holy Week services that my predecessors had done. I am speaking of offering two Holy Thursday Masses (one at St. Mary's, one at St. Joseph's) and two Good Friday services of the Lord's Passion (again, one at St. Mary's, one at St. Joseph's). To this end, I need to plan with St. Joseph's leaders for the proper and solemn preparations which are needed. Could I ask you, even a great number of you, to talk with me after our St. Joseph Mass, the special Mass for the Solemnity of St. Joe, this coming Thursday, March 19th? Thank you!

My Take I think it would do me well to write down my thoughts on the coronavirus, and its specific iteration of COVID-19 as a seriously critical illness. I, like you, have been inundated from every side by the news of people getting sick, of precautions to keep from getting sick, of events being postponed or outright cancelled, and of many, many side effects to all of this. Part of my thinking has been that the Church has faced terrible outbreaks of illness before. I don't know the history super-well, but many of you are familiar with the Potato Famine in Ireland that brought many immigrants to the United States in the 19th century. There was a significant plague in Rome in the 1500's. More familiar to me is the Black Plague in the 1300's, which decimated the population of much of Europe in percentages of mortality that make you sick just to read about. These plagues found many Catholic saints, and non-canonized Catholic-Christians, willing to serve those who had taken up sick. Somehow, we need to be like these saints. If the current COVID-19 outbreak can be likened to getting snowed in by blizzard for a couple of weeks, we can think through the scenario of how we would care for our family and for our neighbor. People blizzarded in make do with less food because of inability to go shopping. People blizzarded in think of neighbors and family who might be worse off than they are. In our rural economy, people who know people who are snowed in find ways to get to them and perhaps help chore their livestock and repair equipment compromised by snow and ice. *** These ways of acting, beginning with those you are most responsible for, like your family, are what we need to be thinking of. *** From the practice of our Catholic faith, the commandment to "keep holy the Lord's Day [the Sabbath Day]" implicitly gives a person freedom to choose, WITHOUT SINNING, to not go to Mass because of illness. We could be placed in a situation where our Diocese and/or the local health department under the State of Nebraska closes down Sunday Mass for a time. In that scenario, no one would be in sin for not attending Mass. *** One Parish Council member of St. Mary's [and, by the way, I am so appreciative of these women and men for helping me formulate our own policy for Mass attendees] said, and I paraphrase, "It kills me that March Madness of the NCAA, that Spring Training of Major League Baseball is

cancelled." I agree; I too love these sports. But that council member, and I, and you, must keep our eyes focused on Jesus. This situation of illness and pandemic which is upon us is like a Long Lent for which one could argue that we barely need to pick large and numerous penances which we would undertake in normal times. We need to see that Heaven, that the salvation of souls, is the primary motivator for the way we in which we comport ourselves as friends of Jesus Christ. *** We might, in a childlike, sing-songy way, say, "Plague, schlmague!" or "Pooh on you, COVID!" It's not that we don't take seriously what is upon us. Rather, the idea is that we look at it face-on; we prepare, we mitigate its effects, and we (even) deal with anyone whom we love who actually becomes critically ill from this virus and/or passes away. This attitude is not me being dire; rather, it is to focus, focus, focus upon Jesus and Heaven and his Resurrection which we upcoming will celebrate! *** I hope this is helpful to you. I certainly am not beyond correction for any of my opinions stated here. Let's fall to our knees, and beseech the Divine Physician, Jesus, to help us. OK? And if you don't feel good, such as having congestion, runny nose, sore throat, trouble breathing, etc., just don't come to church or to our hall. You will be helping yourself and helping all of us.

Diocesan Action I am including in this bulletin what the Diocese of Lincoln has presented to us priests and people for responding to the coronavirus pandemic. It is also found on the diocesan web site, lincolndiocese.org, which may post changes or additions in a timely manner.

"Easter Duty" This phrase, once well-known, has fallen into disuse. But the principles underlying it are still very much in effect. I have re-printed an article a priest wrote in 2013 which explains the Easter Duty. Please prayerfully read it, and send me a note or phone-call me if you are concerned about this duty.

Pro-Life, Out Loud May I ask you to be publicly, proudly, pro-life by contacting State Senator Curt Friesen? In the next day or two? A pro-life bill needs support from him, even possibly invoking the unusual step of being voted on to be pulled out of committee to make it to the floor of the Unicameral. Here is what you could say, either by e-mail or phone call, and our senator's contact info is below: "Dear Senator, thanks for your service to our legislative district. As your constituent, I am asking for your support of LB814 which would ban dismemberment abortions in Nebraska. Modern science and ultrasound technology reveal to us the beauty of unborn human life. By banning dismemberment abortion, which is done during the second trimester, we can show greater respect for the little human life which already, by this point in a pregnancy, has fully developed arms and legs and can yawn, hiccup, and smile. I hope you will support LB814 at every stage of the legislative process. Know that I pray for you and other elected officials on a regular basis. Thanks for your time!" Contact: Sen. Curt Friesen, District 34, (402) 471-2630, cfriesen@leg.ne.gov.

God Bless You!!!

Father Grell