



March 18, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Just this past weekend I wrote to you that the COVID-19 virus continues to develop in the United States. On Monday Bishop Nickless implemented further precautions and restrictions in the Diocese of Sioux City. The CDC is currently recommending no gathering of groups of 10 or more. The following guidelines are in place for an 8-week period, beginning on March 16, 2020:

- All public celebrations of the Mass will be suspended. A bilingual Sunday Mass will be celebrated by Fr. Michael and I and will be available on the [Storm Lake St. Mary's Parish Facebook](#) page on Sunday at 8:00 a.m. You will be able to view Mass at your convenience. We will also post a reflection on the daily Mass readings and provide you with prayer material to help you make a spiritual communion.
- Baptisms – The current Baptisms that are scheduled during this time period will only be celebrated with immediate family members and godparents, following the CDC guidelines of groups no larger than 10. There will be no large group baptisms.
- Weddings – Only immediate family members and witnesses are to attend weddings. Clergy are not to attend related social functions. The parishes are not to host receptions.
- Funerals – Funerals may be celebrated only with immediate family members. We are working closely with Fratzke & Jensen Funeral Home and together we will help families navigate the planning process.
- Holy Week – Holy Week liturgies are suspended.
- Confessions - The sacrament of reconciliation (confession) will be conducted by appointment only.
- The celebrations of First Communion are suspended. We will reschedule First Communion Masses when we are able and communicate that to families as we are able.
- Quinceañeras are suspended during this time.
- The formal exposition of the Eucharist or adoration will be suspended.
- Saint Mary's church building will be closed for the foreseeable future to allow for a deep cleaning and some maintenance projects to take place. We will keep you updated when we allow an opportunity for individual visits. Saint Joseph church and Sacred Heart church will be open during the day for individual prayer, but you are asked to maintain a

distance of 6 feet from other people and not congregate in groups. If this becomes a problem, we will be forced to close these sites as well.

- All conferences, retreats, festivals or similar events in the diocese and the parishes are suspended. Parish groups and meetings are suspended as well.
- All religious education, faith formation classes, RCIA and related activities are suspended. We will reschedule the Sacraments of Initiation for those preparing to enter the Church at a later date.
- Parish governing boards will be conducting essential parish meetings as necessary, and when possible, electronically.
- The parish office is closed to visitors. Only necessary face to face business by appointment only. Parish staff members will maintain parish operations from the office or remotely. Calls will be answered during normal business hours for now. Emergencies will be handled in the normal fashion. We will be placing a locked box outside the parish office entrance to place anything that needs dropped off to the parish office, including donations.

There is significant financial uncertainty during these days for businesses, organizations, and families. Saint Mary's Parish and Catholic Schools are no exception. You know well the difficult financial situation that we find ourselves. We are diligently working on our financial issues but that will take some time for us to resolve and improve. The COVID-19 virus is a significant setback to our progress and the suspension of public Masses will further wound our financial status. I am asking you to do what you can during the weeks and months ahead to continue to support our parish during this difficult time. I fear we will reach a point where we will no longer be able to pay our bills, let alone our staff and priests. Please continue to use, or sign up for ACH with the finance office (automatic withdrawal from your bank account), visit [www.saintmarysgives.com](http://www.saintmarysgives.com) to give online, mail your weekly check or envelope to the parish office, or place in our new drop box outside of the parish office entrance.

This is a time of deep pain for both the Catholic faithful and clergy as we approach Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum and will be unable to celebrate it together. Know that Father Michael and I are deeply pained to not celebrate Mass with you but do know that we are praying for you. May Saint Mary, our patroness, watch over and protect us all.

Sincerely in Christ,



Father Brent C. Lingle  
Pastor