

ST. ISIDORE PARISH
QUAKERTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

FR. BRABAZON'S ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE WEEKEND OF MARCH 14TH AND 15TH, 2020



Dear Friends,

I hope that you are all doing well today! I know that these past few days have brought with them a whirlwind of breaking news coverage and political announcements, panic shopping for toilet paper (yes, even here in Quakertown), and maybe even a little anxiety or fear in the midst of constantly changing information. I'm not ashamed to say it, even I was getting a little overwhelmed this past Friday, with how quickly things were changing locally, regionally, and throughout our nation and world. I am a lot calmer now, however, and I hope you all are as well!

I take great comfort in the fact that we are a strong Christian community here in Quakertown; committed to working together to secure the common good, willing to accept difficult circumstances to accomplish necessary tasks, and devoted to the protection of those among us who are most weak and vulnerable. Surely, the days ahead are probably going to look and feel a bit different, but we are going to get through it and we are going to be even stronger as a community because we have gone through the experience together.

I am a simple parish priest and not a doctor! However, in my role as a shepherd, allow me to offer just a few reminders to my beloved sheep. Please take very seriously the need to regularly wash your hands—it is clear from those who *are* doctors that this is the best way to combat the spreading of the Covid-19 Coronavirus. When you wash your hands, be thorough, and maybe consider, praying a Hail Mary or two, while doing so, to be sure that you're washing for a sufficient length of time. Of course, when it is not possible to wash your hands with soap and water, use hand sanitizer if you have it.

More than that, be conscientious of others! For the time being, try to break yourself of the habit of reaching out for another person's hand to shake, or to hug them—and don't be offended if others are unwilling to offer a handshake or a hug. Cover up your coughs and sneezes—use and personally dispose of your own tissues. If you do not have a tissue when you need to cough or sneeze, it is recommended that you use the inside of your elbow, if you are able. Because of this, kindly do not replace handshakes and hugs with fist-bumps or touching of elbows, these are still forms of physical contact, which should be avoided.

At the instruction of our Archdiocese, our Parish School and Parish Religious Education Program (PREP) have been closed until at least Friday, March 27th. Similarly suspended are all CYO sports and any other extracurricular activities for children, including both those programs provided by the parish and programs provided by other entities but occurring on parish properties, such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

I kindly ask that, with regard to all other parish gatherings, we suspend all larger gatherings of parishioners; such as our praying of the Stations of the Cross on Mondays, our Bible Study Session on Tuesdays, and our Holy Hour on Thursday Evenings, at least until March 29th, though perhaps longer if necessary.

For other smaller meetings of adults, for the time being, I leave it up to the leadership of our individual parish groups and committees to determine whether or not it is necessary or prudent to gather. I ask that such leaders use an abundance of caution, for the sake of their group's members, and lean in the direction of rescheduling or revising the manner of their meeting—such as having a conference call as opposed to meeting in person, if possible. Presently, I have no intention of keeping the Church or Multi-Purpose Room locked. I just ask that everyone be prudent in their own judgments.

Now, I would like to speak in a particular way about attendance at Mass in the coming days. Archbishop Perez has announced the suspension of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass for all Catholics in the Archdiocese. But what does this mean practically? For now, at St. Isidore, all scheduled Masses will be offered as scheduled, and will be open to all those who wish to attend in person. This includes our Weekday Masses as well as our Sunday Masses. With time, that could change, but for now this is the plan.

Even so, I encourage everyone to take to heart the uniqueness of this situation. Under the current circumstances, our Archbishop does not want anyone to feel obliged to come out into public gatherings—most especially the very young, the elderly, and those with already compromised health. The Archbishop has therefore been most generous in his announcement, giving us the freedom to be prudent in our own judgment whether or not to attend Mass during these days. Please do not overthink things! If you are showing any signs of being sick; I beg you, please stay home! If you are among those most at risk in these current days, I kindly ask you, please stay home. If you do not fall into these categories, but feel that is best for you to stay home; I assure you, it is okay to stay home. And do not feel bad about it!

For those who will be attending Mass, we need to be very careful and intentional about *how* we participate at Mass. In addition to the measures we have already taken as a community throughout the past few weeks, I offer the following requests and ask that they be taken very seriously. *Social distancing* is the new buzzword. So, for the time being, we should be mindful to not sit or stand too close

to other people, this includes when we are in the pews. The current common practice is to maintain six feet of space between individuals when gathering as a group. We need to be careful about *common surfaces*. You will be touching many doors, pew backs and hymnal racks, hymnals, etc.... I cannot promise you that they have not recently been touched or used by someone else. Don't touch things you don't have to, and be careful not to touch your face until you've had a chance to wash your hands or sanitize them. Again, I ask you, *please dispose of your own tissues*—kindly do not leave them in Church for someone else to have to remove.

Similar to the current schedule for Masses, I intend to continue to hear Confessions at the scheduled times and at the Confessional in the Day Chapel. However, there will be a slight change of format within the confessional. As a precautionary measure, and in light of the need to encourage appropriate social distancing, we will set aside the option for face-to-face Confession. All penitents are kindly asked to either kneel or sit behind the screen.

As we have seen in other countries and in some other states, at some point in the coming days, it may become necessary—out of an abundance of caution—to suspend public gatherings altogether. The Archbishop may, for a time, be required by state or federal authorities to close church buildings to all public gatherings, including the celebration of Holy Mass. While we all hope and pray that such measures will not need to be taken, I am happy to say that here at St. Isidore, we have a plan just in case. Under such circumstances, I would still intend to offer our parish Masses in the Church or Chapel, even if I am the only one present. I would offer them at the scheduled times and for the scheduled intentions throughout the weekdays. I would offer at least one Mass on Sunday—but I will have to wait for some kind of direction from the Archbishop regarding whether I would be permitted to celebrate multiple Masses in a day without a congregation. (For one priest to offer multiple Masses on the same day without a congregation is not currently permitted by the Canon Law of the Church.) In any event, **we will have** a parish Mass each day.

I am really happy to share that, because of the great efforts of Chris DeVaney and Deacon Mike Nungesser throughout the past weeks, we now have our Day Chapel's video streaming system in place and functioning. So that means, that in addition to our 7:00 Mass on Sunday—now all of our Daily Masses are being streamed and are available on the main page of our parish website.

Regardless of whether things remain the way they currently are, and some folks refrain from attending Sunday Mass in accord with the Archbishop's permission, or whether the day comes upon which everyone must remain home on Sunday except me... We must remember that we have a divine command from the God, Himself to "Keep holy the Lord's Day." No one, not even the Archbishop, can dispense us from that! So how can we keep the day holy if we are not able to attend Mass. I encourage you to take advantage of watching the streaming Mass on our website. Remember that you don't necessarily have to watch the video at the exact time that it's streaming. We have our system set up so that each streamed Mass is

recorded and available on the streaming platform for a few weeks before being deleted to make room for new “broadcasts”. That would be a great way to join yourself to the pray of your own parish community, even though you cannot be there in person. More to it, share the word about this resource as broadly as you are able—help others to be connected to Mass by being connected to our parish community’s celebrations of the Sacred Liturgy. To keep holy the Lord’s Day, you could also be sure to read and pray with Sacred Scripture. Perhaps looking up the readings for Mass and pray with them in an intentional, reflective way. Consider offering devotional prayers, like the Rosary or the Way of the Cross. There are countless resources online—I will be sure to offer some below.

I would especially encourage you to consider joining in the praying of the Archdiocesan Rosary Campaign for the end of the Coronavirus. (I’ll include details below about how to participate.) At 8:00 PM each evening, now through March 25th, hundreds of the faithful have been joining in a Zoom meeting—by app, by webpage or by telephone. It started a few days ago and has been a really moving experience. What a clever way to bring people together in prayer, without having to physically bring them together in the same space; sure proof that modern technology really can be used for good! I will personally be leading the rosary from the Rectory, here in Quakertown, next Sunday March 22nd. Tune in at 8:00 PM to pray with me and with many others throughout our local Church.

For the present time, and until further notice, I am canceling all non-emergency visits to the sick, infirm, and elderly in our parish by our Deacons and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Many of our local care-facilities and nursing homes are on complete “Lock-Down” to protect their most vulnerable residents and clients. In order to assist them in this intention, I am immediately suspending all non-emergency pastoral care visits to nursing homes, to the hospital, and to the home bound. I have, however, made arrangements with our community facilities to reach out to me personally, to respond to true end-of-life emergencies that require the immediate sacramental intervention of a priest—and they have all graciously agreed to permit me access under those extreme circumstances.

A question has arisen about whether it would be possible to continue paying our parish staff members who may have to stay away from work because of school and program closures or possible quarantines to come. I have decide, with the assistance of those responsible, that regardless of Archdiocesan protocols that may later be put in place, and regardless of instructions from any government authorities, we will simply be paying our employees! These are the people who care for and teach and catechize our children. They ore the people who make it possible for us to function as a thriving parish community every day. I cannot let them down, and I know that you wouldn’t want me to. Everyone, including our salaried employees, our full-time hourly employees, and our part-time hourly employees, will all continue to be paid, even if circumstance beyond their control require them to not be at work. It is the right thing to do, and we are going to do it!

That said, I very much need your help as a parish community to make that guarantee possible. Our attendance at Mass this weekend was, obviously, quite low, and it will probably be some weeks before we really get back to normal. I still need everyone to support the parish financially, in order for us to meet the financial obligations that we have as a community.

If you have not already done so, I encourage you to consider signing up for Parish Giving. This is the program we use at St. Isidore to help facilitate easy electronic donations to the parish. Information about signing up to support the parish in this way can be found on the parish website. I'd be most grateful if you would consider supporting the parish in the way—both during this unique and difficult time, but also as we look to the future. Parish Giving really is the best and easiest way to regularly support the parish.

I've just offered you a whole ton of information... more than I think you've ever seen from me before. Even so, I may have missed some things, or not been clear enough on one topic or another. For that I apologize. But allow me to try to be very clear about this one final thought...

This is not the Lent we were praying for. Yet, during this holy penitential season—for whatever the reason, according to God's providence—the Lord is inviting all of us in a big way to carry our crosses along with Him. May each and every one of us bear it well and may none of us fall under the weight of the burden, let us be inspired by Simon and Veronica—Simon, who helped Jesus to carry His cross, and Veronica, who wiped His Sacred Face—that we might all help each other by our good works (when and where possible) and by the prayers we offer now for our well being and that of all the world.

Heavenly Father, deliver us from every evil, most especially the evils of panic and fear. Strengthen us in our resolve to turn to You for our every need, and strengthen our hope in Your lasting goodness. Stretch out Your hand of Mercy toward all who have been affected by the scourge of the Coronavirus Pandemic and welcome all the dead into your lasting peace among the Saints. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

St. John Neumann, pray for us!

St. Katharine Drexel, pray for us!

St. Isidore, pray for us!

And may God bless us all!

Prayerfully yours in Christ,
Fr. Ken

LIST OF RESOURCES:

St. Isidore Parish Resources:

Saint Isidore Parish Website – Among other items, the streaming of Masses is located on the main page.

<https://www.stisidores.org/>

Parish Giving – you can simply find the link on our parish webpage or click below

<https://www.parishgiving.org/Main.aspx?e=641177FF28F810CABC0CB9AFD288CA16F45302735C5520C6D8AAF0A08A935DAB3C10BB6EC06C2C8C22A6705C838A9A2573DAADB41F8B405F>

Archdiocesan Rosary Campaign for the End of the Coronavirus

Join us online, by phone or in spirit as we pray the Rosary every night at 8 PM until the Solemnity of the Annunciation. We will ask the miraculous intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary to put an end to the coronavirus.

When:

Starts Friday, March 13, 8:00-8:30 PM (Eastern)
Every day through Tuesday, March 24*

Please click this link to tune in each night at 8 PM:

[\[if \(gte mso 20\)\]><!https://zoom.us/j/494480541<!\[endif\]\[if \(gte mso 9\)\]\(IE\)\]>zoom.us/j/494480541...<!\[endif\]](https://zoom.us/j/494480541)

Click the link 5-10 minutes early to allow your device to download any necessary software.

Or dial-in by telephone:

Dial: (646) 558-8656
Enter the Webinar ID: 494 480 541

Hosted by:

Meghan Cokeley, Office for the New Evangelization, Archdiocese of Philadelphia
with special guests

Full details at: phillyevang.org/rosary

*On **Wednesday, March 25**, the Solemnity of the Annunciation, tune in to the **Virtual Rosary Rally for Vocations at 7 PM**. This will be the culmination of our Rosary Campaign! Details for March 25 can be found at [\[if \(gte mso](#)

heedthecall.org/RosaryRally <![endif][if (gte mso 9)|(IE)]>heedthecall.org/Rosary... <![endif].

Resources for finding the Readings for Mass:

The Website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops - Click on Daily Readings

<http://usccb.org>

Magnificat – a magazine publication that provides liturgical and spiritual aids, which is currently free in light of the present situation

<https://us.magnificat.net>

Other Helpful Resources:

EWTN – Global Catholic Television Network.... There's just so much here!

<https://www.ewtn.com>

Word on Fire – a media outlet began by Bishop Robert Barron to encourage the New Evangelization

<https://www.wordonfire.org>

Dynamic Catholic

<https://dynamiccatholic.com>