

St. Francis Xavier & St. John the Baptist Parishes

Mail: 1708 E. 10th Street

Merrill, WI 54452

Phone: 715-536-2803

Website: www.stfrancismerrill.org

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As you already know, the coronavirus known as COVID-19, has already impacted all of our lives and our communities. As you also know there is a lot of news about closures, cancellations, decisions on employment, and this information is changing daily; the result of this has brought about a lot of anxiety in most of our lives. However, now is the time for each of us to remain calm and be secure in the faith which has been given to us in Christ Jesus. God is aware of all our sufferings and of all our needs. It is a time for us to turn to Him and know He is always watchful and close to us. With all of these current tensions, **may we listen to our Bishop's request, and join together in praying for all of those who are suffering in any way because of this virus.** We especially pray for caregivers who are assisting those who are sick; those who are working vigilantly to minimize and find relief for all who suffer from this virus. May we also pray for those who are in authority and are having to make important and sometimes difficult decisions.

COVID-19 does need to be taken very seriously by each of us, but it is also a time for us to rely on our faith, which calms our fears. It is through our faith that we are given the hope that can help us find a sense of normalcy. It is our faith which tells us that Jesus Christ is the source and summit of our faith, and it is He who teaches us the love of the Father. Of course, nowhere is Jesus more present to us than in the Eucharist. Everything the Church has to offer leads us to Him in this very unique presence. As of today, Mass is still being offered on weekends and weekdays at our normal times, however please be aware this may change. Since gatherings of 50 or more are being discouraged we are currently awaiting for more direction regarding Mass. In the meantime, Bishop Powers has dispensed the obligation to attend Sunday Mass for anyone who is afraid they may contract COVID-19. This includes anyone who has a compromised immune system, those who are over the age of 65, and the very young. Please give serious thought to this dispensation. For those who need to accept this dispensation and decide not to attend Mass, Bishop Powers has suggested to gather as a family, to watch the Mass on television or on another media, to pray the Rosary, to reflect upon the readings for the day, and to participate in other forms of prayer and devotions.

Please, if anyone is ill, especially with flu like symptoms, please stay at home. Please think of others and how this does affect them.

In addition to the precautions we have already taken for the flu virus, (for example not using the common cup for the distribution of the Precious Blood).

- The Holy Water fonts have been emptied (there is still Holy Water in the dispenser for home use).
- We have been asked to refrain from holding and shaking hands at all times including the Our Father, the sign of peace and in greetings before and after Mass.
- For those who receive Our Lord on the tongue, Bishop Powers has requested that you refrain from doing so, as an act of Christian Charity for the sake of others.

We are following the local and CDC Recommendations with regards to social events:

- many of the social events have already been canceled.
- Sanitizers are being made available for use throughout the churches.
- Cleaning crews have been wiping down surfaces which are touched frequently, and will continue to do so, including the backs of pews.

Lastly, please know our staff is committed to finding ways to provide help in fulfilling your spiritual needs and to provide you with information through the technology we have today; we will update information on our web page and on our Facebook page. As always, we thank you for the support you have provided for our Churches and school. We want to make sure our ministries continue at St. John's and St. Francis Parishes. So, we ask that you please continue to provide your financial support to our parishes. Please know that my prayers and those of our dedicated staff are with you during this difficult time, along with my availability as a spiritual leader. Although this seems to be a difficult time, the grace of our God continues to work in and through our lives. May we and others benefit from our encounters with one another by showing the love we have experienced in Christ Jesus. And may God continue to bless each of you, and may He bring His light in our life in all our days.

Fr. Chris Kemp
Pastor