



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

13 April 2022

Happy Easter!

Happy Easter! We rejoice that Jesus manifested the resurrection, giving us the promise of new and eternal life after our death, which we live beginning now.

A new life, for example, where instead of loving things and using people, we use things and love people; better yet, use things to love people in need.

Helping the poor is one of the markers for a personal, saving faith, as well as for a vital community of those believers, like a parish.

Such markers should most definitely also include learning and teaching the Gospel, and gathering together for daily prayers and Sunday Mass.

Other markers have been suggested by over 16,000 people in our Archdiocese, through their participation in our synodal exercise, the survey on parish vitality.

The purpose of this exercise was to invite prayer, thought, and discussion about parish vitality, to raise awareness about that, and to challenge us to "up our game."

Contrary to what some people fear, there is no plan, or even desire to close parishes; in fact, it's hoped that no parish that is a parish in the true sense of the word will close.

But if our only concern is for a convenient place to fulfill the Sunday obligation, or to preserve the church because it's pretty, or because our ancestors helped build it...

Well, call it what you will, but it isn't a parish, really. And as a consequence, the people in that place may have made the decision to close the parish.

Otherwise, the vitality of a parish isn't judged by things like size, geography, or finances, but by sharing time, talents, and treasure in support of mission and ministry.

And most especially in carrying out the 3 essential activities: helping the poor, learning and teaching the Gospel, and gathering together for daily prayers and Sunday Mass.

There may be communities where, because of a temporary priest shortage, Mass can't be celebrated every Sunday or weekday, but the Catholics there can still gather.

They can (and should) still gather for prayers or worship. On Sundays (but not on weekdays), they can use a form of the Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest.

That can take the form of the Liturgy of the Word for that day, or Morning or Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of Hours.

If there is no priest for a daily Mass, parishioners can gather in the church for the Rosary, the Liturgy of Hours, or Eucharistic Adoration.

Now, with our awareness raised, let's rise to the challenge and up our game, living the new life gifted to us by our Risen Lord!

Michael O. Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque