



# CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH NEWS

111 Boulevard of the Allies  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

E-mail: [communications@diopitt.org](mailto:communications@diopitt.org)  
[www.diopitt.org](http://www.diopitt.org)

**Contact:** **Ellen Mady**  
**(o) 412-456-3129**  
**(c) 412-961-4888**

---

**For Release: March 19, 2020**

## **Bishop David Zubik Issues New Directives Regarding Confession, General Absolution, and Lenten Friday Obligation**

In continuing response to coronavirus (COVID-19) concerns, and with a heart to preserve the Mission of the Catholic Church, Bishop David Zubik announced the following directives for the Diocese of Pittsburgh today. All directives are effective immediately and until further notice.

### **Priests are Permitted to Offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation in Church Parking Lots**

Priests are permitted to hear confessions in church parking lots, following specific guidelines to preserve the sanctity of the sacrament. The guidelines for priests include directions for a set up that allows for anonymity and privacy. *"Our faithful need reassurance of God's mercy now more than ever,"* Bishop Zubik said. **Bishop Zubik is also asking that members of the media respect the sacred nature of the sacrament, and the confidentiality of the penitents, and not appear at any parish sites.**

### **General Absolution**

Today, Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, Prefect of the Apostolic Penitentiary, issued a note regarding the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the current pandemic of COVID-19. He addressed the possible need for general absolution. He noted that general absolution without prior individual confession cannot be imparted except where there is an imminent danger of death because there is not enough time to hear confessions of individual penitents.

He then went on to write: "This Apostolic Penitentiary believes that, especially in the places most affected by the pandemic contagion and until the phenomenon recedes, the cases of serious need mentioned in can. 961, § 2 CIC above mentioned, will occur."

This means that the Apostolic Penitentiary recognizes the need in some places for the use of general or collective absolution. However, it is for the diocesan bishop to determine if and when the grave necessity exists for the use of general absolution.

Bishop Zubik believes that this necessity does exist in some places in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. *"Therefore, in hospitals, nursing homes and other healthcare facilities, where a priest is not allowed to personally interact with patients or staff due to COVID-19 restrictions, he may grant general absolution. The faithful are to know that he is offering absolution and his voice should be able to be heard by those receiving absolution, this could*

*be over a PA system or by some other means. If a priest imparts general absolution, he is to inform penitents of the need to confess serious sins at the earliest possible moment,”* Bishop Zubik said.

### **Anointing of the Sick in Care Facilities**

Diocese of Pittsburgh Priests have expressed concerns about restrictions being placed on them being able to celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in nursing homes and hospitals. Today, Bishop Zubik contacted the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference and asked that they intervene with the Governor, requesting an exemption to clergy from the current ban.

### **Obligation to Abstain from Meat on Lenten Fridays with the Exception of Good Friday**

Bishop Zubik is dispensing from the obligation to abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays with the exception of Good Friday. *“As you are aware, many of the shelves and cases in our supermarkets are sparse if not empty. This is a time when pastoral necessity has informed my decision effective today,”* the Bishop said.