



BISHOP OF STEUBENVILLE

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March 10, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Over the past year, we have sacrificed much in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While we mourn the loss of those of who have died, we also give thanks to God for the recovery of so many who have been sick and for the fact that due to His mercy and the knowledge He gives to scientists and medical professionals, we now have great hope that the end of this terrible ordeal is in sight.

As such, I have today modified last year's *Norms for the Resumption of Public Masses* for the Diocese of Steubenville to allow the option of the exchange of the sign of peace at Mass. It is permissible for the exchange of the sign of peace to be resumed at the vigil Masses of Laetare Sunday that are celebrated during the evening of Saturday, March 13.

I ask that a physical exchange of the sign of peace occur only among families or groups attending Mass together. To exchange the sign of peace with someone from outside such a group, please use a sober action such as a nod of the head.

Of course, this permission gives parishes and the faithful the *option* of once again exchanging the sign of peace. It is voluntary, and anyone who feels uncomfortable doing so may continue to omit the exchange.

Entrusting our world and our beloved diocese to the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I pray that this adjustment of our diocesan *Norms* will be followed by many more as we as a society continue to make progress in the battle against the coronavirus. I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Jeffrey M. Monforton
Bishop of Steubenville