



Diocese of Pittsburgh

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Office of the Bishop

March 2, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Your well-being and safety are always foremost in my prayers and concerns.

At this time of year, there is an increased risk of contracting influenza, and in fact the Pennsylvania Department of Health has declared the flu “widespread” already this season.

As you have seen in the news, people are also preparing for the potential spread of the coronavirus COVID-19. At this writing, there are no confirmed cases of that illness in Pennsylvania. However, the Centers for Disease Control, as well as local healthcare agencies, are encouraging precaution as the situation continues to be monitored. Therefore, I am issuing precautions that will help our faith community, and the region as a whole, stay healthy:

- The distribution of the Precious Blood during the Eucharist is temporarily suspended.
- Holy water fonts should be cleaned and drained on a weekly basis.
- The exchange of the Sign of Peace through physical contact (typically a handshake) is temporarily suspended.
- Those who feel ill are not obligated to attend Sunday Mass. To protect the health of the faith community, they should stay home until they are well.

These precautions will take effect immediately and continue as long as deemed necessary. We will continue to monitor the situation and be ready to make any updates, as needed.

In addition, please follow the hygiene practices recommended by the Pennsylvania Department of Health: cover coughs or sneezes with elbows, not hands; wash hands with soap and water for twenty seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; clean frequently-touched items and surfaces often; and, if you are sick, stay home.

I continue to pray for you, for those afflicted with illness and for our healthcare providers.

Grateful for our continued efforts together in being *On Mission for The Church Alive!*, and for our belief that “Nothing is Impossible with God,” I am

Your brother in Christ,

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Most Reverend David A. Zubik
Bishop of Pittsburgh

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