



Diocese of Pittsburgh

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Office of the Bishop

March 12, 2020

Dear Brother Priests and Deacons:

As a Catholic faith community, in times of uncertainty our first response is to pray for guidance and grace to meet the challenges of the day. We are called today to meet a challenge with which we have no significant past experience. In creating policies and procedures related to the coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19), we join people from around the world who are working through the same things. As a people of action, our focus will be on what steps we can take to protect all that we love. Working together in our communities, schools, and homes, as we always do, will sustain us through any level of challenge.

As the novel coronavirus and COVID-19 continue to affect our nation, the Diocese of Pittsburgh, understanding the need for social distancing, continues to monitor the situation and work with public health officials. While no one can predict the spread of the virus and its impact, until further notice we will work under the following guiding principles.

1. The Eucharist, especially on Sunday, and the sacraments will always be at the heart of our belief, and the faithful need to have access to them to the greatest extent possible. Parishes are to follow diocesan directives regarding hygiene and the celebration of the sacraments.
2. Educating children is essential. We will continue, to the extent possible, to keep our schools and faith formation programs open but will close as is necessary.
3. Parishes, schools and Catholic organizations are to be checking public health websites for direction on hygiene, cleaning of facilities and for other health directives.
4. Nonessential diocesan gatherings of 50 or more people are cancelled starting on Monday, March 16, 2020. Parishes, schools and Catholic organizations are encouraged to assess the need for larger gatherings as well.
5. If circumstances warrant, our parishes, schools and organizations should plan for their staffs to telecommute if possible or develop alternate work plans.

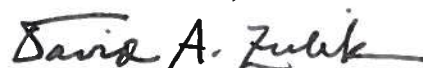
In the implementation of these guiding principles, following recommendations of the Center for Disease Control and the Allegheny County Health Department, all Vicariate Meetings and Listening Sessions scheduled for this month are cancelled out of an abundance of caution. I would ask that you inform your parishioners that the Listening Sessions are cancelled.

Finally, in place of the in-person Vicariate meeting, a remote session will be held on **Thursday, March 26, 2020, at 2:30 pm**. You will be informed regarding remote access for the March 26 session when that information becomes available.

This is certainly a difficult time for all of us. May Mary, Our Mother, keep us under the mantle of her love.

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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