



Diocese of Pittsburgh

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Office of the Bishop

A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP ZUBIK

As we enter another week enduring the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, our physical, financial and spiritual health continues to be challenged. I hold all of you in daily prayer, asking God to bring protection and comfort to you and your families as we navigate through this time.

In my reflections, I've been focusing on where we have been, where we are and where we are going in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. We are being challenged. How will we respond?

We continue to respond in faith. When we look at the history of the Church, particularly the Church at her beginnings described in the Acts of the Apostles, we realize that disciples of the Lord Jesus managed and grew in faith through many difficulties and challenges. Isn't that the story we continue to reflect upon during our readings at Mass every day of this Easter Season? They remained united in their love for the Lord and one another. "Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul...and with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:33-34) We are like the members of the early Church living through our own difficult times. Although we cannot yet come together in our churches for the sacraments and other prayers, we remain strong and united in our faith in God and in the hope of coming together again soon and recognizing Him in the breaking of the bread at Mass. Christ our Savior who suffered and died for us remains always with us and shares with us the glory of His resurrection. We trust in Him. We are His disciples. We are a people of hope!

Based on public health and safety models, our local, state and federal government leaders have been guiding all of us with directives meant to protect the wellbeing of our communities. In accordance with those directives, and with input from my senior staff, I made the decision to suspend Masses on March 15, 2020, which was one of the most heart-wrenching decisions of my life. It has been a struggle for all of us as priests and deacons to be separated from you, our faithful, particularly in celebrating the sacraments at a time most needed, as it has been difficult for you, the faithful, to be separated from the sacraments and your priests and deacons.

Although physical doors have been closed, we have worked to create a variety of online spiritual resources including live stream Masses, prayer services and community discussion through social media channels in an effort to help people feel more connected and less isolated. None of this could ever replace the physical connection through receiving the Eucharist in public Masses, but engaging livestream, we have received many positive responses from people who have received spiritual nourishment from these efforts.

Diocesan staff members have been working remotely and non-stop to continue operations of the diocese. My senior staff and members of a Project Management Team, including outside consultants, have been evaluating the financial health of our diocese in terms of our parishes, our schools and our central administration staff. Our pastors, priests, principals and their staffs have also been working creatively to stay connected with their parish and school families and have shared beautiful stories of the faithful supporting one another.

We have instituted online giving opportunities through the “Bishop’s Coronavirus Emergency Relief Fund,” as well as at the parish level, and we greatly appreciate the financial support we have received, especially at a time when financial situations are uncertain for so many. The suspension of Masses has resulted in a sharp decline in offertory collections. Our parishes had been feeling the strain of lower attendance and funding well before COVID-19. The far-reaching negative impact of the pandemic related to the health and employment of the community as a whole has intensified the strain. Our schools rely on our parishes for financial support that subsidizes their operations. With a decrease in offertory, this does affect our parishes and schools.

As I have shared with you previously, the current reality is that the severe loss of funding means that it is necessary to consider a variety of cost-cutting measures on all levels that may include reduction of positions and programs. Over the course of the next several weeks, we will be addressing each of these areas, and I anticipate more difficult decisions will need to be made.

As we work through these challenges, be assured of my commitment as Pastor of the Church of Pittsburgh to the mission of the Church, which has not and will not change: bringing people to Christ and creating disciples. Although moving forward, we may be smaller in terms of numbers of schools, parishes and staffs, we are focused on protecting a foundation that we must build upon—that foundation is Jesus Himself.

I know from experiences in my own life that change can be difficult and the unknown future is sometimes worrisome. Yes, change is hard, but we hold hope together that our collective efforts will bring us closer to God’s heavenly reign here on earth. I ask for you to join me in a prayerful trusting of Jesus to guide us as we stay focused on maximizing the resources we have and in being very intentional in making decisions to best serve our entire Church and beyond.

I will update you on decisions and progress as we move through this transition.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David A. Zubik". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend David A. Zubik
Bishop of Pittsburgh