



October 11, 2020

Dear Brother Priests and Deacons,

I have already asked Tony DeGol to share with you a Media Release concerning Father Brian Saylor and Father Carl Spishak. They are currently under quarantine for 14 days due to exposure to COVID-19. Before you stop reading the rest of this message, I want to be clear that this is not a hoax. It is a most serious matter, not only for the health and safety of Fr. Brian and Fr. Carl, but for the people to whom they minister. Please pray that they are not infected by this insidious virus.

At the same time, I wish to share my concern for all of you. I am grateful for all that you have been doing for the safety of the people you serve and for your own health and safety. At the same time, I have received notice from people concerning priests and deacons not taking the proper precautions, especially the wearing of a mask.

I asked all of you to take these precautions whenever you are engaged in your ministry, whether it be a one-on-one meeting with people or celebrating Mass and the sacraments. It's the responsible thing to do because we have an obligation to care for the people entrusted to us. And we have an obligation to care for ourselves.

I have been in contact with health officials and there are concerns about the increase of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Pennsylvania, including the region of our diocese. All of the measures that have been taken from the initial outbreak of COVID-19 have been based on real information and the best insights and recommendations of experts. These measures need to be observed and not viewed simply as suggestions.

Any priest or deacon who is unwilling to wear a mask, or utilize sanitizer, or maintain safe distances, is asked to notify me immediately so that we can discuss other arrangements to safeguard your health and safety which is a priority. Please remember, it is not only about us, the clergy. It's about the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of people we are to serve.

Our efforts at taking measures to protect against the spread of COVID-19 right from the beginning has not gone unnoticed. It has made a difference in dealing with government officials. Many of them have expressed their gratitude for the leadership shown in our parishes and schools. I ask all of you to renew your effort to do the right thing. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me.

Thank you for your vigilance and attention to these concerns. Please pray for one another and especially Fr. Brian and Fr. Carl. All of you are in my prayers every day.

Bishop Mark