



**REVEREND DANIEL B. CARSON**

VICAR GENERAL AND MODERATOR OF THE CURIA

Dear Brother Priest,

I write today to provide you with an important update. I will continue to keep you informed as we navigate this challenging time.

### **Archdiocese of Washington Files Suit in Federal Court on DC Mass Restrictions**

From the start of the pandemic, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington has sought to partner with the District of Columbia to protect public health, including by voluntarily suspending public Masses in March. Since Mass resumed in June, the Archdiocese has demonstrated that people can worship God in a safe, cautious, and responsible manner. Our enhanced protocols include the use of face coverings, social distancing, enhanced cleaning and sanitization protocols, and other measures intended to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We also continue to offer livestream options for those who prefer not to attend in person.

We were disappointed by the Mayor's recent executive order, issued just before the start of Advent, which imposes a 50-person cap on Mass capacity. These restrictions single out religious worship for harsher treatment than similar secular activities, such as shopping, dining, and exercising. We have tried to address our concerns directly with the District government and requested relief from a hard cap on attendance at indoor religious services. Unfortunately, as Christmas fast approaches, these burdensome restrictions remain in place. As a last resort, earlier today we filed suit in federal court to request judicial relief from the District's hard cap on indoor religious worship. As the Supreme Court recently stated in *Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn v. Cuomo*, hard caps on worship attendance "effectively bar many from attending religious services" and "many other less restrictive rules . . . could be adopted," including the percentage-based restrictions the District uses for many different types of businesses and activities.

We continue to offer our prayers to those who are sick and their families, for caregivers and our leaders, and for all people that we might be delivered from this pandemic.

I also share with you a statement from Cardinal Gregory from his recent interview with CNN International and PBS:

*"We, here in the Archdiocese of Washington, have been absolutely committed to following all of the health protocols that have been demanded of us. Safe environment, sanitizing, social distancing, wearing masks - all of those things are in place in our churches. We do believe that we should, as religious people, be*

*allowed the same latitude that other public structures are – such as grocery stores and other public venues that have no limits or at least very generous limits. Too often, churches and other houses of worship have more restrictions. We, here in the Archdiocese of Washington, have received no cases - at least none that we know of - where people have been infected by attending church. So we have asked for at least the possibility of proportional attendance. We just think we should not be treated any differently and certainly not unfairly in comparison to other public places for attendance.”* – Statement from Wilton Cardinal Gregory, Archbishop of Washington, on Friday, December 11, 2020, on “Amanpour” on CNN International and PBS linked [here](#).

### **Remind the Faithful of Information on the Website**

The archdiocesan website in response to the coronavirus is updated regularly with information, in English and Spanish, for you and the Faithful available at [adw.org/coronavirus](http://adw.org/coronavirus), which includes a link to find a listing of live stream Masses and prayers available at [adw.org/live-streamed-masses-and-prayers/](http://adw.org/live-streamed-masses-and-prayers/). The *Catholic Standard* and the Spanish-language *El Pregonero* newspapers are currently available on-line at [cathstan.org](http://cathstan.org) and [elpreg.org](http://elpreg.org).

As always, should you have questions or need assistance from my office and the Pastoral Center, please let us know. Please be assured of my prayers for you.

With gratitude for your priestly ministry, I am  
Sincerely in Christ,  
Reverend Daniel B. Carson  
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia