

## Official Statement from Bishop Suarez on Increasing COVID Cases

Dear Members of the Florida-Bahamas Synod,

It is with gratitude that I write to you, knowing that many of our congregations have been very careful in their protective measures against the Pandemic. At the same time, I understand the disappointment some of us feel just when we thought we were starting to go on with our lives close to what they were before COVID 19.

As most of us know, COVID cases have increased due to the Delta variant, particularly here in Florida. As the presiding bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod, I strongly encourage members of our synod to take extra steps to ensure their safety during this time. With the consultation of your doctor, please make sure to be vaccinated. Those who are vaccinated are better protected against the delta variant compared to those who aren't. It is also strongly recommended that, even if you have been vaccinated, please wear your mask when going to the store, church or anywhere else where there are groups of people. A foundational principle of our faith is to care for one another, and the best way to do that during this time is to wear your mask and get the vaccine, if eligible. Encourage others with respect, to be vaccinated. Wearing a mask is a sign of caring for our neighbors as well as for ourselves. Loving our neighbors as ourselves is a crucial part of our belief as Christians.

I urge congregations to continue to provide video live-streaming of our congregational services and resume our protective processes. I encourage limited singing in our worship services, perhaps only a few cantors. Return to safety practices on Holy Communion, Spiritual Communion being my preferred method, or Communion with the bread alone, when in person. I would ask congregations to limit or eliminate the after-worship refreshments for now. But above all, as I have said all along, pay attention to CDC guidelines and your local authorities. **Remember, if we are going to err, in this case it is better to err in the side of safety.**

Please continue to pray for our Synod Council during these challenging times as they have the responsibility for our upcoming Synod Assembly. My staff and I after this short time when we were able to travel, must limit our in person visits as well for now.

Let us remember the words of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians, "Let each of you look not only to your interest, but also to the interest of others." (Philippians 2:4)

In Christ service,

+Bishop Pedro M. Suarez