

## Letter from Seminarian Clifton Mastran

Please come back.

The doors are open, the table has been set, and the Lord awaits you at Holy Mass.

Please come back.

The grocery stores have remained open while the world was “shut down.” So have Walmart, Target, restaurants, liquor stores, and many other “essential services.” They do indeed provide for food and liquid to eat and drink to sustain our bodies, and these are necessary for life on this earth. However, this list is incomplete, as there is more important nourishment that we need for our immortal souls. The Holy Eucharist is necessary for eternal life. It is not a nice to have or an “if I have the time.” It is real spiritual food, and it is necessary to live in this world and the next.

Please come back.

Yes, there was a time when the doors were closed for Mass, and the people were forced to fast a short while from this necessary food. But that time has passed. The doors of St. Benedict the Moor Church have been open for over a month, and while some returned, there were no starving crowds banging at the door to come in to meet Christ at the Supper of the Lamb after being deprived of this incredible blessing. Nor have the numbers grown as time has gone on. If anything, the number of those joining our Lord to worship and give thanks have diminished as the world continues to open up.

Please come back.

The Lord stands waiting with open arms to welcome all back. He desires to feed you with what you need most. Do not leave him neglected and abandoned.

Please come back.

It is safe to come back. There are many worries and fears being spread incessantly, and some with good reason, yet none of these now prevent us from going to the grocery store, getting a haircut, or buying clothes, crafts, and toys. There are risks associated with these and each and every action we take. And yet the church stands mostly empty. Of course, precautions must be taken to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our neighbors. But those measures *have* been put in place at St. Benedict the Moor, and they are working quite well. Social distancing is employed, and there is still plenty of room for many more. Facemasks are required. Hand sanitizers are available. The church is cleaned after every Mass. Procedures and protocols have been incorporated into a stream-lined celebration of the Liturgy. The congregation is respectful of these rules and of each other. Mass at St. Benedict the Moor is at least as safe, if not more, as anywhere else that is open to the public. Do not be afraid. *It is safe to come back.*

PLEASE come back.

There is no such thing as living a risk-free life. We are mere pilgrims in a foreign land, and our passage through this world is only for a short time. We are destined to be with God in Heaven for all eternity. Even if—*even if*—you were to get sick and die, despite all these precautions, by coming to Mass to receive Holy Communion, would that not be a beautiful death? Would not God, knowing that you died because your love was so strong that nothing would keep you from the Son, welcome you into Heaven with the eternal, loving embrace of the Father? Would not the Blessed Virgin and all the angels and saints in Heaven rejoice as you joined them? Is that not worth the risk for something you need to live?

Please come back.