



## DIOCESE OF PAISLEY

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Feast of the Assumption 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

### **Pastoral Letter: Solemnity of the Assumption and Lifting of Restrictions**

This Sunday we gather for the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Blessed Mother into Heaven and celebrate our faith that Mary was assumed body and soul into Heaven to share in the fullness of the Resurrection of Her Son, Our LORD Jesus Christ.

The joy of this Feast is only increased with the news that Covid restrictions in Scotland have been lifted. After eighteen months in which the Pandemic has dominated our lives, the Scottish Government has judged now is the right moment to return the care for our wellbeing into our own hands, with almost all Covid measures removed, including the requirement of physical distancing. Though it recognises there will still be nervousness around, it has reassured us that the vaccines are now giving significant protection.

At this point I want to recognise particularly the tireless commitment of our elected leaders in endeavouring to keep us safe according to their best judgement in ever changing circumstances. I hope they will now be allowed some well-merited rest and reflection before retaking the more normal business of government.

Nor can we forget those doctors, nurses and health and care workers on the frontline, as well as volunteers in key posts, who risked their lives to serve and save others. We thank GOD, too, for those in scientific research who have found effective solutions for overcoming this virus. I personally want to thank our priests who were there for us throughout this crisis with pastoral support in our hospitals and gravesides, our parishes and schools, as well as online with spiritual nourishment. May GOD bless all of those who were there for us at great cost and in an heroic spirit of service.

Of course, we cannot look forward without acknowledging those who suffered most through the Pandemic: those who mourned loved ones who died, at times buried in a way that grieved them deeply; those who accompanied sick relatives and friends but who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, could not be close to them; those who suffered the fallout of the economy and employment. We do not forget any of them and keep them all in our prayers as we begin to move on.



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At this point, as we return to some sense of normality, I want to thank especially our diocesan Infection Control Working Group of Mgr. Gerry Gallagher, Fr. Paul Bady and Cn. Tom Boyle, as well as our clergy and their teams of infection control volunteers, who have been quite exemplary in ensuring that our churches are the safest public spaces of all. I know you are especially grateful to them for their faithful care.

Now, as we enter a new context where we no longer ask ourselves what we cannot do but begin to look to what we can do, I want to assure you that we, together with your parish priests, will continue to do all in our power to keep you both safe and feeling safe and to keep all risk at its lowest level.

With that assurance, I now want to encourage you to return to your parishes for Sunday Masses and to encourage your friends and family to return too. As our society looks to begin again with a new normal that recognises what truly matters, it is important that we put GOD and His living Presence in the Eucharist at the heart of our attempts to rebuild our society.

Of course, those with underlying health conditions can feel content to continue to avail themselves of the wonderful online provisions we have been able to put in place, but I hope that all hale and hearty Catholics will now want to return to Sunday Eucharist and take up again your unique place in the living Body of Christ.

We place all our concerns and hopes for our Church in these months ahead into the hands of Our Lady, *the Woman who brought into the world the Son who was to rule all the nations*. Just as the LORD made *a place of safety for Her*, may He look after us, and may we eventually join again in our Churches in the great cry from Heaven: *Victory and power and empire to our God, and all authority for his Christ.*

With prayers and best wishes,



Bishop John