

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

MAY 24, 2020



Dear friends in the Risen Lord,

As you may have heard, Archbishop Hartmayer has called for the resumption of public Masses throughout the Archdiocese of Atlanta on Pentecost—the weekend of May 30-31. I know that this news will lift many hearts, and I am glad for that. What pastor would not rejoice to know that his parish is yearning for the Eucharist!

I have reservations about the prudence of gathering so soon; but in obedience to the Archbishop, we will resume our regular schedule of public weekend Masses at IHM on Saturday evening, May 30, the Vigil of Pentecost. Public daily Mass will resume on Monday, June 1. But please remember that everyone is still dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, and we will continue to livestream our daily and Sunday Masses for the benefit of those who should not attend and those who prefer not to attend at this time. (If I were not a priest, I would not come to a public Mass this month.)

Governor Kemp's current executive order calls for those over age 65 and the medically fragile to continue to shelter at home until June 12. The resumption of public Masses should not be construed as an invitation for anyone to violate that order. We encourage those over age 65 and those at higher risk of serious illness to continue to join us by livestream. Even after June 12, seniors and those with serious underlying health conditions or compromised immune systems should seek advice from their physician before coming to Mass.

When public Masses resume, precautions will be in place to protect the health of all. They include:

- **No one with a fever or any other symptom of illness—cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, sore throat or loss of taste or smell—and no one who has been in the presence of a Covid-19 patient in the previous 14 days, should come to church for any reason.** We ask everyone to check their own temperature each time before they leave home for Mass, and to remain home if they have a fever above 99.6. When you arrive at church, you will be asked about your health, and a thermometer will be available if you are unsure about your body temperature.
- Archdiocesan policy now restricts church occupancy to 25% of a building's former capacity. **At IHM we will be able to accommodate safely only about 125 people per Mass! In order to regulate that number, advance reservations will be required for everyone attending Mass. Beginning on Tuesday, May 26 at 9:00 a.m., you may call the parish office at 404-636-1418 to make a reservation.** If, because of capacity control, it is not possible for you to attend the weekend Mass of your choice, please consider coming to a weekday Mass instead. In order to allow more people the opportunity to participate in a Mass, we ask that no one register for more than one Mass per week for the time being.
- **All Mass-goers age 3 and older will be required to bring a face mask and to wear it from the time they exit their vehicle and throughout Mass. There will be no exceptions.**
- Seating will be assigned upon arrival by ushers, who will maintain a 6-foot distance between households. It will not be possible to honor requests for a favorite pew. Please do not attempt to seat yourself.
- There will be no nursery available during Mass for the foreseeable future.
- We cannot sanitize the restrooms after each visit. Moreover, once Mass begins, it will be impossible to leave the pew to go to the restroom without putting others at risk. **Please plan for the entire household to satisfy all restroom needs at home before coming to church. Restrooms will be closed except for emergencies.**
- Holy Communion will be offered under one species only, and only in the hand. Communicants should bring their own hand sanitizer to use immediately prior to receiving Holy Communion and again after.
- The assembly will be dismissed pew-by-pew at the end of Mass in order to maintain appropriate distance, and all should go directly to their car. It will not be possible to remain following Mass for fellowship or private prayer, as the church will be closed immediately to be sanitized before the next Mass.

I realize that these precautions may seem burdensome. But as eager as we are to resume our public worship and to draw near once again to Christ in the Eucharist, it is critical that we do so in a way that protects the most vulnerable and does not place anyone at increased risk of illness or death. I thank you for your patience, understanding and cooperation.