



*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful,  
and kindle in them the fire of your love. Amen.*

May 28, 2020

Dear Members and Friends of the Cathedral of Saint Peter,  
Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception, and Saint Patrick,

I had no idea that it would end up being so long that we have been unable to gather together to worship God in our beautiful churches when we closed on March 16. In the past two-and-a-half months, much has changed. The coronavirus has now taken more than 100,000 lives in our country alone and affected all our lives—schools and workplaces have been closed, families and friends have been unable to be together, and the normality that marked our everyday lives seems so long ago. While our lives and world will never be the same, our society is slowly and cautiously reopening. Bishop Malooly has given permission for churches in Delaware to open beginning Monday, June 1.

I am grateful for his leadership during these troubled days. Working closely with him, I know how seriously he approaches his role as our spiritual father and shepherd. His concern throughout this all has been our health—both physical and spiritual. With his permission and after much preparation, we are now in a position re-open our churches. In this letter I wish to lay out how the return to our churches will take place.

At the outset, I remind you that the dispensation Bishop Malooly granted on March 13 remains in effect: for the duration of the pandemic, he has lifted the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday. We will continue to live-stream Masses on [www.YouTube.com/DowntownCatholic](http://www.YouTube.com/DowntownCatholic) our YouTube channel. If you are ill, particularly vulnerable (e.g. over the age of sixty, with existing heart or lung conditions, diabetic, or otherwise immuno-compromised), or even just apprehensive about returning, you are **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED**, for your own health, to avoid the risk of attending public celebrations of the Church until all restrictions have been lifted. Individuals are the primary protectors of their own health; there is always risk coming into public spaces. Coming into an open church building carries that same risk. Individuals assume that risk for themselves in these circumstances.

For those who do decide to return to our churches, know that we are limited to one-third of our occupancy. That means that the Cathedral can accommodate a maximum of 140 people, Saint Mary can accommodate a maximum of 33 people, and Saint Patrick can accommodate a maximum of 73 people. This number includes the priest and those who assist in opening the church, keeping it clean, operating the live-stream, etc. Additionally, those who are present will have to maintain a six-foot physical separation from anyone not in your own household. To assist with that, we will be closing off some pews, and ushers will assist in seating you to maximum our seating capacity. During this time, you most likely will not be able to sit in the pew you usually would.

Bishop Malooly has directed that everyone over the age of 13 wear a cloth facemask upon entering the church and for the duration of your time inside. Everyone will be asked to sanitize their hands at the door of the church, too. I realize that some of you may dislike or object to some of these procedures and those listed in the attached document. Please know that these measures are undertaken in balancing the interests of public health and the desire to return to the celebration of the Sacraments as soon as we can. As we are able and at the bishop's direction, we will return to a more normal practice of worship, but until then I ask that you comply with the directives set out herein. They have been set by Bishop Malooly for the whole diocese; please receive with a spirit of understanding. And, if you do disagree, I would encourage you to receive them in a spirit of obedience to our bishop, knowing that the Lord has entrusted to him (and not to us) the authority over our church in the Diocese of Wilmington and it is his task to regulate how the liturgy is celebrated in our diocese in accord with the universal Church. If you still find difficulty with following these directives, I would ask that you wait until the regulations are relaxed and we return to our normal practices.

During this time of limited occupancy levels, our Mass and Confession schedules will be different from what they were previously. These changes are based on the numbers of those who usually attended, the ability of Father McVoy and me to cover all the Masses, the occupancy limits, and the need for time between Masses to sanitize the churches. The Mass and Confession times can be found in the separate document *Returning to our Downtown Catholic Parishes* and on the website. In the document, you will find more detailed directives, including for how to receive Holy Communion. Additionally, in the coming days, I hope to post a video explaining these procedures on our YouTube channel. If you have not already received this message via email through FlockNote, do please sign up for our parishes' online mailing list at [DowntownCatholic.FlockNote.com](http://DowntownCatholic.FlockNote.com). By doing so, you'll be the first to receive information in the future.

For Sunday (and Saturday evening) Masses, we will be using an online RSVP system to assist us in ensuring that we do not go over the occupancy limit. A link to sign up is located on both webpages: [cathedralofstpeter.com](http://cathedralofstpeter.com) and [smspwilmington.com](http://smspwilmington.com) underneath this letter. By clicking the link, you will be taken to a Sign Up Genius page. There you will find a list of Masses for a given weekend. Select the one you want to attend, click the green *Sign Up* button and then the orange *Submit and Sign Up* button. Then you will select the number of people in your household who will attend and give your name, the names of those others attending, an email, and a phone number. While we are under this limited occupancy, **it is required that you RSVP online in order to attend a Saturday evening or Sunday Mass**; this way we can ensure we do not go above the limit and we can plan to maximize our seating. **If you cannot RSVP online**, please contact Dian O'Leary at (302) 545-2934.

In conclusion, if I may make the words of our Lord my own, I have eagerly desired to celebrate this Passover with you. (*Luke 22:15*) Even though we were unable to finish Lent together and were separated for the Easter season, our communities were joined together in daily prayer with and for one another. I look forward to welcoming you back to our churches and worshipping our Lord together in person again.

*God bless you!*  
*Father McQuaide*