



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

May 29, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am grateful for the opportunity to write to you again as your Shepherd, yet also as your fellow brother in Christ. This Pentecost, I am reflecting on those very first days of our Church and what the Church is at its deepest core. It is you, me, and all our fellow parishioners; baptized into a life with Jesus Christ. Together we form a body with Christ as our head. Though we have not been able to be together physically, we are still the Church. Know that you have not walked this challenging stretch of life alone.

As you no doubt have learned, Governor Sununu announced today that the state's general restrictions have been modified for houses of worship. This means that state public health authorities now consider it to be reasonable to resume public gatherings for worship, as long as safeguards laid out in the new guidelines (such as limiting attendance to a 40% capacity, social distancing, and sanitization) are put into place. This is also consistent with the recently-issued Centers for Disease Control guidelines for houses of worship.

After considering these public health announcements, I am ecstatic to announce that the great reunion we all have longed for is at hand. We will resume public celebrations of the Eucharist in the Diocese of Manchester as soon as the weekend of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity (June 6 - 7) for those parishes which are prepared to do so by then, and on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi (June 13 - 14) for those parishes which need more time to prepare. Parishes that are able may begin with daily Mass once they can implement the instructions that will be forthcoming from the Diocese. As we return, let us be renewed by the Holy Spirit and remember what the Acts of the Apostles said of the Church after describing Peter's first homily: "*All who believed were together and had all things in common*" (Acts 2:44).

These intervening days are designed to give our parishes the ability to prepare everyone, and in particular those who will serve as ministers and volunteers, in the implementation of the measures that public health experts have said are important for the safety of the public.

It will be critical for all of us to continue to work together. We will need to be vigilant in ensuring that this return is done in such a way as to protect one another and especially the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters. In the coming days, we will be providing more details and instruction on how this resumption will be carried out. Please watch your parish website and social media sites for further information specific to your parish.

I am grateful to those who, with great charity, have endured this period of physical separation from the source and summit of our faith. By selflessly putting the interests of your brothers and sisters ahead of your own desires, as a true family does, you have embodied what, in the end, the Eucharist is all about: sacrificial love. May the graces that flow from this difficult period in our history draw us even closer to our blessed Lord, and through Him closer to each other, inspiring us to ever greater acts of worship and service on behalf of all those who are in need.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter A. Libasci". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci
Bishop of Manchester