



ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI

Office of the Archbishop

May 8, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Over the past eight weeks, the Bishops of Ohio have met on a regular basis to discuss recommendations and requirements put in place by the State of Ohio and the medical profession to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. Early in those discussions, we very reluctantly agreed that we had to suspend the public celebration of Mass for the safety of our parishioners and for the common good of our communities. These past weeks and months have been very difficult, but I am grateful to our priests, deacons, and lay leaders who continued to show genuine pastoral care for our people by staying in contact with parishioners in very creative ways. Many parishes live streamed Mass, connected with parishioners through phone calls, opened their churches for private devotions, offered spiritual reflections in online videos, etc. I am deeply, deeply grateful to all who have taken these initiatives. I am also grateful for all of you who have maintained spiritual closeness through these and other means and continued to live the Catholic faith in your homes.

On May 8, the Bishops of Ohio issued a statement by which we informed Catholics in the State of Ohio that, while making every effort to respect the spirit of the governor's *"Responsible Restart Ohio Plan,"* we will begin to make the public celebration of Mass available once again. **In the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, public Masses will begin on Monday, May 25.**

At the same time, I must emphasize that this is not going to be "a return to normal." Health and safety requirements and recommendations must continue to be followed. Among these are social distancing, the use of face masks, and concern for the most vulnerable.

Because of social distancing, church capacity will be significantly reduced and the number of people who attend a particular Mass will have to be regulated and limited. Please remember that you have been dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, and that dispensation will remain in place for the foreseeable future. Thus, those who wish to participate in Mass and receive Holy Communion can do so by attending any Mass that is celebrated any day of the week. I am asking our pastors to make every effort to have a Mass celebrated publicly in every parish/region every day of the week beginning May 25.

Pastors, priests, deacons, parish staff, and volunteers are establishing respective guidelines for public health in each parish church. Please be respectful of these guidelines. Those who are elderly or vulnerable should continue to stay at home, mindful of the dispensation from the Sunday obligation. Parishes are asked to try to find ways to safely bring Holy Communion to shut-ins. People who are fearful that they may be putting their health, or the health of their family, at risk should likewise continue to remain at home.

On Sunday, May 3, the first Sunday of the month of May, a month dedicated in a special way to give honor to the Blessed Virgin Mary, I re-consecrated our archdiocese to the maternal care of Mary. In the prayer of consecration, I prayed: "Most Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and our Mother ... In this time of pandemic, we come to you, our sign of sure hope and comfort ... bring everyone under your protection and entrust everyone to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord."

With the Blessed Virgin Mary interceding on our behalf we will get through these challenging times and draw nearer to her Son, the Good Shepherd.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr
Archbishop of Cincinnati

RADIATE CHRIST