



TIMOTHY CARDINAL DOLAN

June 12, 2020
Month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Dear Family of the Archdiocese of New York:

Because the news headlines of the past few months have seemed to be unrelentingly disturbing and depressing, I am eager to share some good news. Daily Mass began earlier this week in the parishes of the archdiocese in Dutchess, Sullivan, Ulster, Orange, Rockland, Westchester, and Putnam counties, and Sunday Mass will begin in those same counties this Sunday, June 14, providentially the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ – *Corpus Christi!* In addition, funerals, weddings, and baptisms can also be held once again. (The solemn obligation to attend Sunday Mass continues to be temporarily suspended.) Of course, we must follow the advice of health professionals and limit attendance to no more than 25% of a church's capacity, keep social distance, wear masks, and observe all of the health and safety requirements that have become such a part of our daily routines.

Understandably, parishes in Staten Island, The Bronx, and Manhattan must wait a few more weeks until New York City enters Phase 2 of the New York State's re-opening process. However, churches in those boroughs remain open for visitation, prayer, and the sacrament of confession, and we look forward to the resumption of Mass in these parishes soon.

Your patience and understanding throughout this difficult period have been admirable. I have been moved by the many letters, phone calls, and emails sent to me, expressing your longing to be able to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist, telling me of your admiration for your parish priest, or offering your support for your parish and the archdiocese as we deal with the financial implications of the coronavirus shutdown. Even though our churches were temporarily closed for public Mass, our priests and parishes found new and innovative ways to reach out to the people, including regular contact with parishioners, graveside services, and on-line Mass. The Mass from Saint Patrick's Cathedral has reached tens of thousands of people each week!

I have also been moved by the heroic work done by *Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese* and *ArchCare*, our healthcare ministry, in responding to the growing and changing needs of the people throughout these months. It is not an exaggeration to say that they are on the frontlines, finding new and creative ways to help alleviate the pain and suffering of so many people, and making real the words of Jesus, “whatever you do for your brother and sister, you do for Me.”

So, too, our Catholic schools have continued to provide a quality education to our students. Our teachers, administrators, and support staff from the Superintendent of Schools office all worked together to quickly transition to at-home learning.

When I wrote to you in March, I shared with you that ordinary parish income was down by 50%. Many of you responded generously, including signing up for electronic giving through *WeShare* (check your parish website for details), and in April and May our parishes received close to 70% of their regular income – thank you! What an inspirational display of stewardship! You have made a difference. Without your support, our situation would be even more dire than it is.

However, to be transparent, we, like many of you, are still facing towering financial challenges. Allow me to share some with you:

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, the archdiocese had to support many of our parishes, schools, and other institutions that were unable to make it on their own. For instance, the archdiocese shares \$10 million per year with struggling parishes, while our schools receive \$40 million in annual subsidies in order to keep their doors open. In addition, many of the parents of our school students were unable to make tuition payments since February, due to loss of income because of layoffs, unemployment, or a drop in wages. Many of our generous supporters, like the *Inner-City Scholarship Fund*, and the *Alfred E. Smith Foundation*, stepped forward to help bridge the gap for the remainder of the school year. But, many of our schools have very few students registered for this September, as struggling families are unable to afford tuition, even with our scholarships, and we may be looking at a significant number of school closures, something we work very hard to avoid.

The *Cardinal’s Annual Stewardship Appeal*, which helps fund many of the basic ministries of the archdiocese, is also down about \$4 million this year, even as the needs of the people we serve are on the rise.

All of this comes as the archdiocese continues to prepare to respond to the many lawsuits – at last count, close to 400 have been filed – that are part of the *Child Victims Act*, which, as you know, eliminated the statute of limitations for one year and allowed civil lawsuits for the sexual abuse of minors; that “look-back” window, which was due to expire in August, has now been extended through January, and may be further extended until August 2021. I have promised you I will keep you posted. Just know that we have before us more bad news of past scandal, and towering costs. I renew to you this commitment: none of the donations we receive for specific ministries of the archdiocese will be used to pay for the cost of these lawsuits.

I share all of this information, not to criticize or appeal for sympathy, but because you deserve to know the truth, especially if we, as an archdiocese, need to make some difficult decisions in the months ahead.

May I switch gears for just a moment?

These past two weeks, all across the country, we have seen protests, marches, and demonstrations in the wake of the tragic death of George Floyd. The rallying cry of “Black Lives Matter” has echoed throughout the land, as indeed it should. Yes, of course, *all* lives matter – is there a more basic truth of our faith that we are all made in the image and likeness of God? – but the reality is that the sin and evil of racism continues to haunt our society, and, sadly, it too often appears that, for some, Black lives don’t matter, or don’t matter enough. I have made many friends in the NYPD and in other law enforcement agencies throughout the archdiocese. I know that the vast, overwhelming majority of our law enforcement officers are good and decent people, and that we shouldn’t let the horrific acts of a few tarnish all. The same could be said of the demonstrators, who were overwhelmingly peaceful and well intentioned, and should not be associated with those who were bent on looting and destruction.

As we seek to confront the sin in our own lives – whatever that sin might be – we need conversion of heart, and the grace and mercy of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Our *Reconciliation Monday* this past Lent was canceled due to the virus. Therefore, as we begin to return to Mass, we will celebrate *Reconciliation Friday* this June 19, the *Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*. Confessions will be heard in all parishes of the archdiocese from 10 a.m. – Noon, and from 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. I am happy that our neighbors in the Diocese of Rockville Centre will be joining us in offering the sacrament at this time, so wherever you are, you can stop in and find a priest ready and eager to hear your confession.

I hope you will forgive the length of this letter – I had not intended to write an encyclical!
But know of my gratitude for all you do for the Church in New York.

With prayerful best wishes for you and your loved ones, I am,

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, starting with a plus sign (+) followed by the name "Tim. Card. Dolan" in a cursive script.

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York