



IMMACULATE HEART^{OF}MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR MARCH 12, 2023

Dear friends in the Lord,

It was this week three years ago when it became clear that assembling for Mass was a public health peril, as Covid-19 surged here and around the world. Public Masses were suspended in the Archdiocese of Atlanta and in most places, and parishes were encouraged to make the Mass available online.

We were blessed at IHM to have the expertise of two Emmy-winning cinematographers, Evan McIntosh and Jordan McMonagle, who devoted their time and talent to designing and installing a state-of-the-art livestream capability in our church. At the same time, a small band of dedicated parish volunteers learned how to operate the system and made the broadcast of Mass from IHM available on Sundays and weekdays, for weddings and funerals. Over time, as word spread about our livestreams, we attracted viewers from around the world, many of whom reached out to thank us. I will be forever grateful to Evan and Jordan, to Deacon Erik who chaired the new ministry of livestream techs at IHM, and to all who participated to bring the Mass to our parish family while we were sheltering at home.

It was an unnerving experience celebrating the Eucharist in an empty church. (At the beginning, remember, only the priest, lector, organist, cantor and livestream tech were permitted in the building.) The liturgy is, literally, the “work of the people,” and although in generations past, Catholics might have thought of it as “Father’s Mass,” at which they were mere spectators, the Second Vatican Council restored a more ancient understanding, and called for the “full, conscious and active participation” of all the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist. I had spent my entire priestly life trying to implement the renewal of the Council, and it was heartbreaking to have to surrender that vision for more than a year due to the pandemic. And of course the reception of Christ’s Body and Blood in Holy Communion is a tremendous—perhaps the preeminent—source of grace, and I knew that making a “spiritual communion” while watching a livestreamed Mass on a screen would never be an adequate substitute.

This anniversary of our livestreams is an apropos time to issue a call for new volunteers in that ministry. Many of our first livestream techs became unavailable after they returned to their workplaces over the last year. If you enjoy technology (or video games!) and would like to part of our outreach to the homebound who still count on our livestreamed Mass every weekend, please contact David Nieto at dnieto@ihmatlanta.org or 404-636-1418 ext. 229.

Your brother in Christ’s word and work,