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DIOCESE OF NASHVILLE

April 13, 2021

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Peace be with you this Easter season. He Is Risen! Let us rejoice together!

This has been a most unusual and difficult year for all of us. A year ago at this time, none of us could have envisioned the anxiety, illnesses, deaths and other losses as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. We likewise could never have imagined that the dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation would have had to remain in effect for a full year!

From the beginning, the entire Diocese of Nashville has held the safety of our parishioners and schoolchildren as a paramount concern. As we all remember, after temporarily suspending the public celebration of Mass in March (one of the most painful things I have had to do as your bishop), last May we were able to reinstate the public celebration of Mass with strong new health and hygiene protocols in place. Since that time, we have been able to keep both our churches and schools open for public worship and education thanks to the vigilance and dedication of both clergy and lay leaders alike. Thankfully, we were finally able to lift the dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation. As each day now brings more good news in overcoming the pandemic, a greater return to normalcy is beginning to blossom.

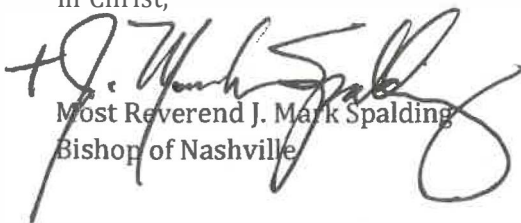
It warmed my heart to see so many of the faithful experiencing, in-person, the joy and promise of the liturgies throughout Holy Week and Easter, but we must now go deeper. As more and more aspects of daily life re-open and revitalize, so too must our regular worship and of our fellowship and community with Christ in the Eucharist.

As a brother bishop recently remarked on Jesus' Bread of Life discourse: "Jesus meant exactly what he said: He is truly present in the Eucharist. If Jesus had meant it as a symbol, he would not have repeated this message seven times in this dialogue! Despite the uproar caused by his teaching, Jesus did not soften his claim. On the contrary, he strengthened it."

The Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life (Lumen Gentium, 11). At Mass, our souls are nourished by Word and the Sacrament of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

As your bishop, and on behalf of all our Pastors of the 58 churches in the Diocese of Nashville, I personally invite and welcome all to experience Jesus Christ in worship and the celebration of the sacraments, in fellowship and in community. I also encourage you to evangelize and bring along family, friends, and others you feel may have suffered from feeling isolated during these many months. Christ gave us the Church to help support each other for exactly times like this. **Let Us Rejoice Together!**

In Christ,



Most Reverend J. Mark Spalding
Bishop of Nashville

Living and Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, Welcoming All!