



October 7, 2020

Dear Friends and Family,

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the whole world to adjust to a new reality. Our seminary is no different. Yet, despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus, Cathedral Seminary continues to full its mandate of forming men into mature disciples and helping them discern the priesthood.

As we pass the halfway point of this semester, all our seminarians, faculty, and staff have remained COVID-19 free. Allow me to share with you how, with God's assistance, we have kept our community safe and healthy. We are temperature-checked every day, tested for the virus every two weeks, and have limited, as much as possible, contact with the outside world. I am sure it has been a sacrifice for you, our friends and family. It has certainly been a sacrifice for the seminarians (and faculty!) to be physically distant from all of you. While our collegians have had to attend most of their classes virtually, our pre-theologians in the MA in Catholic Philosophical Studies program have taken the majority of their classes in person. These classes are taught by resident faculty or by adjuncts who maintain social distance protocols. In the classrooms, when on the buffet line for meals, and on the first floor and basement of our campus, where there might be contact with non-resident employees, our seminary community wears masks. The campus at Douglaston, normally a pastoral hub for the Diocese of Brooklyn, has been closed to non-residents and non-essential employees until the pandemic passes. I am proud of the way the seminarians have taken care of each other, even taking turns daily disinfecting the residential areas of the seminary. I am grateful to the campus staff who work diligently to sanitize the rest of the facilities every day. The folks in our kitchen have not only fed us well, but provided a festive and homey atmosphere at meals.

With God's help, good planning, and the efforts of our entire community, we have been able to live a relatively normal and socially healthy life at Douglaston. Bishop DiMarzio, and the Diocese of Brooklyn, who hosts the seminary, have been incredibly gracious and supportive in our efforts to run a formation program amid a global pandemic. It is a blessing to witness our seminarian community make lemonade out of this pandemic lemon. Our faculty and staff have continued their normal excellent work, but have also shown great patience, creativity, and, most of all a generosity that comes from their love of Jesus and His Church and a tremendous care for seminarians. The seminarians have been remarkably resilient and have rolled with all the adjustments that have been made this semester. The circumstances provided by the pandemic have robbed them and all of us of many of the comforts and supports we are used to. Perhaps because our men have had to rely more on each other and on the Lord, I have seen an unprecedented enthusiasm and joy in our community.

Regarding the spring semester, while the situation is very much fluid, it appears that we will be following the same protocols as this semester. Once again, the seminary community will be in a "bubble", avoiding gatherings with outside groups and residing completely on campus for the spring semester, except for Easter break (Wednesday of Holy Week after classes and through Easter Monday). This means that, again, there will be no home weekends. Nor will we be able to have non-seminary residents stay with us. As of now, special events like Pastor's Night, and Bishops' visits, are put on hold. However, we are hoping to have our *5th Annual Cathedral Seminary Golf Classic* and end of the year

Convocation in May. Obviously, if the Covid-19 situation changes, we will adjust our program accordingly. Let us pray that vaccines become readily available and we can all return to a more normal life sooner rather than later.

Earlier I wrote that we have done our best turning this pandemic lemon into lemonade. However, this is not exactly what is happening. The most important member of our community is Christ. He is at the heart of all we are and all we do. Our Lord has allowed us to join all our sufferings, the relatively smaller but nonetheless real sufferings of our community, and all the sufferings in the world, to His perfect sacrifice of the Cross. Through the power of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we have found that good has been able to flourish at Douglaston amid coronavirus: a stronger and more joyful community, a greater awareness of the needs of others, and an opportunity to fill the void that comes from isolation with a deeper relationship with God.

Please continue to pray for us and know you are in our prayers.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. George Sears".

Fr. George Sears
Rector