Dear Beatitudes Family

The facts about COVID-19 today and its rate of transmission are indeed sobering to hear. Yesterday, the Director General of the World Health Organization said that globally, the pandemic is actually speeding up. The state of Arizona is one of the 36 states that have seen a big surge of COVID-19 in the past few weeks. On Monday, Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey rolled back the state’s re-opening and instituted a month-long pause on the operations of bars, gyms, theaters, water parks and tubing rentals to help slow down the spread. Arizona Department of Health Services Director Dr. Cara Christ announced the activation of “Crisis Standards of Care,” which helps hospitals manage the surge and helps guide allocation of scarce resources.

COVID-19 testing is still of paramount importance across the campus to contain the spread. We believe that testing is the pillar of containing the spread, particular in surveilling the individuals who are pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic. It leads to quicker identification of cases, quicker treatment for those people testing positive and immediate quarantine or isolation to prevent the spread of the virus. Early testing also helps to identify anyone who has come into contact with infected people.

At the campus, we are in the midst of our testing “blitz,” testing residents and staff. To get this accomplished, we have had to contract with three different labs to do the testing. So far, we have had 559 residents and staff tested – 185 for the serology antibody test and 373 for the PCR (Nasal Swab) test. We have tested all staff working in the Health Care Center and tested and retested residents on the 4th floor in the Health Care Center. Another 235 tests were administered today for staff working in Assisted Living and the Health Care Center as well as staff in departments supporting those areas. Additionally, today residents on the 3rd and 4th floor of the Health Care Center were tested. Of course, we continue to screen all people – residents, staff and essential health care providers – for symptoms before they ever set foot on campus.

We have had nine residents in the Health Care Center test positive for COVID-19 and four residents in Assisted Living/Early Memory Support. About half of the residents are asymptomatic and all are in isolation rooms. Since the pandemic began, 23 staff have also tested positive and four of those have recovered. The rest are in quarantine at home and will remain in quarantine for at least 14 days from their symptom onset or from the date of their positive test after having 72 hours with no symptoms.

Sadly, we have had two residents in the Health Care Center who succumbed to COVID-19 in the past week. Please keep the families of these residents in your hearts and prayers. We were blessed to have these individuals as part of our lives and we will miss them.

These numbers are concerning, but they are not unexpected. COVID-19 is highly contagious, and, in Arizona, the increasing rate of infection makes the state very vulnerable to a rapid spread. This virus is known to be more virulent to aging, immune-compromised people. Small, relatively confined settings like a health care center, where staff frequently move from one room to the next, are particularly vulnerable to spreading infection. At Beatitudes Campus, we have rigorous infection control protocols in place and have been in constant contact with the Maricopa County Department of Health Services and Arizona Department of Health Services and have followed their recommendations. The Health Care Center passed three additional inspections for infection control during the pandemic – one from the CDC and two from Arizona Department of Health Services. Although masks and PPE were hard to get in the beginning of the pandemic, the supply chain has loosened and getting equipment is not as difficult as it was previously.

Please know that we are working diligently to keep our residents and your loved ones as safe as we can. The safety of residents and staff continues to be our top priority and we are doing whatever it takes to keep Beatitudes Campus as safe as we can. We mandate masks at all times on the campus, and we urge you to wear a mask whenever you leave your house. According to the CDC, wearing a mask can reduce transmission of the virus by up to 50 percent. Mask-
Over the past months, The New York Times has received a number of poems submitted by its readers. They make for fascinating and poignant reading now that they have been collectively published on the Times’ website. As I read through them, one in particular stood out to me. It was written by Bonnie Shaw, of Salt Lake City.

‘The Before Times have receded deep into memory as if all of that happened ten, no, twenty years ago when we lived in another land of freedom & movement & laughter & hugging & sitting in each other’s living rooms, living, alive, chatting for hours without measuring the social distance, without wearing N95 surgical masks or nitrile gloves, without anxious fear.

Now we are living in another land, frightened & confused, our minds always tasked with remembering to wash our hands, not touch our faces, not touch packages or mail without gloves & Clorox wipes & yes, remembering to worry, as if anxious worry could create a high wall surrounded by a moat of reeking & fuming disinfectant to keep us safe in this new land of contamination & fever & suffocation & death.

We must not forget the Before Times, when we could touch doorknobs, doorbells, the mail, U.P.S. packages, restaurant tabletops, colleagues’ keyboards, other people’s hands, our own faces.

We must not forget dinner parties, book groups, political rallies, concerts, movies, worship services, protests, weddings, funerals. In the Before Times we shared our joys & sorrows together. Will we ever live together again?’

Her references to the ‘Before Times’ have a particular poignancy to them, as ‘laughter & hugging & sitting in each other’s living rooms’ stand in stark contrast to so much of what has become our new normal. The ‘Before Times’ do indeed seem long ago. Perhaps it is that feeling which causes her to end with the question, ’Will we ever live together again?’

I think we have all pondered what our post-covid lives will look like, but the answer to that question must surely be yes; we will be together again.

That sure hope, drawn from our faith that these things too shall pass was what inspired the song “We’ll Meet Again”. Sung by Vera Lynn during the WWII, that song expressed the hope that loved ones separated by the war would soon be safely united again, and its words speak to our own situation also;

“We’ll meet again, don’t know where don’t know when. But I know we’ll meet again some sunny day. Keep smiling through, just like you always do ‘Till the blue skies drive the dark clouds far away’.

While dark clouds are still with us it can be difficult to see the Before Times returning. But they will. And we will meet again. And when that day dawns we shall say together ‘This is the day that the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it!’ (Ps. 118:24).