

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** December 13, 2020, 11:00 AM  
**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT ST. MARK'S  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** ...And I want to follow in the spirit of Pastor Quissico, and say, in this joyous season, a Merry Christmas to all, *Feliz Navidad a todos*, [inaudible] Noel. Whatever language you speak, the Christmas season is upon us, and it's such a powerful time of year. A time of hope, a time of faith, a time for family and community, and we need it now. We need it now, don't we? And here at St. Marks, this is a faith community and a powerful faith community, but also an anchor for the larger community, and Pastor Quissico has seen to that, and I honor him and thank him for all he has done to feed the community, to watch out for the young people in the community, to make this a place of hope for the whole community. Let's thank Pastor Quissico for his great work.

[Applause]

And, I have to tell you, I am particularly moved to be joining you this day, because in a matter of days, this coming week, this will be a week that changes the history of New York City. There is no doubt about this statement. The week we're about to begin, will change the history of New York City for the better will change our lives for the better, because this week coming, the vaccine arrives in New York City, the vaccine to fight back the coronavirus, the vaccine that will allow us to turn the page on this extraordinarily difficult era we've all been through. This year, 2020, we could not have imagined it, the pain and the challenge that so many families have experienced the suffering, the loss. So many families have felt it, lost loved ones, gone through the sickness, lost jobs. What a challenging and difficult season it's been. What a challenging year. It's been one thing I think unites all New Yorkers. We all want 2020 to be over don't we? We're all ready for a new year aren't we? Well, it's coming, and the new year comes with the new vaccine, and here's what's important to know this vaccine is not just a shot in the medical sense. It is a shot of hope as well, because it shows us that we will overcome the coronavirus.

Now, people want proof. They want to know the vaccine works, and our health care leadership has said it has been confirmed to them. They are satisfied. They're ready to take it themselves. I'm ready to take it myself when my time comes. But New Yorkers will judge as always by what they see in their own communities. But here's the other important thing – the vaccine must be distributed equitably and fairly. The vaccine must reach the people who need it most and who have borne the brunt of the coronavirus. The Black community, the Latino community, the Asian communities, the people of color of this city have disproportionately suffered from the coronavirus and therefore need the vaccine the most. And we are adamant in the city that we will not distribute this vaccine according to who has the most wealth or privilege or celebrity. We will distribute it according to which community needs it the most. That is the work we will do in

these weeks ahead, starting with the people who deserve it the most, our healthcare heroes serving at the front line who have protected us all. Haven't our health care heroes been amazing this year? We honor them.

[Applause]

And we will protect them. Our seniors, particularly our seniors who live in nursing homes and the good people who work in nursing homes. That's where the first priority you should go, and then we want to make sure all the first responders, all the people who serve us and then our seniors in communities that have suffered the most, people with those pre-existing conditions. We're going to spread this vaccine to all who need it quickly, effectively as only New York City can do, and I want to speak for just a moment about the city and what we have done together. I'll be very brief, but it's so important to remember. Remember that in March and April, we were the epicenter. We were the place in this country suffering the most from the coronavirus, and a lot of people thought we couldn't come back from that. But New York City fought back. New Yorkers looked out for each other banded together, and put on the masks, practiced the social distancing, and what happened next? We became safer, and then we became safer, and by summer we were one of the safest places in the United States of America. Every one of you, every one of you made that happen. We went from worst to first. Or, to borrow from scripture, the first shall be last and the last shall be first. We showed that here in New York City. We showed we could bring our schools back for our children. We showed that people would never give up, and when it came time for an election in the middle of the pandemic, in the middle of a pandemic, when people could have stayed home, in fact, they turned out in record numbers to determine the future of their nation. New Yorkers did that. All of you did that. There's something special about a place that can do that. There's something powerful about people who can do that.

Yes, as Pastor said, we now deal with the challenge of the second wave that is bearing down on us, but we don't give up because we are New Yorkers and we will overcome this second wave the same way we fought back before, and to everyone, I will tell you, it will be tough in December, and it will be tough in January. That is the truth, but every day will get better also because as the vaccine is distributed, fewer and fewer people will be vulnerable. I'm going to tell you, in December, in January, you're going to have to really be careful. You're going to have to keep those gathering small for the holidays. You're going to have to practice that distancing. You're going to have to not travel. Even though we all yearn to connect with our loved ones, we cannot travel at this time. But if we work hard just for a little longer, as the vaccine comes to back us up, we can turn this page on the coronavirus once and for all.

And the last thing I want to talk about is our future, because we lived through this difficult moment, but it does not define us. It is not the end of our story. In fact, our stress, our resiliency in overcoming the coronavirus is a ratification, a confirmation of the greatness of this place, and so we look ahead to 2021, we look ahead to our recovery and how we rebuild, and someone said to me a few weeks ago with, with a heavy heart, a New Yorker, and he said, said, Mr. Mayor, do you think we will ever regain our past glory in New York City? And I said to him – I know he was speaking from the heart – but I said to him, I think that's the wrong question because yes, New York City is great and we love it. But New York City before the pandemic still had problems we had to address. It still costs too much to an afford apartment here. People weren't

getting their fair share in term or wages here. There was still too much unfairness and injustice here that had to be overcome. New York City has always been great, but New York City is not finished. So, I said, I don't think the question is, how do we regain our past glory? I think the question is, how do we reach our greater glory? How do we go farther? How do we make this a better place? Out of this crisis, how do we transform into something better and fairer, something that includes everyone? That's what we have to do together.

But I have faith in you that you will all be agents of that change because you are the very same people who fought back against the pandemic improved. It could be done. I have faith in you because you've shown a strength that people didn't realize was there. You've shown a compassion for each other. There's something great in you, and it will make us great in our future. So, brothers and sisters, I say to all of you, thank you. I joined with you and looking forward to those better times, and I know that we will show the world once again the greatness of this place and our people. To everyone a very Merry Christmas, a joyous new year, and God bless you all. Thank you.

[Applause]

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