

Dear Faithful of Eastern Washington,

After consultation with the Priest Council, the bishops of the Northwest, and after reviewing the recent guidelines by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, I have decided that the general dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation is no longer necessary. With widespread access to vaccine and a resulting drop in hospitalizations, we have moved beyond the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days is to be reinstated throughout the Diocese of Spokane beginning with the Vigil Mass for Corpus Christi on June 5<sup>th</sup>. As has always been the case, those who have a serious reason are exempt from the obligation to attend. This includes those who continue to have significant fear of contracting COVID-19 as well as those who are ill, living with significant health risk factors, or those who provide care for another individual who has serious health challenges.

Several parishes will continue to broadcast Sunday Mass through live-stream or other social media. Please note that the purpose of providing this service is for the benefit of the sick, homebound, imprisoned or those who are unable to attend Mass in person. For those able to attend, such broadcasts do not fulfill the obligation to attend Sunday Mass or other Holy Days.

It is most fitting that the obligation will be reinstated on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. This will conclude the Year of the Eucharist in the Diocese of Spokane and I trust that it will inaugurate a renewed sense of appreciation for this Sacred Gift as we go forward.

God does not need to be worshipped. We, however, need to worship God out of a profound sense of gratitude for all the gifts He has given to us. The obligation to attend Mass should not be seen as a burden but rather an act of love for the Lord. The Eucharist is a gift to us for personal and communal strength and, most importantly, for the salvation of souls. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reaffirms this gift and our need to respond: *“Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God’s holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit”* (CCC 2182).

I want to express my gratitude for your fidelity, flexibility and patience during the unprecedented restrictions we have had to endure over the past many months. Thank you.

I end by repeating the final paragraph from my Pastoral Letter on the Year of the Eucharist. It seems to be an appropriate expression of our desire to move ahead in hope as we prepare for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

*“Our fast is finally over, let us give thanks for the gift of the Most Holy Eucharist; let us go forth being Christ-bearers to the world. Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us! Live Jesus in our hearts, forever!”*

In Christ,  
Most Rev. Thomas Daly, D.D.  
Bishop of Spokane