

March 13, 2020

Dispensation from Sunday Mass Obligation

From Bishop John M. LeVoir

The Church teaches that "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass" (CCC, no. 2192). However, if one is sick, physically unable to get to Mass (e.g., a snowstorm), is needed to care for a sick child, or another physical or moral impossibility, the obligation to assist at Sunday Mass is suspended. Also, the obligation may be dispensed from by the bishop for the good of the faithful.

Given the rapid spread of the COVID-19/coronavirus and to minimize the risk of contracting or spreading infection, I am dispensing the faithful from the obligation of attending Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday for the next three weekends (March 14/15; 21/22, 28/29) in the Diocese of New Ulm. If the faithful decide that gathering for Sunday Mass would constitute a risk to themselves or others, they have the freedom not to attend. However, Masses will continue to be celebrated in our parishes as regularly scheduled.

In any case, please remember that Sunday is still the Lord's Day and should be kept holy. For example, one can keep the day holy by viewing Mass on television, listening to Mass on the radio, making a spiritual Communion, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, praying the Rosary, Eucharistic adoration, or other devotions.

In addition, in times of widespread disease, Catholics have a history of prayer and fasting offered to God in order to plead for his mercy and deliverance from all harm. I encourage ardent prayer and fasting during this penitential season of Lent asking God to curb the tide of the spread of the coronavirus.

Pope Francis has especially invoked the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary during this time of trial. His beautiful [prayer to the Blessed Virgin](#), which he recently composed, can be prayed to seek her maternal intercession during the coronavirus pandemic.

Please pray for healing and perseverance for those who are infected with the COVID-19/coronavirus, especially those with underlying health ailments and the elderly. If it is possible for us to reach out to those who are vulnerable, let us do so. Pray for the caregivers who minister to those sick with the virus. Pray for our priests and deacons who minister to the faithful. Pray for the dying.

Many are fearful during this time and are wondering what will happen. This is natural. But, we find strength in Jesus Christ, who loves us and calls us to love others. Remember the words of Scripture: "perfect love drives out fear" (1 Jn 4:18). Turn to "Perfect Love," Jesus Christ, and seek his grace, mercy, and consolation.

