



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

November 11, 2020
St. Martin of Tours, Bishop

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we approach the end of the Liturgical Year on the Solemnity of Christ the King (November 22, 2020), and prepare to begin a new Year on the first Sunday of Advent (November 29, 2020), our Diocese, country and world still find ourselves in the grips of the worldwide pandemic, COVID-19. While we seem to be getting ever closer to having a vaccine that promises to be highly effective in helping to protect us from contracting this dangerous virus, the numbers of people getting sick from this disease continue to increase in Michigan, in most of our country and throughout the world. It is necessary that everyone remain vigilant to the dangers of this virus. We are urged by Health officials to keep taking the precautions of maintaining social distancing, mask wearing, and avoidance of gathering in large groups for extended periods of time.

In light of that reality, and in spite of my great reluctance to do so, I am once more **extending the General Dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days.** Since this will mark the third time I am granting this General Dispensation for a particular period of time (the first two times being: March 20th until September 6th; and September 6th until November 22nd), at this time, I am granting this General Dispensation **until further notice.**

Please remember that this Dispensation, though general, applies primarily to those people who are in a vulnerable category, those who are medical personnel/caregivers in direct contact with COVID-19 patients, as well as for those who are seriously concerned for their safety in gatherings of people. **The General Dispensation should not be used by those who are physically able to safely attend Mass.**

It is also important to realize that there is no greater duty that we have in our lives than the obligation to be mindful of our relationship with God and our need to give God thanks, praise and honor, as we live our lives in this world, mindful of our Eternal destiny. The Third Commandment coming directly from God is to: "Keep Holy the Lord's Day". The Church has dictated, through one of the Commandments of the Church, that the best way for every Catholic

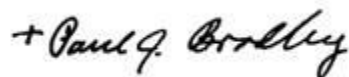
to fulfill that command is through the obligation to come to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, unless there is good reason that a person is not able to do so (sickness being one of those reasons). This General Dispensation does not “dispense” us from the Third Commandment, and we must not allow the temporary lifting of the obligation to come to Mass from finding other significant ways to “*Keep Holy the Lord’s Day*”. Some of those ways, of course, are: participating in the Celebration of Holy Mass virtually, through one of the many live-stream opportunities available; spending time as a family/household in prayerfully reading/reflecting on the Sunday Scripture Readings; spending quality time in private prayer; doing special works of charity for those in need.

Just as families and loved ones who are separated from one another long for the day when they can be reunited; and just as parents, who provide for the well-being of their children, not solely out of obligation or fear of reprisal, but out of love; so too should every one of us be longing for the time when we will all be able to be reunited with one another, in person. As a Community of Faith, we should long for the opportunity to worship our Loving God and share in the joy of God’s Presence among us through His Word, and most especially, through the Gift of the Holy Eucharist. I fervently pray that we will experience the defeat of this dangerous COVID-19 virus sooner than later, so that these General Dispensations will become unnecessary.

As we prepare to end this current Church Year, and to begin another with the four weeks of Advent leading to Christmas Joy, please remain strong in your faith, and continue to long for the time when we can safely join one another around the Table of the Lord, Who has come to be Emmanuel, God with us, and to be our spiritual Food and Drink for our Journey of Faith.

Assuring you of my fervent prayers for you, and asking that we continue to pray for one another, I remain

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Paul J. Bradley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo