



August 14, 2020

Brothers,

As you know our initial dispensation regarding Mass attendance is quickly coming to an end. In order to fashion a faith-filled response to the continuing crisis, cognizant of the legitimate concerns of the faithful to returning to a regular pattern of public worship, we would like to offer some general considerations as you teach about the centrality of the Church's worship and our participation in it. We also want to communicate the importance of teaching about the need to keep holy the Lord's Day.

We have decided in the interest of the common good to extend the present dispensation for all through Christ the King Sunday. It seemed clear from the counsel received from our brothers that such a decision most aptly responded to the prevailing circumstances in our metropolitan area and in our parish communities. While this decision is a prudent and practical response to the present crisis, it is, nonetheless, a dramatic response and not lightly taken.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council remind us: Taking part in the eucharistic sacrifice, the source and summit of the (entire-totius) Christian life, [the faithful] offer the divine victim to God and themselves along with it (LG #11). The shape of Christian life and worship is undeniably cruciform and eucharistic; in offering the divine victim and entering into his worship, we find our strength, (cf. Nehemiah 8:11) and we discover a hope that does not disappoint (cf. Romans 5:5). There is no substitute, despite our most valiant efforts to put a good face on it, for our gathering as a people knit together by the Holy Spirit, to worship as one with, through and in Christ.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the very center of our identity as priests; we were made for the Eucharist. It is the identity of our people too, deputed for the task of sharing in the mission of evangelization; they find in the Eucharist the source of their zeal and strength (UTG, Marker 3.4). Helping our people keep this saving action as the engine of their

missionary activity and at the forefront of their imagination is an absolute necessity and an incomparable gift that we can share especially at times such as these.

In the pastoral letter, *Unleash the Gospel*, we are reminded that: reliving the Gospel mysteries means that we continually return to the Upper Room, asking for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on us and the whole region....Recognizing that we cannot give what we do not have, we continually seek to be refreshed in God's presence and filled again and again with his love, so that it is his own love we are giving away (UTG, Guidepost 1). This of course refers most especially to our eucharistic assembly but includes too all the moments of communion with the Lord throughout the Lord's Day and the ensuing week. While we are prevented from gathering in person in varying measures, we must encourage the importance of making a spiritual communion and do so without also implying that it is an adequate substitute for our participation in the Holy Sacrifice as a gathered community of believers.

Keeping holy the Lord's Day, something enshrined in the Decalogue and as divine law not dispensable, is the foundation of hope upon which we as a people build our lives. While our Sundays are different presently, it may be part of the Lord's plan to use this pandemic as just one more way to draw us back to Himself and remind us of that perennial truth that without Him we can do nothing (cf. John 15:5). A holy people keeping a holy day is our goal, and in fact was at the heart of the directive regarding sports on Sundays. While every parish community is similar and every parish community unique, each of us must, with the assistance of our staff and advisors, offer ways in which our families, temporarily unable to come together, can continue none-the-less to carve out time for communion with the Lord particularly on the Lord's Day. This includes scripture, prayers and meditation, and time for communion with each other. Thank you in advance, dear brothers, for your many efforts in assisting our people in walking the path of holiness, in being and becoming a eucharistic people, a people who keep the Lord's Day perpetually alive in their hearts.

While this time is a time of testing, we pray that God uses this present crisis to whet our appetites for himself, for his eucharistic presence, so that we treasure anew our communion with one another, and once again make the foundation of our lives burn anew with eucharistic amazement.

Fraternally in Christ,

Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron
Archbishop of Detroit

Most Reverend Donald Hanchon

Most Reverend Arturo Cepeda

Most Reverend Robert Fisher

Most Reverend Gerard Battersby