



September 2, 2020

Dear Brothers,

As you may have heard already, the Wisconsin bishops jointly decided to lift the suspension of the Sunday Mass obligation in their respective dioceses during this month of September. Here in our diocese, I will lift the suspension beginning on Sunday September 27th. We have been living with the obligation suspended for almost six months and we rightly chose to be cautious, concerned for the safety and health of our people, especially at the beginning of the pandemic.

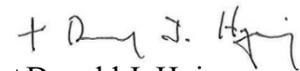
We have implemented for months now a safe reopening of our churches with limited capacity and great caution for the public health. These efforts have been both fruitful and effective without any known spread of COVID-19. Now is the time to call people back to Mass who can safely and securely do so, but with full awareness that our elderly, immunodeficient persons, and those who are still at risk may refrain from Sunday Mass attendance without the sin of violating the obligation. Canon law contains explicit direction regarding circumstances which mitigate the Sunday Mass obligation and some of these rightfully apply to this current situation.

And while canon law now provides a framework for our understanding of the Sunday Obligation, our true obligation is born out of love and right reason. Sunday Eucharist is the heart and center of the Church. It is the source and summit of the Christian life. In short, it is central to who we are as children of God. In Mass, we participate in the sacrifice of Christ, hearing the Word and receiving the Eucharist. Our people need the sacred nourishment of Mass as the most essential service. Watching Mass at home and making a spiritual communion, when not subject to the obligation to assist at Mass, is a good and pious practice in these months of quarantine, but it can never substitute for the efficacy of participating in even one celebration of the Eucharist.

Enclosed is the decree of September 2, 2020, revoking the dispensation issued on March 12, 2020, by which all the faithful of the diocese were dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Please read the enclosed decree for pertinent details. In addition, the Office of Communications is preparing a public announcement and a set of frequently-asked questions (FAQs) for the faithful.

Many thanks to you for your leadership and generous service to your people in these months of the COVID pandemic. I will always be grateful for your courage, generosity, and faith in action.

Sincerely in Christ,


+Donald J. Hying
Bishop of Madison

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