

Dispensation from the Sunday Mass

Most likely by now you have already heard that the Archbishop of Detroit has decided to continue the dispensation for Catholics from attending the Sunday Mass under obligation. The dispensation is extended through the Solemnity of Christ the King on November 22nd. It would seem that it is his hope that we will all be able to safely attend Mass together on the First Sunday of Advent this year. It is important for us to have a good understanding of just what this dispensation means and what the intentions of our archbishop really are.

So, the dispensation is granted for those who **might** be at risk of contracting the corona virus by being in a group of other persons. Medical authorities define this group as those over the age of 65, those who are chronically sickly with things like an immune deficiency or particularly high blood pressure or other health issues that weaken the body. Of course there are those who just have terrible fear of getting the virus and becoming seriously sick or dying from it. Their fears may have credibility or not, still they are real fears and must be respected. This pandemic is a real and a serious thing. These are the persons who should be invoking this dispensation.

The dispensation should NOT be looked upon as an excuse not to go to Mass if you don't feel like it or have something else you want to do with your time instead. So, those making use of the dispensation should be staying home. They should not be going to restaurants, or shopping for anything other than food and medicine. They should not be socializing nor really seeing anyone outside their home but their doctor or health care workers. If a person is willing to take risks to do these things of lesser importance then that person should also be going to Mass which is of much greater importance. You CANNOT play both sides of this dispensation card without revealing yourself to be a lukewarm Catholic in need of strengthening your faith in the infinite value of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

As for the archbishop's intentions, you can be certain that he wants only the best for Catholics, both body and soul. I know it pains him greatly to declare this dispensation but he has, as we all should have, a great value for human life, which is what this dispensation is ordered toward. Further, he has made it very clear, that Sunday, remains the Lord's Day no matter where we are and what is going on in our life and in the world.

The Third Commandment says; Keep holy the Sabbath Day. Going to Mass is the best way to approach this commandment but when that is not possible as during a pandemic, good Christian people must find other ways of doing this. All of us, whether we are able to go to Mass or not, must resist the temptation to make Sunday into a free day to get all the things done we didn't manage during the week. Our archbishop has reminded us, and St. Pope John Paul II as well, that Sunday, the Lord's Day is a sacred day. It is a day to spend our time growing closer to God, first by prayer, second by hearing Him speak to us through the Sacred Scriptures, third by encountering Him in others, beginning with our family members, in a relaxed and loving way, like at dinner or by doing things together that build up our affection for each other. This is how we love God better and better. It's especially the "work" of Sunday, the day we refrain from other work that is really not that necessary and certainly in the big picture not that important.

Sunday Mass is of the greatest importance! Personally I cannot imagine why someone would not want to go to Mass on Sunday if they were able. Again personally I cannot imagine why we have to attach an obligation to going to Mass on Sunday. People who really believe in God and who love Christ should always and enthusiastically want to go to the Sunday Mass. The Holy Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass are the very core of our Catholic Faith. If you don't have them, you don't have anything! If you don't want them you are on the wrong road for sure.

Our archbishop is trying to do his very best in this terrible situation. Anyone who would suggest that his motivations for extending the dispensation, is anything less than that is foolish. It has nothing to do with advancing the cause of Satan or playing into the political craziness that surrounds us these days. His sincere wish is that Catholic people in the archdiocese of Detroit and everywhere would love the Son of God and that they would always and everywhere choose "to joyfully go up to the altar of God!"