

Most Reverend David Laurin Ricken, DD, JCL



By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See  
Bishop of Green Bay

## **DECREE**

### **The Return of the Sunday Mass Obligation**

With Christian joy and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the time has come for Catholics to return to worship God at Mass on Sundays.

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020, I granted a dispensation from the obligation to worship at Sunday Mass during the month of March for Catholics living within the Diocese of Green Bay. A few days later, on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the public celebration of Mass was suspended throughout the Diocese and the dispensation from the Sunday obligation was extended indefinitely. Since that time, the faithful have not been obligated to worship at Mass on Sundays and even with the resumption of limited public worship, certain restrictions regarding the numbers in attendance have precluded the lifting of this dispensation.

Now, since the dispensation from the obligation to worship at Mass on Sunday is no longer strictly necessary, the faithful will once again be morally obligated to come to Mass on Sundays throughout the Diocese. (Canon 898) Thus, the obligation will resume on the weekend of September 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – the 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Since the Mass is the entering into the one and infinite sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross, and thus a sacred meal by which we are spiritually nourished with His Body and Blood, the obligation to gather together as a Christian community to worship on Sundays is a natural reflection of our faith as His disciples. Worshipping together at Mass as God's people is also

beneficial both spiritually and psychologically as we support one another in our Christian lives. Thus, the healthy practice of Sunday worship is a blessing that we must continue.

As has always been the case, if individual Catholics struggle with serious health concerns or are physically or morally prevented from worshipping at Mass for a grave reason, this obligation does not apply. Additionally, if individuals are frail due to illness or age or, in their well-formed consciences believe that going into public places - including Sunday worship at Mass - would place their health or the health of their loved ones in serious jeopardy, they too are not bound by this obligation. Furthermore, if the occupancy limits have already been reached in a given Mass which preclude safe social distancing, the obligation does not apply. However, the faithful who are unable to attend Mass are nevertheless urged to make holy the Lord's Day and to pray, read the Scriptures, and take part in acts of charity.

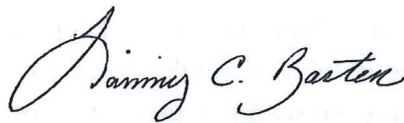
Jesus said, "I am the living bread come down from Heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." (John 6:51) As Catholics, we gladly return to the altar of God to receive the Bread of Life from the one who gives healing and joy to our hearts.

Given at the Chancery on Monday, September 7, 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David L. Ricken". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

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Bishop of Green Bay

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tammy C. Basten". The signature is written in a cursive style.

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Tammy C. Basten, Chancellor