



Extending the Dispensation
“Sperabamus ... we used to hope ...”
November 9, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In early March, and again in August, the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation was granted in the Diocese of Gaylord in view of the pandemic that engulfed our state, country and world. The latter extension expires November 22, 2020. We had hoped that by that time, things would return to normal and all could safely return to our celebrations of the Eucharist.

Sadly, that hope is not being realized, and we continue to find ourselves not in a diminishment of cases, but in an increase here in Michigan and our own area. People continue to be at risk. Some are fearful, and many for good reason. While most of our churches have observed the required protocols for safety, such as wearing masks, not all have done so, placing others at risk. If safe distancing is maintained in the diocese, many of our churches would be unable to accommodate all.

Considering these and other factors, **I am extending the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation for the people in the Diocese of Gaylord until further notice.** I do so that anyone who needs to stay at home to protect the common good, themselves and others can do so in good conscience. In the meantime, we will continue to monitor the situation and make a determination when we can safely return to our “normal” patterns of worship. A day we all look forward to.

The granting of this dispensation is not meant to be a reason to absent oneself from Mass. Without a dispensation, many would be excused from this obligation because of age, health or other family situations or issues. Conscience will always need to be our guide. If you are able to do so, I invite you to come back to the parish celebrations. Whether we are able to attend or not, we all have a serious obligation to “Keep holy the sabbath day.” If you are not able to attend Mass, I ask that you set aside time for prayer, not only everyday but especially on Sunday. While not a substitute for Mass attendance, the various “virtual Masses” can be useful in focusing our prayer and our union with all our brothers and sisters. The recitation of the rosary, other devotions, visits to the Blessed Sacrament at the church or chapel, and Scripture or other reading can all be helpful.

As we continue through these difficult and challenging times, let us always be mindful the Lord is walking with us and speaks to tell us, “Do not be afraid.” Let us also commend ourselves and our local church to the love and care of Mary, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the patroness of our diocese.

Sperabamus ... we used to hope ... and now we do, because God has come and made His dwelling with us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Apostolic Administrator