



STEVEN JOHN

By the grace of God and the Apostolic See

DECREE

Participating in the celebration of Mass on Sundays and Holy days of obligation are key responsibility incumbent upon a Catholic Christian person since it is a precept of the Church. Many faithful come to church weekly to satisfy this obligation (cf. canon 1247). The novel coronavirus medical emergency here in the United States will put our brothers and sisters who are seniors at greater risk. Motivated by a desire for the safety of all the faithful in order to mitigate the effects of this pernicious virus, I hereby dispense all the faithful of the Diocese of Gaylord, and those who find themselves present in the Diocese of Gaylord (whose domicile is elsewhere), from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation. The dispensation is effective at the same time as the accompanying letter describing the steps taken to suspend the public celebration of weekday and Sunday Masses in the churches and institutions throughout the Diocese of Gaylord, i.e., March 14, 2020 through April 6, 2020.

The faithful are urged to find an alternative means to fulfill their spiritual obligations by 1) watching or listening to the broadcast of the Mass on television, radio, or other social media streaming; 2) pray the Rosary together or individually; 3) read / reflect for 15 minutes on the Sunday readings; 4) make a visit to the parish church and pray before the Blessed Sacrament; or 5) engage in some spiritual reading during this Lent; or 6) perform an act of charity for someone in need.

Indeed, the celebration of the Mass is a highlight for many. Being together with the community of faith to hear the Word of God proclaimed and receiving the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord and Savior fulfills the deepest hungers of the human heart. Pope St John Paul II explained that the “Church draws her life from the Eucharist” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 1). Truly, as *Sacrosanctum Concilium* of the Second Vatican Council noted that the Eucharist is the pre-eminent form of liturgical worship and the “source and summit of the Christian life” (SC, 10). Through it, we worship Almighty God as one body in Christ and draw the graces from it to live our Christian lives more fervently.

In your charity, please remember the priests, deacons, religious, seminarians and lay ecclesial ministers throughout our diocese in your prayers. As we seem to be approaching Good Friday in our lives, we must remain confident that Good Friday was not the end of the story. We await the resurrection of Christ in which he overcomes sin and death! May we remain steadfastly anchored in hope persevere in our discipleship in ever new and engaging ways during this time of uncertainty.

Given in the Pastoral Center in the Diocese of Gaylord on this the 13th day of March, 2020.

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Most Reverend Steven J Raica
Bishop of Gaylord



Deacon Kevin Endres
Chancellor