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Indiana bishops extend Sunday Mass dispensation

MERRILLVILLE – The Diocese of Gary, along with the other four dioceses in the State of Indiana, is extending the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation until further notice. The full joint statement released today is as follows:

“While commending our pastors and pastoral life coordinators who have gone to great lengths to assure safe worship spaces in our churches, given the continued increase of Covid-19 cases in our state, the Indiana bishops hereby extend the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation beyond 1 November 2020 until further notice. The Indiana bishops will continue to monitor the situation to determine when it might be advisable to modify or lift the dispensation.”

Most Rev. Robert J. McClory, Bishop of Gary, stated that he is pleased with the very good work that local parishes have done to practice social distancing and employ safety protocols, allowing the faithful to return to public Mass.

“I’m grateful that all our parishes are open for public worship and committed to keeping our churches safe for gathering,” explained Bishop McClory. “Over the last six months, our parishes have followed safety protocols recommended by public health officials and designed for the public celebration of Mass, including face coverings, social distancing, and enhanced sanitizing. I commend our pastors, pastoral staff and volunteers who have gone to great lengths to assure the safety of the faithful as they worship in our churches.

“I encourage those who have not returned to Mass recently, to contact their parish local parish to ask questions and learn how well the various safety protocols have been working over these last six months.”

Bishop McClory explained that in the climate of the pandemic, each person must prayerfully consider his or her individual situation and that the continued dispensation is a helpful measure since some of the faithful may still find it difficult to fulfill the obligation during this time.

“Being dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass does not mean people should stay away from church or fail to keep holy the Lord’s Day. Those who are not able to attend Sunday Mass in person should consider how they will honor the Lord’s Day,” the bishop encouraged. “It is the Catholic tradition that Sunday is also kept holy by refraining from work, increasing our love of the Lord and extending charity to others through prayer and service.”

The bishop invites the faithful to join their parish community for Sunday Mass, in person, or spiritually, noting that most parishes offer livestream coverage of Sunday Mass (*for a listing: www.dcgary.org*).

Bishop McClory emphasized that he and local pastors continue to hold Northwest Indiana in prayer, offering to pray for any specific request through the diocesan website (www.dcgary.org) or by email pray@dcgary.org.

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