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Bishops of Indiana – It is a joyful time as the faithful return to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation

MERRILLVILLE -- Since March of last year, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, all Roman Catholics throughout the State of Indiana have been dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.

With the decrease of COVID-19 cases in our state, a widespread availability of vaccines, and guidance of public health officials, Bishop Robert J. McClory of the Diocese of Gary, along with the other bishops of Indiana, agreed that Catholic churches can safely accommodate more parishioners for Masses and lift the dispensation which has been in effect for more than a year.

This is a time of great joy, as the faithful have longed to more fully worship together, in celebrating the Eucharist at Mass.

Effective June 11, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the general dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass is lifted throughout the state of Indiana.

There will be some circumstances, where some of the faithful may continue to be dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.

Bishop McClory encourages the laity to reach out to their parish with any questions about specific needs, concerns or safety protocols. Pastors, who have the authority to dispense in individual cases, will be most helpful in addressing specific concerns.

Some circumstances where dispensation will remain applicable include:

1. Those who are seriously ill, exhibit flu-like symptoms and/or may have a contagious disease.
 - *This includes the need to quarantine due to exposure to contagious disease.*
2. Those who are unable to attend Mass through no fault of their own.
 - *An example would be - having no means of transportation.*
3. Those who are homebound or incapacitated due to age, infirmity, or other medical restrictions.
4. Those who have compromised health conditions or are at high risk of contracting the coronavirus.
5. Those who are caretakers of persons who are sick or of persons at high-risk of serious illness if they contract the coronavirus.

“The celebration of the Eucharist at Mass is the source and summit of our life and mission as Catholics,” remarked Bishop McClory. “The transition to a normal rhythm of our faith life is a cause for joy. We still need to be prudent and patient with each other as we enter this new phase. I am grateful for our pastors and parish leaders who continue to serve so faithfully during these days to meet the needs of our parishioners.”

The Diocese of Gary is home to an estimated 168,500 Catholics who are served through 66 parishes in Lake, Porter, LaPorte and Starke counties. The diocese is home to three high schools, one private high school and 17 elementary schools.

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