



## THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE

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March 19, 2022

Dear Friends,

Two years ago, when there was great uncertainty about the spread of the coronavirus, many bishops dispensed the faithful in their dioceses from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass as a temporary means for promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone. My predecessor, Bishop Edward Braxton, dispensed the faithful from this obligation in the Diocese of Belleville in March 2020.

Now twenty-four months later, as our society and the Church have taken many measures to promote the health of the public, we have reached a point where we believe that we can reintroduce the obligation to attend Sunday Mass in a way that balances our health and safety concerns with the deep desire to meet the Lord Jesus and our sisters and brothers during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in our churches, chapels and institutions.

Therefore, on Sunday April 10, Palm Sunday, I will lift the dispensation and reintroduce the obligation to attend Sunday Mass for our Catholic community in southern Illinois. For many people who have continued to participate at Mass via social communication, I encourage you to see this step as an invitation to return to our parishes as we begin Holy Week. How fitting it is that we should gather around the altar of the Lord in church as we celebrate the mysteries of our salvation in Christ.

For those who are sick, homebound, or gravely concerned about their health, the dispensation from the obligation to participate at Mass remains, as it has in the past during normal times. No one is morally obligated to attend Mass when doing so presents a grave risk to their health or the health of others.

Please share this information with your family members and friends; I hope this is a moment when we can each offer a personal invitation to our families and neighbors to re-engage in the Eucharist at our parishes. When Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper in Jerusalem two thousand years ago, he declared to his apostles: "Do this in memory of me." May the Lord's words resonate in our hearts as we move toward the holiest of weeks and our celebration of the saving mysteries of Christ.

In our Lord,

Most Reverend Michael McGovern  
Bishop of Belleville

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