



DIOCESE *of* LACROSSE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

18 September 2020
Year of Saint Joseph

Dear Brother Priests and Deacons and my dear People of God:

Peace and Love in the Lord Jesus!

I extend my sincere thanks to you all for the fidelity with which you have been returning to the Sunday celebrations of the Mass across the Diocese. It gives me great hope that the yearning of our hearts truly is for the loving presence of our Lord and savior and that "our hearts are restless till they rest in You." The increasing number of faithful who are returning to our churches continues to help us all understand more deeply the true meaning of our responsibility to worship God together and remain in Communion with Him.

After a great deal of consultation among the leadership of the priests and inquiry among a number of God's people, I have decided to NOT reimpose the obligation to attend Mass throughout the Diocese at this time. This is not to minimize the importance of the communal celebration of the Holy Eucharist. While this is a departure from the decision of my brother bishops in Wisconsin, it is not mean spirited. I am considering the high number of new COVID cases in our area and the growing number of congregants, and the ability we have of safely social-distancing in our churches. These factors create a large number of situations that bring us back to the very reason why we lifted the obligation in the first place.

We will monitor the number of COVID cases in the Diocese, the progress towards a vaccine and the amount of people returning to the celebration of the Mass, as we make our future decisions regarding the lifting of the dispensation for the obligation to attend Mass. Know that while the obligation remains dispensed the commandment to keep holy the Sabbath remains, if you are unable to attend Mass or join one of the live stream Masses then please keep the day holy through the reading of Scripture, recitation of the Rosary and other spiritual activities. Please continue to follow the instructions for the return to Mass as earlier issued, use common sense, and continue to pray for one another as we make our way through this.

God be with you.

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+ William Patrick Callahan
Bishop of La Crosse