

Effective May 23, 2021, Pentecost Sunday, the temporary protocols for the celebration of the sacraments initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic will be rescinded and the temporary dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, which I granted because of the pandemic, will be lifted. I joyfully invite all Catholics back to in-person participation in the sacraments and the life of the parish.

As the effects of COVID-19 vaccines evidence a decrease of infections and an increase of in-person activities, we continue to hold in prayer those to whom this pandemic has caused significant hardship, especially those who have died. In spite of this painful experience, we remain hopeful, knowing that we will emerge from this strengthened by the sacraments and renewed in the Gospel.

Although the COVID-19 dispensation will no longer be in effect, the general teaching of the Church remains; that is, a serious reason excuses one from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, even without a dispensation (CCC 2181). Anyone for whom attending Sunday Mass would pose a serious health risk (including anyone who is positive for COVID-19 or needs to isolate because of COVID-19 symptoms) is excused from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Additionally, individuals may request a dispensation from the Sunday obligation from their pastor for any type of serious illness or other serious reason.

I commend the clergy and lay leaders in each parish who have faithfully maintained the protocols throughout the pandemic. The diligence our diocese has displayed has made a significant contribution to the common good of our communities. As we move forward and the protocols are rescinded, I ask that we continue to support one another in Christian charity, knowing that, for good reason, some will continue to observe precautions for their own health and the health of their families. We are called to be sensitive to and respectful of one another.

Brothers and sisters, I am grateful for your prayers, fidelity, and patience during this pandemic. In the midst of this challenging experience, God continues to walk with us. Let us never cease turning to God to strengthen our resolve and calm our fears. Also, please join me in supporting our priests and asking the intercession of St. John Vianney, that God will give them the grace and skill they need to lead our parishes well.

May the Holy Spirit infuse us with His grace this Pentecost, sending us out like the first disciples to fill the world with His wisdom and holiness.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Joe S. Vásquez

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