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DECREE

The fall season, the gift of Sunday Mass and the ongoing concerns regarding the novel Coronavirus

There is word in the mass media, that a vaccine might be on its way sometime this fall. Please God. But until a new vaccine is developed *and* dispensed as a means of protection, this new COVID 19 *will continue* to be a threat to the health of the diocesan family of west Tennessee. As we have witnessed over these seven months, there has been little uniformity in the guidance given by the various health departments, by federal and state and local civil authorities, by the C.D.C. and other medical resources. Granting the fluidity seen in the various professional health services' advice and counsel, along with the uneven infection rate seen in our twenty-one counties, this new DECREE for the faithful, and subsequent decrees regarding this health issue, will be issued month by month, so that I may be attentive to the changing situations seen in our twenty-one counties.

And so, as of the 4th of October 2020, please know the following:

FIRST of all, *please note* that *the dispensation* from the obligation to attend holy Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation **will end** on the 4th of October. As all know, "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate at Mass (canon 1247)". Starting with the weekend liturgies of 10-11 October, I ask all Catholics to renew the spiritual obligation, to join in fellowship at their parish for holy Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation. We need to come back to the Sunday celebration of holy Mass. We need to come back to the strength of each community of faith.

HAVING SAID THAT, "If participation in the Eucharistic celebration becomes impossible because of the absence of a sacred minister or another grave cause, it is strongly recommended that the faithful...devote themselves to prayer for suitable time alone, as a family... (canon 1248)".

What is a grave cause that would make it impossible to meet this "Sunday obligation"? Granting the continued presence of this new coronavirus among our people, *any health precondition that makes the person or health provider more vulnerable to COVID 19 is the kind of grave cause mentioned in the canon above*. Some of the health preconditions would be: diabetes; any issue with breathing and the lungs; any medical issue with the heart; a vulnerable immune system; morbid obesity; a crippling fear of the virus, and so on.

And so, with the weekend liturgies of 10-11 October, I ask that all who are able join your Pastor and the fellowship of the parish for Sunday Mass.