

October 29, 2020

For the past couple of weeks, there have been numerous reports about the second wave of the Coronavirus spreading through our nation and, certainly, through our State of Wisconsin. The City of Milwaukee and the health department are stating that there are to be no gatherings with more than 100 people in attendance. The archbishop and the Archdiocese of Milwaukee are recommending that we continue to follow guidelines of no more than 25% capacity in the church, as well as encouraging physical distancing, wearing masks, and sanitizing. The number of parishioners who have been coming in person to our Masses remains around 70-90 people on average at each service.

In an e-mail earlier this month, the archbishop has made it very clear that he has no intention of reinstating the dispensation for the faithful in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. *“Although the latest COVID-19 numbers [are] seemingly on the increase in some areas, I do not anticipate again providing a general dispensation at this time....Rather, I think we must trust individuals’ examination of their own conscience and our priests/parish directors’ judgment regarding the circumstances in their area.”*

As the rates of infection and hospitalizations rise in our state, I encourage you to examine and discern wisely how safe it is for you to attend Mass in person. I remind you that if any of the following circumstances apply to your situation, then you are not obligated to attend Mass:

- (1) If there is an impossibility to attend Mass, such as if the Churches are closed and offering no public Masses, or limits are placed on in-person gatherings by those in authority, or even when people are traveling and not able to locate a Mass.
- (2) If a person is ill, especially during this pandemic, they should remain at home for the good of the entire community.
- (3) If a person is at risk because of age, underlying medical conditions, or a compromised immune system, they would be excused from the obligation.
- (4) If a person is caring for a sick person, even if they are not sick, they would be excused from the obligation out of charity.
- (5) If a person has a fear of getting sick during this pandemic because of at-risk factors, such as pre-existing conditions, age, or a compromised immune system, then the fear would be sufficient to excuse them from the obligation.

If any of these circumstances apply to you, you would be excused from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass or a Holy Day of Obligation. As a pastor or administrator, I have the authority, on a case-by-case basis, to dispense an individual from attending Sunday Mass or a Holy Day of Obligation only. This authority does not extend to dispensing the

entire congregation from their obligation. If you would feel more at peace receiving an individual dispensation in regards to your circumstances, please feel free to contact me in the parish office.

Ultimately, if you decide to remain at home for a period of time, remember that there are many options to remain connected with your worshiping faith community. You can participate in our parish Zoom liturgies, celebrate with other liturgies that are live-streamed on the internet, or even watch a Mass on television.

I can assure you that the leadership of our parishes and I will continue to monitor the data and reports coming from the City of Milwaukee and the Archdiocese. We continue to pray that all stay safe as this pandemic continues.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Gregory J. Hart".

Fr. Greg