



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

16 September 2020

Dispensation from the obligation to attend Holy Mass continues

There are some wondering if now is the time to lift the Sunday Mass dispensation, pointing to a few dioceses neighboring on Iowa that have already done so.

From what I could glean (Google), the dioceses that have lifted the Mass dispensation still require the pandemic-inspired restrictions, like social distancing.

That particular restriction results in limiting the number of people able to attend a Mass. At the same time, Church law limits the number of Masses a priest may celebrate.

When you combine those two limitations, you create a situation where people are obliged, but are unable to fulfill the obligation.

One bishop has rightly said the obligation doesn't apply if you're frail due to age or health, or if you fear being in a public place, or if there's no room in church.

So, why restore the obligation only to have it frustrated by space limitations, or to hold people dispensed who are already exempted right now?

Some people have returned to Sunday Mass, out of duty, love, or devotion. Those who would only respond to rule and the rod will look for loopholes to be excused.

And so, after consultation with the other bishops in Iowa, as well as with the Priest Council and the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, the dispensation will remain in effect until...

The pandemic-inspired restrictions are no longer required because there is a miraculous disappearance of the virus, or we achieve herd immunity, or an effective vaccine is widely available.

It's not yet time, but pray, pray, pray for that happy day.

Archbishop Michael Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque
