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OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

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The Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For some time now, the obligation of the faithful to assist at Sunday Mass has been temporarily abrogated due to the coronavirus pandemic. Given the current situation of the virus, its less severe symptoms, the availability of vaccines and the advice of the medical establishment, I now reinstate the obligation of the faithful to assist at Sunday Mass and all other Holy Days of Obligation. Please note that the Catechism of the Catholic Church makes it clear that “Those who fail in this obligation commit a grave sin.” (CCC, 2181) However, the obligation itself is a welcome one in that its intent is to bring together God’s holy people so that they might be sustained by Word and Sacrament, formed more perfectly as the Body of Christ and missioned for service throughout their lives.

As the Code of Canon Law reminds us, “Sunday is the day on which the Pascal Mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church.” (CIC, can. 1246, §1) The *Letter to the Hebrews* urges the faithful “not to neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but to encourage one another.” (Heb. 10:25) At the same time, please note that a serious reason in itself excuses one from the Sunday obligation. The Catechism mentions illness or the care of an infant as two examples of a serious reason. Pastors are also able to excuse a parishioner from this obligation. (Cf. CIC, c. 1245)

If a parishioner is unable to assist at Mass on Sunday or its eve, then it is highly recommended to spend time in prayer, reflecting on the readings of the day and engaging in other acts of piety. However, nothing can replace the gathering of the People of God at Sunday Mass, which is the “source and summit of the Christian life.” (Lumen Gentium, 11) “Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God’s holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” (CCC, 2182)

Thanking you for your attention to the importance of Sunday Eucharist and assuring you of my prayers and best wishes, I remain

Your servant in Christ Jesus,

Most Reverend John C. Wester
Archbishop of Santa Fe