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OFFICE OF
THE ARCHBISHOP

An Update on Mass Obligations for Catholics of the Archdiocese of Hartford

March 13, 2020

Archbishop Blair's dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass through March 29 applies to each and every Catholic. Its application, however is based on the assumption that there are two groups of parishioners: those who still wish to participate in Sunday Mass and those who feel it is best not to attend out of concern for their own health or the health of others. That is a decision left to the individual, but with the caution that all the precautions of hygiene and social distancing should be followed, and that if someone is ill or having symptoms, out of charity they should not go to church. However, to repeat, through March 29 all Catholics of the Archdiocese of Hartford are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.

That public Masses can continue to be celebrated is in keeping with what Pope Francis has urged, "that the Holy Spirit give pastors the capacity for pastoral discernment, so they find measures that don't leave the holy faithful people of God alone, so the people of God feel accompanied by their pastors and draw comfort from the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer."

It is also in keeping with Governor Ned Lamont's Executive Order of yesterday, which prohibits gatherings of 250 people or more throughout the State through the end of April but makes an exemption for worship services. However, local authorities may ask parishes to consider temporarily suspending the public celebration of Mass. Pastors will be required to follow any ordinances or mandates published by legitimate local authorities, who have been entrusted to protect the community at large.

Finally, if any future ban on public assemblies necessitates the suspension of public Mass, Pastors should see that all Mass intentions are fulfilled, and all priests would be expected to celebrate private Mass daily.