

Bishop Reintroduces Obligation to Participate at Mass

On April 10, Palm Sunday, Bishop Michael McGovern will lift the dispensation of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass for all the faithful in the Diocese of Belleville. This means that the faithful, unless ill or having a good reason for omitting participating at Mass, will attend Mass in person. The faithful who are sick, homebound or gravely concerned for their health retain the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass, which has always been the case in normal times. If someone is homebound, sick or concerned about their health, they are encouraged to participate in the Sunday Eucharist through a Mass that is broadcast over television or radio or livestreamed.

Attendance at Mass in person is an important part of practicing our Catholic faith. Recently our safety protocols were updated so that the faithful will feel secure in being in church for the celebration of the Eucharist. Fr. Felix and myself will continue live streaming (and will only be available on YouTube for 24 hours) as a means of supporting the spiritual needs of those who cannot attend in person. Though we should take the obligation to attend Mass seriously, no one is morally obligated to attend Mass when doing so presents a grave risk to their health or the health of others.

When our Lord Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, he said to his apostles: “Do this in memory of me.” Through the centuries, the Church has fulfilled the Lord’s command with the gathering of the faithful for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The celebration of the Mass is preeminent and central in our spiritual lives; the obligation to participate at the Sunday Eucharist flows from this.

Bishop Michael McGovern encourages our faithful, for whom it is possible, to return to the celebration of Mass on Sunday April 10. How fitting that we should be renewed in our commitment as a Catholic, Eucharistic and sacramental people as we enter into Holy Week.

For more information, please see our diocesan website: www.diobelle.org.