



Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Richmond

June 2, 2021

Dear Brothers Priests,

I am grateful that I had the opportunity to speak with you and members of your parish staff on Wednesday, May 26th to offer updates for lifting Mass restrictions put into place last year due to COVID-19.

In a special way, I am most thankful for the hard work and attentiveness of all our pastors, parochial vicars, chaplains, and staff who worked long hours to fulfil our liturgical, catechetical, and workplace policies over the last year. Indeed, your caring approach to parishioners, personal sacrifice in pastoral ministry, and leadership among your staff and volunteers has been remarkable.

As Catholics, we have a significant appreciation for the importance of the physical presence of the community. From its earliest days, the Church gathered and “devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread,” (Acts 2:42). As the Body of Christ, the Church, we encounter the living God most fully in the Sacraments which appeal to our whole being, through outward signs. Therefore, it is important that we continue to encourage the presence of the Catholic faithful at Mass and at the other sacraments.

As expressed in the Statement of the Bishops of the Province of Baltimore and the Archdiocese of Washington’s *Lifting of the General Dispensation from the Obligation to attend Mass*, this lifting of the dispensation is a hope-filled sign that we can gradually return to a normal and full experience of the celebration of the sacraments.

I am grateful to each priest for sharing the attached statement with his parishioners this week. With gratitude and prayers, I remain

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Bishop of Richmond



Archdiocese of Washington



ARCHDIOCESE
of BALTIMORE



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARLINGTON



Catholic Diocese
of Richmond



DIOCESE OF
WHEELING-CHARLESTON



Catholic Diocese of Wilmington

For Immediate Release

June 2, 2021

**STATEMENT OF THE BISHOPS OF THE PROVINCE OF BALTIMORE AND THE
ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON**

Lifting the General Dispensation from the Obligation to Attend Mass

We, the Catholic Bishops of the Province of Baltimore and the Archdiocese of Washington, give thanks to Almighty God for the progress our country has made in curbing the coronavirus pandemic. The average number of new cases of COVID-19 continues to decline due to the observance of safety protocols and the increase of the availability of the vaccine. At this time, many places in our region are enjoying a return to some sense of normalcy.

Therefore, we are lifting the dispensation of the Sunday and Holy Days Mass obligation in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Dioceses of Arlington, Richmond, Wheeling-Charleston, and Wilmington and reinstating that obligation beginning on Saturday, June 26, 2021 and Sunday, June 27, 2021. We welcome and encourage the Faithful to return to full in-person participation of the Sunday Eucharist, the source and summit of our Catholic faith (cf. Code of Canon Law, canon 1246-1247 and Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2180).

This obligation does not apply to those who are ill; those who have reason to believe that they were recently exposed to the coronavirus, another serious or contagious illness; those who are confined to their home, a hospital, or nursing facility; or those with serious underlying health conditions. One should consult his or her local pastor if questions arise about the obligation to attend Mass (Canon 1245 and the Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 2181).

Safety protocols and other liturgical directives in each diocese remain in effect until modified or revoked by the respective Diocesan Bishop.

Let us continue to be united in prayer for one another and for an end to the global pandemic.

Given on June 2, 2021



Archdiocese of Washington



ARCHDIOCESE
of BALTIMORE



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARLINGTON



Catholic Diocese
OF RICHMOND



DIOCESE OF
WHEELING-CHARLESTON



Catholic Diocese of Wilmington

Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory
Archbishop, Archdiocese of Washington
Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop, Archdiocese of Baltimore

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge
Bishop, Diocese of Arlington

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Bishop, Diocese of Richmond

Most Reverend Mark E. Brennan
Bishop, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

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