

## HOMILY HELPS – Part 1 and Part 2

### Homily Helps – Part 1 – “The What”

- The pandemic has caused many of us stress and introduced us to incredible challenges; however it has also helped us understand more fully our call to be drawn into the Body of Christ and receive Christ in the Word and the Blessed Sacrament which is shared with us each Sunday.
- The lifting of the dispensation to attend the Sunday Mass essentially means that starting this weekend; we are now obligated/required/supposed to attend Mass every Sunday. During the pandemic, we were allowed to miss Mass because many were unable to due to either fear of contracting COVID 19, or the reality that they were sick. Now, the Church calls us all back to Mass and to receiving Christ.
- Sometimes, “absence makes the heart grow fonder,” and this is a reality for all of us who, during this time of pandemic have been unable to attend the Sunday Mass.
- The greatest gift Jesus left His Church was the gift of the Eucharist, the very gift of God Himself.
- Since we are experiencing greater health in our communities and our parishes, after much discernment and consultation, I have decided to lift the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass effective on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady into heaven.
- Just to clarify, the obligation to attend the Sunday Mass does not apply to those individuals who are frail due to illness or age and in their well-formed consciences believe that going into public places - including Sunday worship at Mass - would place their health in “serious jeopardy”, they too are not bound by this obligation. It also does not apply to those who are themselves sick.
- Obviously, I am preaching to the choir, but what does the lifting of the dispensation mean for us who are gathered here today? It means that we have the mission to help others to come back to the Mass. It means we are charged with the responsibility to reach out to those who were coming to Mass before the pandemic, but who have been either scared or unable to come back, to invite them back to worship Jesus, to receive Jesus, and to reach out to others with His love.

## Homily Helps – Part II “The Why”

- Bishop extends his thanks to all who have helped to make the virtual Mass opportunities possible at our parishes and for the generosity of many donors to make the Channel 5 Masses a possibility. He would encourage these opportunities to continue for those who are not able to attend the Sunday Mass – namely, the sick, those who are imprisoned, those in nursing facilities – but he would like to encourage anyone who is not in these categories of the faithful to come back to the Sunday Mass.
- The reason Bishop Ricken encourages us all to attend Mass if we are able, is two-fold. First, because God tells us to in the third commandment. The third commandment is “To Keep Holy the Lord’s day”. The Lord’s Day for followers of Jesus is Sunday, based upon His Resurrection from the dead. In the Old Testament, the Creator, the Father, required one day of rest after six days of work. The one day required for rest was the requirement of Friday evening and Saturday as the Sabbath. That is the Jewish observation of the Lord’s command, a day for thanking God in ritual worship and a day for rest.  
The second reason why Bishop encourages us to come back to the Sunday celebration of the Mass is because “There is no substitute for receiving the very gift of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ during the celebration of the Mass, the Supper of the Lamb. There is no substitute for praying together as a community of missionary disciples thanking and praising God for the gift of the past week, and begging his help for the week to come. We absolutely need to receive Jesus’ Body and Blood in the Eucharist! There is no substitute for being able to reach out to our families, filled with the gift of Jesus within us, and to our neighbor and community by sharing this Eucharistic gift with others in need whether physically or spiritually. At the end of every Mass we are sent forth to do just this, to make a difference in the lives of others, “Through Him, with Him and in Him.”
- So, for those of us who are here, in person and have the opportunity to receive Jesus Christ in the Word and in the Blessed Sacrament, this is great. We are given the challenge by the Gospel and by our Bishop to welcome those who may not be coming due to one reason or another. It is time to get back in the habit of coming to Mass and to get back in the habit of receiving Christ so we too may be formed and shaped into His body in the world.
- Brothers and sisters, let’s remember that all of life is a journey. It is a daily walk with our God and with one another as we make our way to our Eternal home, which is so much longer than this short life. Every day is a gift; every day can become an act of thanksgiving, even in the midst of trial and struggle. God is with us, Jesus is walking with us. He is present with us every day and especially at Sunday Mass in the Holy Eucharist.