



## DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

P.N. BCZ 20/17

8 July 2020

### DECREE

#### **Coronavirus Update #6: General Dispensation from Sunday obligation is no longer in effect**

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Every Tuesday, I am on a conference call with the Bishops of Region XII, Northwest Region of USA, and I am amazed at how many parishes in the more populated areas are limited to 25 people for Mass attendance. We are very blessed to have many of our churches open to celebrate the sacraments. However, not all churches in the Diocese of Fairbanks are open due to varying guidelines from community to community. We need to continue to work within these guidelines as we provide sacraments, and outreach ministry.

As the State of Alaska has moved fully into Phase IV of re-opening, COVID-19 has not left the state. The State of Alaska reported 165 cases for the 3-day period of July 2-4. With this increase, we still need to follow hygiene protocols when attending Mass. Many of the priests have commented that most individuals are expressing a care and concern regarding the potential transference of COVID-19. Please take seriously these continuing protocols.

#### **Continuing Protocols for Attending Mass:**

- stay six feet apart from non-household members;
- wash hands frequently;
- sanitize and clean high touch surfaces frequently;
- stay home if you are sick, and get tested for COVID-19 if you have symptoms;
- wear a face covering in public places when near others; and
- be mindful and respectful to those Alaskans that are most vulnerable to this virus, including Alaska's senior population and those with existing health conditions.

#### **Reception of Holy Communion:**

I realize that an individual has the right to choose to receive Holy Communion in the hand or on the tongue. Based on solid science and medicine it is strongly recommended that Holy Communion be received on the hand. Those who wish to receive on the tongue will be permitted to do so. However, if you choose to receive on the tongue you are accepting the increased risk of potential exposure to COVID-19. Ministers of Holy Communion will not purify their hands between communicants. In order to maintain order during the distribution of Holy Communion, you are asked to follow the direction of the priest celebrant at Mass as to how Communion will take place.

***The general dispensation from the Sunday obligation is no longer in effect. Only those who are considered high risk (i.e., those who are immune deficient, elderly, etc.) or living in communities with stricter protocols are dispensed. This dispensation will remain in effect until further notice.***

We will continue to live stream the Saturday 4:30pm Vigil and Sunday 11am Mass for those who are unable to attend in person.

May we work together at building the Kingdom of God to reform a society that is built solidly upon Christ's justice and peace.

***This Decree is effective immediately.***

Sincerely in Christ,



†Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski  
Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska  
Diocese of Fairbanks



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