



THE DIOCESE OF
HOUMA THIBODAUX
OFFICE OF BISHOP SHELTON J. FABRE

DECREE

REINSTATING THE PRECEPT OF THE OBLIGATION TO ATTEND MASS ON SUNDAYS AND OTHER HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION

To My Dear Faithful of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux:

At the onset of the worldwide concern surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, our civil government leaders enjoined all sectors of our society to respond with significant measures in order to ensure the minimization of the spread of this virus and mitigate its dangerous and deadly effects on all of humanity. As a result, very strict regulations pertaining to all forms of public gatherings, including assemblies of worship, were implemented.

As your Shepherd and Pastor, I was also seriously mindful of your health and safety. Out of an abundance of concern for your well-being, I decided, albeit with much pain and sorrow in my heart, to suspend *in person* celebrations of the Mass and, consequently, to dispense all of you from the precept of the obligation to participate in Mass on Sundays and other Holy Days. I very grateful to our priests for the way they continued to provide you with pastoral and spiritual care in the midst of these challenges.

Over the course of the pandemic year, we began to steadily re-open our church doors to allow our faithful to return to the participation at Mass *in person* even in limited capacity and with restrictions. At the same time, our civil leaders also dedicated their time and efforts to finding ways to counter the devastation of this pandemic and to devise health measures to significantly diminish the spread of the virus and increase societal immunity.

Since our churches fully re-opened in recent months, I have seen a steady increase in the number of people attending Sunday Mass. This has led me to discern that we have finally come to a point where our entire communities should return to weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist.

Indeed, it is in the Paschal Sacrifice that we draw our greatest strength and our deepest blessings. Our participation at the celebration of Holy Mass and the frequent reception of Holy Communion should be the most important expressions of our belief that Jesus is truly present in the Most Holy Eucharist. Since the Eucharist is Jesus (body, blood, soul, and divinity), the Eucharist is the source and summit of our lives. Moreover, I have also witnessed this past year how it has been a challenge to remain focused on our spiritual lives when the Eucharist is absent, for it is the Eucharist that enables us to keep our gaze fixed on Jesus and remain on the path toward heaven. Thus, I firmly believe that we have arrived at a time when we should once again enjoin everyone to ensure that the Eucharist is at the heart of our faith.

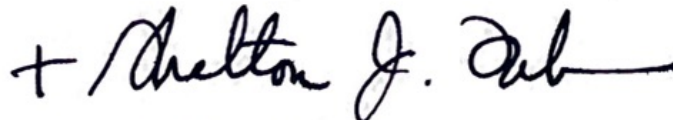
Therefore, in accord with canons 1247 and 1248 of the *Code of Canon Law*, I hereby reinstate the Precept of the Obligation to participate in the Mass on Sundays and other Holy Days of Obligation.

I further decree that this reinstatement will take effect on the weekend when we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 14 & 15) for it is fitting that we emerge from this pandemic inspired by the example of our Lady who pondered in her heart the many blessings of her life, especially the blessing of the *Word made flesh who dwelt in her*.

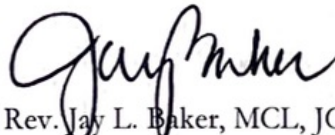
I am aware that there are still those among us such as the elderly, those who have health vulnerabilities or have compromised immune systems, those who are currently suffering from illnesses and those who chose to refrain, in good faith, from leisure activities, social contacts and all forms of gatherings due to their concerns for their health. The dispensation from the obligation will continue to be applied to them.

As we prepare for this very significant transition in our liturgical life, I encourage everyone to take to heart the words, the *Magnificat*, of our Mother which she proclaimed before her cousin Elizabeth: “*He has come to the help of his servant Israel; for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever*” (Luke 1:54-55). God has truly come to our help. He continues to come to our help most especially through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is always present to us in the Eucharist. It is my hope that we make every effort to respond to this gift by being present to Jesus as well, especially in the celebration of Mass.

Given at the Pastoral Center this 3rd day of July, in the Year of Our Lord 2021, the Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle.



Most Rev. Shelton J. Fabre
Bishop of Houma-Thibodaux



Very Rev. Jay L. Baker, MCL, JCL
Chancellor

