



MOST REVEREND CHARLES JASON GORDON

ARCHBISHOP OF PORT OF SPAIN

DECREE

ON DISPENSATION FROM THE OBLIGATION OF ATTENDING SUNDAY MASS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PORT OF SPAIN

Peace and blessings to you, beloved in Christ!

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our society and our world in both negative and positive ways. As church, we have been on a journey from the Desert to the Upper Room and now Missioning the Domestic Church to spread the Good News as missionary disciples.

We were obliged to close all avenues of gatherings, including, sadly, our churches. As Archbishop of Port of Spain, I issued a dispensation to all Catholics which allowed them to attend Masses via television or social media and pray for a Spiritual Communion.

The Sunday Eucharistic celebration is central in the life of the Church. Liturgical prayer, particularly the Eucharist, the Source and Summit of our faith, is essential for all believers. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church." (CCC 2177)

In no way do I want to diminish the importance of the Sunday Eucharistic celebration in the life of the Church which is more than an obligation but to be seen as a gift and a privilege. However, we must keep in mind that due to the Government's guidelines for the reopening of churches, we are still operating at a limited capacity in gathering. As such, we will not all be able to attend Masses as we would like on weekends.

As an act of solidarity and in keeping with being pro-life - *accepting the stipulated precautions as an act of safeguarding your own life as well as the lives of others* – you are being called to sacrifice your desire to attend Masses as you would like to safeguard your life and the life of others.

It is due to this fact that I hereby grant a dispensation in the following instances:

1. If you have attended Mass at church on a weekday, regardless of the day, it would serve as your weekend obligation.

This is to assist persons who are health care workers and security personnel who must work on weekends and also others who due to no fault of their own cannot attend a weekend Mass.

2. If you are in a high risk or vulnerable group, that is, over the age of 65 and/or you have pre-existing chronic illness or you are a caregiver of such persons, you are encouraged to participate in the live transmission of Holy Mass; of course, with reverence and respect for the Eucharist.
3. If you have earnestly tried to attend Holy Mass at your Parish or at another Parish within the cluster and have been unsuccessful in doing so, then participating via television or online should be your next option as opposed to non-participation in Holy Mass.

We are still obliged to adhere to all observances in preparation for Holy Mass. These include: the one hour fast before Holy Mass, appropriate dress, reflecting on the scripture readings of day and praying for an encounter with the Lord through the Holy Mass.

I hereby, grant this decree which is to take effect on **June 12th** and remain until **June 30th, 2020**. It is to be communicated to all interested persons, according to the norm of law. This is a very fluid time and as such I will review this decree on July 1st, 2020.

Given at the Office of the Archbishop, Archbishop's House, Port of Spain, this **twelfth day of June** in the year of Our Lord, **two thousand and twenty**, Tenth Week in Ordinary Time.

Yours Sincerely in Christ,



.....

Most Reverend Charles Jason Gordon
Archbishop of Port of Spain



.....

Sr. Lystra R. Long, OP
Chancellor