

## RECTOR'S LETTER

### January 2, 2021 New Year & New Opportunities

Dear Friends in Christ:

Anh chị em thân mến trong Chúa Kitô:

Estimados Amigos y Amigas en Cristo:

I hope this letter finds you and your families well in this new year. Much as we did at this time last year, we begin the new year with a prayer that 2022 may be "smoother" than 2021. As part of a new beginning, as I shared with the parish on the weekend of December 18-19, Cardinal DiNardo has promulgated new liturgical directives (relating to COVID-19 protocols) which take effect this weekend, the Solemnity of the Epiphany.

One of the changes that the faithful will be happy to hear is that we may return to having Holy Water in our baptismal font. Water will be blessed next Sunday for baptisms during our Masses and will remain from that point forward. In fact, the only modification that really remains in place is the continued restriction on the distribution of the Precious Blood outside of the clergy. Cardinal DiNardo has promised to revisit this matter as the situation continues to unfold.

**By far, the most important directive taking effect is that as of today, January 2, 2022, the general dispensation from obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days is now removed.** This means that all of the faithful who are not impeded from attending Mass due to moral impossibility are now obliged once again to participate in the liturgical assembly or be guilty of grave sin.

For a more in-depth treatment of the nature, history, and context of Mass obligation, I invite you to watch the recording of my homily of December 19, 2021 online (during the second half of the homily). However, lest anyone question whether my interpretation is biased, I will share in this space the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on the matter:

2180 The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass." (CIC, can. 1247) "The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day." (can. 1248 §1)

2181 The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. (can. 1245) Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin.

2182 Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

2183 "If because of lack of a sacred minister or for other grave cause participation in the celebration of the Eucharist is impossible, it is specially recommended that the faithful take part in the Liturgy of the Word if it is celebrated in the parish church or in another sacred place according to the prescriptions of the diocesan bishop, or engage in prayer for an appropriate amount of time personally or in a family or, as occasion offers, in groups of families." (can. 1248 §2)

As I shared on December 19, COVID-19 protocols have unfortunately become divisive like everything else in our country. We should not allow this to be so among the faithful in this matter. This reimposition of the standard obligation is simply a recognition that we are not in a transitory phase. COVID and its variants are with us for the long haul—there is nothing to outwait. Now is the time where each must follow his or her own conscience in making prudential decisions (vaccinations, masks, choices, etc.) and then live with the consequences. Amid these decisions, though, we cannot cut ourselves off from the most essential thing: our communal worship of God and the grace of the sacraments—the very thing we need for strength for the battle.

It is futile for us to stop living to prevent dying. Now we need to make our choices, respect others, and move forward in charity. May we exhort and support one another in doing what is right and just.

*O Sacred Heart of Jesus, we place all our trust in You. Amen.*

Yours in Christ,



Very Reverend Jeffrey L. Bame  
Rector & Pastor

