



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII
DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
WITNESS TO JESUS

December 6, 2020

To: All Parishioners of the Diocese of Honolulu

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Peace be with you!

One of the most difficult decisions I have had to make as a bishop was the suspension of public Masses due to the coronavirus pandemic from mid-March to late May, 2020. Since then, the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days has been dispensed. In light of the ongoing pandemic, **I am extending the dispensation through Tuesday, February 16, 2021, the day before Ash Wednesday.**

While I am extending this dispensation for the sake of those who are at higher risk if they should be infected with the COVID-19 virus, **I would like to urge all our parishioners who can safely do so to return to worship at Sunday Mass.**

Why does the Church put such great importance on our celebration of Sunday Mass that it is a serious obligation for all Catholics to attend every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation? It is because the Eucharist is our unique physical encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ, who longs to be one with us and to strengthen us for our mission of living in his love and sharing his Good News with others. The Eucharist is not simply a series of rituals in which we engage, but it is the Memorial that Jesus himself left us in which he makes himself present to us. He offers himself to us in a physical manner, hidden under the guise of bread and wine, which by the power of the Holy Spirit invoked by the priest in the midst of his beloved Bride, the Church, become his Body and Blood. Jesus died on the cross for us, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. But he is the “living bread come down from heaven,” who offers himself as real food and real drink to give us eternal life. (See the Gospel of John, Chapter 6.)

When his disciples first encountered the risen Jesus, it changed them from deserters and cowards into bold proclaimers of his Gospel who found joy even in offering their lives for him. So Jesus wants to encounter us to transform us so that we can proclaim to a world gone astray that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Yes, we can encounter Jesus in our private prayer, in reading the Scriptures, in feeding the poor and doing the works of mercy – and we must do these things! – but there is nothing compared to a physical encounter with him in the Eucharist. This is why the Church insists that all its members, whenever they are not legitimately impeded, come together in intimate communion with the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, so that the Body of Christ can renew and transform our world with renewed vigor of the living Christ Jesus.

Yes, under our current circumstances, we do have to make adjustments and live a “new normal.” But there is nothing that compares to the great gift of his Real Presence that Jesus offers us in the Eucharist. We look forward to welcoming you back!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Larry Silva". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Larry Silva
Bishop of Honolulu