

Sunday, August 15, 2021  
The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Dear family in Christ,

Welcome back! I have missed you all a lot and it has been so wonderful to see so many of you coming back to Mass weekend after weekend. This is a beautiful weekend in so many ways. We celebrate the awesome day of Mary's Assumption into Heaven body and soul. This is also our parish Feast Day of Our Lady of the Lake. Happy Feast Day! We also celebrate this weekend the lifting of the dispensation of the Sunday Mass obligation. It may seem odd to some of you to say that we are celebrating this, especially since we are still amid the pandemic with the new Delta variant. Please allow me to explain why this a good thing and truly worthy of celebration.

The Holy Mass and Christ's gift of Himself in the Eucharist is the greatest gift we will ever receive on this earth until, by the grace of God, we are with God forever in Heaven. Any steps to get us all back to Holy Mass, in the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and receiving this True Presence is very good and holy. Even if it is just beginning on the level of obligation this is a good start. The Mass isn't holy because of the obligation; The Mass is obligatory because it is holy! The word "obligation" oftentimes is seen in a negative way, but it doesn't need to be and shouldn't be. Obligation is a good thing. Our obligations to God and to others are a gift of love, right? We all have an obligation to take care of our spouses and our children, right? We all have an obligation to raise our children well, protect them, and show them good example, right? We all have an obligation as Christians to love one another as Christ has loved us, right?

These obligations are all very good and holy. They are fueled by love ... love of God, love of our families, and love of our neighbor. The same is true with our Sunday obligation to attend Holy Mass. It is an obligation that is given to us as a gift of love from Jesus and His Church. The obligation prompts true faith, hope, and love in us. It is a loving obligation that assures us that we are receiving that gift of Jesus' Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity that Jesus Himself calls, **"the living bread that came down from heaven and whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh ... Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them"** (John 6:51-56).

This is a pretty good obligation then! It is one that leads us to Heaven and to true life and joy with Jesus now too. Therefore, unless there is a very serious reason (*serious sickness, taking care of someone who is seriously sick, or a genuine impossibility to get to Mass*), it is a mortal (deadly) sin to miss Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and not fulfill this most important obligation we have as Catholics. Please, we all need to receive this again and not take this lightly.

In this letter I would also like to address some changes that we will all be seeing in our return to Holy Mass. The first, is the addition of the kneeler at the Holy Communion stations. Many of our parishioners want to kneel to receive our Lord in Holy Communion and this is a very good thing. If you are able, kneeling to receive our Lord in Holy Communion is one of the greatest acts of reverence and adoration you can show Him. The kneeler makes it easier for these parishioners. *To be clear, kneeling to receive Holy Communion is optional.* If you still prefer to receive standing while still making a profound bow and receiving Jesus into one hand over the other or on the tongue this is still very good. Also, if you do want to kneel to receive you still have the option to receive Holy Communion into one hand over the other or on the tongue.

I also want to address the changes and additions to our church especially in the sanctuary. Some of you have asked why we are doing this. Is it because our church is not beautiful? Not at all! It is very beautiful, but it can and should be more beautiful and worthy of the God of the universe and Lord of all that lives within it. It has been said that our church is “homey” or a “simple, country church”. As well intentioned as these comments are, it is not how our Catholic churches should be described. Please let me explain.

Our churches are meant to look totally different from our homes or any of our earthly buildings. Why? Because they are meant to remind us of Heaven. Every time we enter a Catholic church, we are meant to be seeing a foretaste of what Heaven will be for all eternity. Our experience of going to church is meant to take us out of our ordinary lives and call us into the holy, the Divine, and the supernatural. Thus, our church buildings and our worship need to reflect this. Therefore, our churches, and our liturgies need to be adorned with the most beautiful and precious of materials that we can afford. It's not only fitting for God, but also our way to show God proper praise, worship, and adoration. This is all through the Scriptures; in the Old Testament we see this in the beauty of God's holy temple and in the New Testament Jesus speaks about this in the Book of Revelation. This is a great book to show us how exactly our earthly churches and liturgies should look because in them we are entering into what is happening in Heaven now and what, please God, we will one day experience for all eternity. If you have not read the Book of Revelation, please do so. Also, a great book to

read to have more understanding about this is *The Lamb's Supper* by Dr. Scott Hahn. This is also consistently seen in our Tradition through the writings and teachings of the Saints and the Church's documents (*especially the documents of the Second Vatican Council*).

Another objection I have heard is that why are we spending so much money on our church building when we should be using it to care for and love the poor and most needy. This is fair. I would absolutely say that if we were not taking care of the poor, spending all this money on the church and the liturgy would truly be scandalous. *This is not the case though!* Praise God we have one of the most generous parishes ever! We are giving thousands and thousands of dollars monthly to the poor and needy from our parish through your generosity at Thrifty Threads and the generosity of our Social Concerns resources.

There is so much more to be said about this but let me leave you with how Jesus feels about giving Him the best that we can offer and afford. Please prayerfully read and reflect on this Scripture passage: **“Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?” (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put in it.) Jesus said, “Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me” (John 12:1-8).**

The bottom line is: Does Jesus need this? Of course not, He is God apart from anything we can give to him or offer Him. He is perfect and holy in Himself. Does He deserve it though? Yes, absolutely ... because He is God and our everything now and forever! Thank you for reading this very long letter. There is a lot of information in here to process, digest, and pray through. I realize that some of you after reading this will still have questions and/or concerns. Please speak to me about them. I want to listen and hear you and talk through them and pray through them with you!

With that in mind, I am asking a few favors from all of you. One, please if you have a smartphone make sure you have the myParish app installed on your phone and set to receive notifications. This is the quickest and easiest way for me and the parish to get important messages and information to you. Finally, at your earliest convenience

please send me an email (or a snail mail letter) with a current email and address so that I can keep in touch with you all on a regular basis. So many of our messages via email and snail mail have been returned because your information has changed. You can send your information directly to my personal parish email ([fr.daniel.hoffman@ololake.com](mailto:fr.daniel.hoffman@ololake.com)). Thank you all so much! Can't wait to hear from you! I love you all so much!

Peace of Christ always!

Rev. Daniel R. Hoffman, Pastor