



Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama

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Office of the Bishop

March 13, 2020

Dear Faithful People of the Diocese of Birmingham:

As you know, I recently published directives concerning how we should respond to the threat of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) crisis, including omitting to distribute communion from the chalice and avoiding other physical contacts during Holy Mass.

With the news that the virus is now present in Alabama, and having consulted with priests of the Diocese and other bishops, I am pleased to issue the following additional indications for the foreseeable future.

Effective immediately, the following categories of individuals are **dispensed** from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 1247):

- Individuals with chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, and cancer;
- Individuals with compromised immune systems;
- Caretakers of the at-risk individuals listed above;
- Those who are concerned that they may be sick or may have been exposed to sickness;
- Individuals over the age of 65.

This dispensation remains in effect until it is revoked.

If you avail yourself of this dispensation, please remember the moral obligation to keep the Sabbath holy and consider sanctifying the day by watching a Mass on EWTN, another television outlet, or online; meditating on the daily readings (<http://www.usccb.org/readings>); praying the Holy Rosary for an end to this crisis; reading the Scriptures; or praying some other Catholic devotion. I leave it to you to choose how you will keep the day holy.

It is crucial that we all unite in prayer, begging that God keep us and all who are in danger safe from this serious illness. Our churches will remain open, and I and our priests remain available to attend to your sacramental and spiritual needs during this time. We will also cooperate with civil authorities and issue additional norms if needed. Thank you for your kind attention!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. Baker, S.T.D.
Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama