

December 31, 2021

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we stand on the threshold of 2022, I pray that you and your loved ones will have a blessed, happy and healthy new year. We have challenges ahead, to be sure, but we are also abundantly blessed by God. A new year is a reminder to give thanks to our loving God for our blessings.

Unfortunately, we begin 2022 with the legacy of 2020 and 2021. As you are aware, the State of Louisiana has seen a dramatic increase in the number of people infected with COVID-19 over the past week. It would appear that the combination of variants and holiday gatherings have exposed more vulnerable people to the virus. While I do not believe that it will be necessary to reinstate a blanket dispensation from participating at Mass, I want to remind you of a portion of my letter of July 29, 2021, regarding those who qualify for a personal dispensation. You are not obliged to participate in Mass if:

1. You are sick with any communicable disease or from any other condition that would make your travel to, or participation at Mass too difficult.
2. You wish to receive a COVID vaccine, but have been unable to receive one, or you have received only one of the two required inoculations, or your immunity has not yet kicked in (approximately two weeks after the second dose of the vaccine).
3. You have other health conditions that would make exposure to the virus too dangerous for you.
4. You care for someone who cannot obtain a vaccine, or who has health conditions that would make exposure to the virus too dangerous.
5. You have a true fear of the virus and are isolating or quarantining until the surge is over or until the virus is eradicated.

To these previously stated conditions, I would add that anyone who has been knowingly exposed to the virus is exempt while they are observing the necessary quarantine period. More than just dispensing you from the obligation to participate in Mass, I ask anyone who is sick to stay home whenever you could spread this virus or any other.

Although the governor has not reinstated a general “mask mandate,” I ask you to prayerfully consider wearing a mask indoors in public spaces – including at Mass – to protect yourself and others.

Let us continue to pray for all of those who have died from this disease, for all of those who are presently sick, and for all of our health care workers and others on the front lines. We pray especially for an end to this global health crisis.

Sincerely in Christ,

+Robert W. Marshall, Jr.

Most Reverend Robert W. Marshall, Jr.
Bishop of Alexandria