



DIOCESE OF
SAN JOSÉ

Office of the Bishop

Brothers and Sisters in the Diocese of San José,

Since the time of Adam and Eve, suffering has been part of the human experience. The pandemic has certainly added a great deal of suffering worldwide. As we understand in our faith, suffering will never be eliminated completely until Jesus Christ returns; however, we are called to mitigate unnecessary suffering where possible. Thus, we live with a certain amount of discomfort and inconvenience, but always with the joy and hope that we are in solidarity with each other and with Christ's suffering and caring for with most vulnerable among us.

Public health experts have been preparing the public for the *endemic* phase of the Covid-19 disease. With an endemic disease, the virus remains present at a lower level of infection as the population gains greater immunity. Thus, we integrate the health risks of Covid-19 into our life calculations.

Thank goodness, more than 80% of residents of Santa Clara County have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. With these improving circumstances, therefore, **effective March 6, 2022, the First Sunday of Lent, the dispensation of the Sunday and Holy Day obligation will conclude for all Catholics within the Diocese of San José.** The faithful who are healthy and without significant risk factors or other serious reasons should fulfill these obligations joyfully and conscientiously, continuing to abide by safety protocols.

At the same time, I remind everyone that the Church has always provided exceptions to the Sunday and Holy Day obligation. **Anyone with a "serious reason" or "grave cause" is excused from the obligation.** *In the case of this pandemic, "serious reason" and "grave cause" would include: anyone who is sick, symptomatic, or tested positive for or has been recently exposed to COVID; anyone who is confined to their home, a hospital, or nursing facility; anyone caring for someone who is ill or immunocompromised; or being at high-risk for contracting COVID-19 (Canon 1245; CCC 2181).* **Catholics are encouraged to consult with their pastor if they are unsure about their personal situation.**

Anyone who isn't able to go to Mass should continue to keep the Lord's Day holy with intentional time in prayer, including engagement in the readings for the day, which may be enhanced through watching a pre-recorded or livestreamed Mass and making a spiritual communion.

Regarding the importance of Sunday worship, the Catechism states: "The celebration of Sunday observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in the human heart to render to God an outward, visible, public, and regular worship 'as a sign of his universal beneficence to all.' Sunday worship fulfills the moral command of the Old Covenant, taking up its rhythm and spirit in the weekly celebration of the Creator and Redeemer of his people" (CCC 2176).

I invite those of us who are able to return safely to participate in the Sunday Eucharist in their parish. Let us continue to make the Lord's Day a true celebration of thanksgiving for God's love, mercy, and redemption.

I am grateful to everyone who has worked so hard to keep our parishes and schools running so that our mission could continue. Despite the challenges and darkness of this pandemic, we continue to bring the light of Christ to others as seen in our liturgies, visits to the homebound, prayer groups, faith formation, adoration, and much more. Thank you to all the volunteers, staff, and clergy who have creatively nurtured our parish and school communities!

Be ensured of my prayers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Oscar Cantú', written in a cursive style.

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú
Bishop of San José