



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of COLUMBUS
OFFICE of the BISHOP

Earl K. Fernandes
by the grace of God and the favor of the Apostolic See
Bishop of Columbus

DECREE
DISPENSATION FROM THE OBLIGATION TO PARTICIPATE IN MASS
ON SUNDAYS AND HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION

Recent days have seen an increase in immigration enforcement in the Diocese of Columbus, causing a rise in fear and feelings of anxiety among our immigrant communities. I have consulted closely with many of the pastors whose parishioners are more acutely affected by this recent surge in activity of immigration enforcement.

The Christian faithful have an obligation, which is a disciplinary law of the Church, to participate in Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, including the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord (cc. 1246 §1, 1247). The fear associated with this recent activity of immigration enforcement may deter some of the Christian faithful from fulfilling their obligation to assist at Mass, which would be detrimental to their spiritual welfare.

The diocesan bishop is able to dispense the faithful from disciplinary laws, both universal and particular, when it contributes to their spiritual welfare (cf. c. 87 §1).

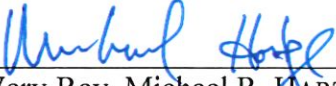
THEREFORE, having considered the law and the facts, I hereby dispense from the obligation to attend Holy Mass, all those persons who reasonably fear being detained, even those with proper legal documentation, who fear separation from their families, experience intimidation because of their status or ethnic background, or other actions of immigration enforcement. This dispensation will last through the Christmas Season, which ends with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on January 11, 2026.

The Christian faithful who make use of this dispensation are strongly encouraged to engage in spiritual practices during this time, including joining live-streamed Masses, making spiritual communion, praying the family rosary, meditating on the Nativity scene, and other activities of popular piety (cf. c. 1248 §2).

Pastors and all the priests serving the Diocese of Columbus are encouraged to be generous in attending to the pastoral care of the faithful who cannot participate in Mass and who are in need of pastoral and sacramental care, including the sacraments of penance, anointing of the sick, or Holy Communion.

This decree is to be promulgated on the Diocese of Columbus website. It should also be shared on parish websites and via social media for the good of the faithful.

Given at the Diocese of Columbus Chancery Office this 23rd day of December 2025.


Very Rev. Michael R. HARTGE
Vicar General and Ecclesiastical Notary




Most Reverend Earl K. FERNANDES
Bishop of Columbus