



*Whoever is in Christ is a new creation:
The old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.
(2 Corinthians 5:17).*

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Grace and Peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you this Lenten Season. During this Lenten Season, we are invited time and time again to celebrate our relationship with God. We are called, through prayer, fasting, and our acts of charity, to “taste and see the goodness of the Lord,” as the psalmist tells us – that we might be radiant with joy.

The Lenten Season is a time to draw near to God. In our conversations about how we can do that more fervently, the question of lifting the dispensation of the obligation to participate in the celebration of Mass on Sundays and other Holy Days of Obligation, established for the safety of people during the pandemic, has been discussed.

We ache with longing to return to the Lord, both individually and as a community. As we ponder how to draw near to God, we cannot but think of the Gift of the Bread of Heaven. Our longing is most wonderfully fulfilled through our participation in the Eucharistic Feast on Sunday. For we know that participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and being faithful to Christ and to His Church (CCC 2182).

In our time since the pandemic, we have experienced many changes in our world. Today, we find ourselves listening to headline news about war, human trafficking, and many other sins against God. But the Love of God is yesterday, today, and forever. St. Paul tells us that our ministry is to imitate Christ; to bring forth Jesus’ total self-giving love for all God’s people. The Love of God is always inviting, always forgiving, as Jesus reminds us in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The father welcomes the son and says, “let us celebrate with a feast.”

It is time to offer ourselves selflessly and return to the Father, to celebrate with a feast. **Effective Palm Sunday, April 10, 2022, the obligation to participate in the Eucharist in person on Sundays and other Holy Days of Obligation is restored.** During the pandemic, God gently prompts us of our care for each other by refraining from gathering when ill or in the care of someone who is ill. The Church has always excused those who are sick or care for infants or the elderly from this obligation. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin. Mass times may have changed at your parish since you last participated in the celebration of Mass. Please be sure to check the parish website or call for Mass times.

By participating in the Eucharistic feast, we become what we receive. For, each time we receive, we come to life again. God offers Himself to us so that we know our greatest dignity is through, with, and in Him. Then, by this reception, we are sent forth to bring Christ into the world. Yes, during the Lenten Season, and forever. Our sisters and brothers living in the Ukraine are courageous examples for us. Even knowing the possibility of their death as they bear the fruit of their religious faith, they participate in the celebration of Mass because they understand their only source of life is through God. As we participate in the Eucharistic feast, we join in communion with these sisters and brothers, and so many others, who are suffering.

At the sight of you entering God’s house, we are filled with compassion at your return! Let us celebrate the new things to come.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend John Noonan
Bishop of Orlando