



His Excellency
STEVEN JOHN RAICA
By the grace of God and the Apostolic See
Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama

**DECREE
EXTENDING THE DISPENSATION
DUE TO COVID-19**

In accordance with canons 87 § 1 and 90 of the Code of Canon Law, I make the following provision, recognizing that infection rates for COVID-19, though recently on a downward trend, remain generally high in the territory of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama and that the dispensation I previously extended on January 5, 2021 shall soon expire, on March 14, 2021:

I hereby extend the dispensation from the obligation to assist at Holy Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation through Sunday, May 23, 2021 (inclusive) – the Solemnity of Pentecost – for all the Roman Catholic faithful who reside or are visiting and present in the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama.

We have made great progress and it seems we are finally glimpsing a light at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic tunnel. Many people are now receiving vaccines; many others have also become ill with the virus and recovered. We continue to pray for those who have died or who are otherwise suffering lasting, deleterious effects from the virus. As we look forward to the time when the dispensation will be lifted, we must not let down our guard. We must continue to observe the precautions and best practices advised by the various authorities, including handwashing and sanitization, the use of facemasks, and social distancing.

That said, I continue to encourage all to evaluate the risks and, for those who have been staying away from church still, to seek a way to return to corporate worship in a parish even before the dispensation is lifted. Many have taken comparable risks in other areas of life, such as by returning to work and/or having their children attend in-person school; eating out in restaurants; doing non-essential shopping; taking vacations; visiting others or having visitors in one's own home; etc. The increasing availability of vaccines also affords us greater security going forward. We are in a Year of the Parish and the Eucharist as a diocese; the Lord of the Eucharist invites us all to rediscover his Real Presence in our midst in our parishes, among our brothers and sisters.

Given at the Diocesan Chancery in Birmingham on the 8th of March, the Commemoration of Saint John of God, in the Year of the Lord 2021.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steven J. Raica".

Most Reverend Steven J. Raica
Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan W. Jerabek".

Very Reverend Bryan W. Jerabek
Chancellor