



Bishop Parkes Grants Dispensation of Sunday Mass Obligation

Given the forecast of the potential impact and severity of Hurricane Irma, Most Reverend Gregory Parkes, Bishop of St. Petersburg, has granted a dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation for this weekend, **September 9-10** to all Catholics living within the five counties of the Diocese of St. Petersburg and to those who are traveling through the diocese. The dispensation is to assist the safety and conscience of the faithful. The dispensation also remains in effect regardless of the weather situation as it develops over the weekend in our area.

In making the announcement, the Diocese of St. Petersburg states that it is up to the pastor at each of its 81 parish churches and missions to decide when or if Masses will be held over the weekend. The diocese encourages parishioners and visitors to contact their local parish to find out when Masses will or will not be held. Some parishes have already made such announcements on their websites, social media and other communication methods.

The dispensation from Bishop Parkes is not a directive for a pastor to cancel or curtail Masses but gives the pastors the ability to make a judgement with regard to the availability of Masses and to address local safety concerns.

Earlier this week, the following announcement was posted on the diocesan website:

The Catholic faithful are reminded to exercise prudence as they seek to fulfill their Mass obligation [...] The Office of the Bishop urges all Catholics to heed the travel advisories of their cities and towns, and to stay off the roads during the peak hours of the storm. The faithful are encouraged to use good judgment when planning to travel to Mass. In the event that roadways are not clear for travel, the faithful are reminded that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass does not apply when there is grave difficulty in fulfilling this obligation. (See Code of Canon Law, Canon 1248 §2)

The Diocese of St. Petersburg includes the following counties: Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas. Any updates concerning closings and cancellations can be found by accessing our diocesan website: www.dosp.org.