

Diocese of Great Falls–Billings
PO Box 1399
Great Falls, MT 59403

To: Priests and Pastoral Administrators of the Diocese

From: Most Reverend Anthony M. Milone

Re: Obligation of Holy Days

Date: March 19, 1992

I have given the recommendation of the Presbyteral Council to dispense the obligation of Holy Days (except Christmas) much prayer, reflection, and consultation. I am aware of the problems so many of the priests have brought to my attention, particularly the problem of great distances to travel and the cultural problems of truly celebrating a religious holy day, recalling with joy the events of our salvation in a regular workday environment when only the obligation seems stressed. The latter problem, long a difficulty, is more universal and seems now to be affecting the Lord's Day itself.

At the last meeting of the National Conference of Bishops, I was able to support the recommendations of our people as the issues were discussed and voted upon. As you are aware, there was only partial success.

Our Portland Province has tried to act in solidarity on issues such as this. This is especially true of the two dioceses of Montana. I do not wish to isolate our Diocese from the rest of the Province and I want to work in concert with them. Therefore, I will, at this time, modify my implementation of the recommendation from the Presbyteral Council. I will, however, pursue the issue on the Provincial level. I do not feel it would be for the spiritual good of our Diocese to act otherwise presently.

Because of the problem we have with long distances and multiple missions, I agree that too many of our priests are traveling too many miles for these Holy Days. Therefore, on the Holy Days, exclusive of the Lord's Day, those priests with missions or stations need only to celebrate the Holy Eucharist at the main parish where the priest resides. Members of the mission or station churches should be reminded that they are excused from the obligation for the Holy Day because of the distance they would have to travel to attend Mass. It is important that parishioners who are members of mission churches be adequately instructed and prepared for this so that those with a more tender conscience may be at peace.

Let us pray together to the Holy Spirit as we continue to address the difficult pastoral problems that face us.

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