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## DIOCESE *of* GAYLORD

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October 17, 2024

Dear Clergy and Directors of Parish Life:

Of immediate concern is a change in the usual practice of the Church in the United States regarding the obligatory nature of Mass participation on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the patronal feast of our nation. This year, since December 8 falls on the Second Sunday of Advent, the Solemnity has been transferred to Monday, December 9, 2024. In the past, when this has occurred, the USCCB has presumed the obligation of the People of God to assist at Mass on December 9 is abrogated.

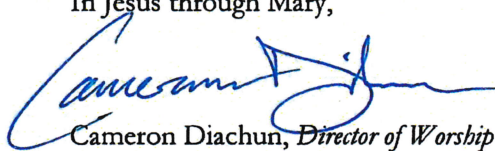
On July 5, 2024, Most Reverend Thomas J. Paprocki, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, wrote to the Dicastery for Legislative Texts seeking clarification on this matter. His inquiry notes that the Solemnity in question is not included in the USCCB's complimentary norms to can. 1246 which abrogates the precept to assist at Mass when other locally observed holy days fall on a Saturday or Monday. In response, His Excellency Filippo Iannone, O.Carm., Prefect of the Dicastery for Legislative Texts informed Bishop Paprocki that **the Solemnity "must be observed as a day of obligation on the day to which it is transferred."**

Having received notification of this decision on October 10, I write now on behalf of our own bishop, Most Reverend Jeffrey J. Walsh, that you may have time to plan liturgies accordingly and inform the faithful of their obligation. Bishop Walsh offers as a reminder that while anticipated Masses are permitted for the Solemnity on the evening of Sunday, December 8, the faithful are obliged to assist at Mass twice, once to fulfill their Sunday obligation and once again to fulfill their holy day obligation.

Nonetheless, the Prefect, Archbishop Iannone, states it is "important to keep in mind that canon law explicitly addresses the situation in which a grave cause renders it impossible to attend Holy Mass (cf. can. 1248, § 2), and, since no one is bound to the impossible, a dispensation is not even needed in those situations." He further quotes the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2185, that "family needs or important social service can legitimately excuse from the obligation of Sunday [or other holidays] rest." Pastors can otherwise offer a dispensation to individual members of the faithful for a just cause. However, pastors may not offer dispensations to entire groups, much less their entire parish.

Realizing the "short notice" and the canonical/pastoral questions this decision may invoke, please do not hesitate to contact me for any clarification.

In Jesus through Mary,



Cameron Diachun, *Director of Worship and Liturgy*