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CNS documentary service

Let Us Return to the Eucharist With Joy!

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments

Church services and Mass online cannot compare to or replace the in-person participation of the faithful, the Vatican's office for divine worship told the world's bishops. Once the local situation in relation to the coronavirus allows, it said, "it is necessary and urgent to return to the normality of Christian life, which has the church building as its home and the celebration of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist," as the source and summit of its activities. "Once the concrete measures that can be taken to reduce the spread of the virus to a minimum have been identified and adopted, it is necessary that all resume their place in the assembly of brothers and sisters,"

"Physical contact with the Lord is vital, indispensable, irreplaceable."

it said. The letter by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, signed by its prefect Cardinal Robert Sarah, was sent to the presidents of national bishops' conferences worldwide. Pope Francis approved the publication of the letter during an audience with the cardinal Sept. 3. "In listening to and collaborating with civil authorities and experts," the congregation said, bishops "were prompt to make difficult and painful decisions, even to the point of suspending the participation of the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist for a long period." God never abandons humanity, it said, and "even the hardest trials can bear fruits of grace." It added, "We have accepted our distance from the Lord's altar as a time of eucharistic fasting, useful for us to rediscover its vital importance, beauty and immeasurable preciousness." The congregation's letter follows, copyright © 2020 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus has produced upheavals not only in social, family, economic, educational and work dynamics but also in the life of the Christian community, including the liturgical dimension. To prevent the spread of the virus, rigid social distancing was necessary, which had repercussions on a fundamental trait of Christian life: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Mt 18:20); "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And all who

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