

## **Sunday Mass obligation lifted this weekend in WNC in wake of deadly storm**

CHARLOTTE — Bishop Michael Martin has lifted the responsibility to attend Mass this weekend for Catholics in the western part of North Carolina most impacted by the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

In a special announcement Friday, Bishop Martin also urged Catholics to take precautions, make good decisions, and reach out to those who have been impacted by the storm or are vulnerable.

“Please...offer your assistance where possible to ensure the well-being of those around you, especially those most at risk. A call to someone living alone, as well as support for those most affected (flood victims, the homeless) can make a real difference,” he said in an announcement to parishes and Catholics across the Diocese of Charlotte.

The dispensation applies only to Masses this weekend – Vigil Masses on Saturday, Sept. 28, and Sunday Masses on Sept. 29.

Parishioners should check their parish website and social media channels for cancelations or modified schedules to this weekend’s services. For a directory of parishes, go online to [www.charlottediocese.org](http://www.charlottediocese.org).

Hurricane Helene hit Florida Thursday night as a Category 4 storm with sustained winds of 140 mph, before weakening into a tropical storm as it pushed north into Georgia and the Carolinas on Friday. As of noon Friday, the Associated Press reported that at least 17 people had been killed, with widespread flooding, wind damage and power outages for millions reported throughout the region.

The diocese’s emergency preparedness officials are taking stock of the 92 churches and other facilities across 46 counties.

On Friday, Bishop Martin shared these words:

*“The devastating effects of Helene are impacting many across the Southeast and in our own diocese. I encourage everyone to be vigilant and take extra safety precautions during this time. Please follow state and local guidelines and offer your assistance where possible to ensure the well-being of those around you, especially those most at risk. A call to someone living alone, as well as support for those most affected (flood victims, the homeless) can make a real difference. Our God is with us always, especially when we feel most vulnerable. We unite together in prayer as a Church who trusts in God and who is ready to act as the hand of God to help those in need.*

*“In recognition of the challenges we are facing this weekend, I lift the Vigil/Sunday Mass obligation for Catholics in the western part of our diocese most impacted by*

*Helene. Catholics in the rest of the diocese are encouraged to use caution and make appropriate choices knowing that God calls us all to prudent decision-making, especially in times of crisis. May we also take this moment to reflect upon the power of Mother Nature and on how we can live in greater communion with each other and with her on this planet.”*

— Catholic News Herald