

April 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

After consulting the Archdiocesan Priests Council, and after conferring with Bishops Conley and Hanefeldt, I am ending the general dispensation from the obligation to participate in Sunday Mass, effective the weekend of Pentecost, May 22-23, 2021, in the Archdiocese of Omaha.

Happily, many parishes have been experiencing an increase in weekend Mass attendance recently. I think we can anticipate this trend to continue in the coming weeks, as vaccines are more widely available, and as other activities in the community resume.

Each pastor, in consultation with parish leaders, will continue to determine how to implement the guidance from the DHHS and local health departments. It will be important for pastors and parish staffs to communicate any local precautions or occupancy restrictions to their parishioners. Decisions about livestreaming of the liturgy will be made locally.

While the responsibility to participate in Sunday Mass rests with each of us, there are persons who may consider themselves excused under certain circumstances. Those who are prevented from attending due to advanced age, sickness, disability or some other serious reason are excused. For the foreseeable future, those who feel they are at heightened risk of contracting or communicating COVID-19 are excused.

The coming weeks provide an opportunity for us to respond again to the invitation of Jesus to come to Him. This is also an opportunity for each of us to share the invitation of Jesus with family members and neighbors. Look for more communication from your parish and from the archdiocese as we move to the feast of Pentecost with hope.

You are in my prayers for joy and peace in the risen Lord.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend George J. Lucas
Archbishop of Omaha

FAQ on the end of the dispensation from the Sunday obligation

April 2021

When will the current dispensation end?

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass will end effective Pentecost weekend, May 22-23, 2021. Catholics who are not otherwise excused from the obligation will need to attend Sunday Mass that weekend.

Does the Archdiocese expect a sudden surge in Mass attendance?

We have seen a gradual increase in Mass attendance in recent months; many people have already been returning. Parishes should be actively inviting every parishioner to participate in Sunday Mass, as all are obliged to do.

To whom does the Sunday obligation apply?

As one of the five precepts of the Church (cf. CCC #2041-2043), it binds all Catholics who are not otherwise unable to attend Mass. Pope St. John Paul II offered the Church very clear and helpful direction on this point in his letter “Dies Domini” (“The Day of the Lord”):

Finally, the faithful who, because of sickness, disability or some other serious cause, are prevented from taking part, should as best they can unite themselves with the celebration of Sunday Mass from afar, preferably by means of the readings and prayers for that day from the Missal, as well as through their desire for the Eucharist.(97) In many countries, radio and television make it possible to join in the Eucharistic celebration broadcast from some sacred place.(98) Clearly, this kind of broadcast does not in itself fulfill the Sunday obligation, which requires participation in the fraternal assembly gathered in one place, where Eucharistic communion can be received. But for those who cannot take part in the Eucharist and who are therefore excused from the obligation, radio and television are a precious help, especially if accompanied by the generous service of extraordinary ministers who bring the Eucharist to the sick, also bringing them the greeting and solidarity of the whole community. Sunday Mass thus produces rich fruits for these Christians too, and they are truly enabled to experience Sunday as “the Lord’s Day” and “the Church’s day”.

What safety protocols are being mandated by the Archdiocese of Omaha?

Each pastor and those who assist him in parish leadership must determine how best to implement guidance from the Nebraska DHHS and their local health department. At this time, there are no archdiocese-wide restrictions beyond those mandated by local government.

How will I know what precautions are in place in a given parish?

It is incumbent upon pastors and parish staff to communicate any precautions or occupancy restrictions to their parishioners. When in doubt, please contact your parish.

Will parishes continue to livestream Masses?

That is up to the discretion of each parish. Parishioners should direct any questions to their pastors and parish leadership.