



# ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

## **Colorado Bishops: Sunday and Holy Day Obligation to be Restored on Pentecost Sunday**

April 6, 2021

The Bishops of Colorado have announced that the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days will be restored on Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021, and all Catholics who are healthy and without significant risk factors or other serious reasons should resume normal Mass attendance in the coming weeks.

This is being announced with over six weeks of notice to give parishes and Catholics adequate time to prepare. Catholics are encouraged to use the Easter season to prayerfully contemplate why they are called to Mass every week, and if necessary, educate themselves on the Church's teachings on the obligation, including acceptable reasons to still stay home.

### **BACKGROUND**

In March of 2020, as the Coronavirus began to significantly spread, the bishops of Colorado made the difficult decision to suspend in-person Masses and granted a general dispensation to the faithful.

In May of 2020, the dioceses resumed in-person Masses, following public health protocols and guidelines. Over the last 11 months, parishes have continued to increase attendance and welcome back as many people as possible.

While entering into any public space over the last year has included some risk, the safety and health protocols implemented at our parishes have proven to be extremely effective, and we are unaware of any issues of community spread happening at a public Mass.

Prudent health precautions will still be taken by every parish, but as the worst of the pandemic seems to be behind us, and access to COVID-19 vaccines for those who desire to receive it has increased, the time has come that the general dispensation is no longer necessary.

### **RETURN TO MASS**

As Catholics, we are invited by God to gather together in community, and participate fully in the Sunday Eucharist, which is the "source and summit of the Christian life."

As the Church teaches: "Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." Catechism 2182

The Sunday and Holy Day obligation is not something God asks of us out of his own necessity or need to be worshipped, but rather a gift to the faithful for our own spiritual nourishment, happiness, and eternal salvation.

### **“SERIOUS REASON” OR “GRAVE CAUSE”**

It is important for Catholics to know that the Church has always provided for exceptions to the Sunday and Holy Day obligation, and that anyone with a “serious reason” or “grave cause” is excused from the obligation.

In the case of this pandemic, “serious reason” and “grave cause” would include:

- Anyone who is sick, symptomatic, or has been recently exposed to the coronavirus. Protecting the health of others is an act of Christian charity and our moral duty to one another.
- Anyone with significant health risk factors that requires them to avoid public spaces, or if you care for someone with significant risk factors.
- Anyone who cannot attend Mass through no fault of their own, for example, if a parish has reached capacity.

Catholics are encouraged to consult with their pastor if they are unsure about their personal situation.

Anyone who isn't able to go to Mass should continue to keep the Sabbath holy with intentional time in prayer including engagement in the readings for the day, which may be enhanced through watching a pre-recorded or livestreamed Mass and making a [spiritual communion](#).

### **PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH**

Finally, let us ask the Lord for a renewed spirit in every one of us: that we can emerge from this pandemic stronger and with an increased commitment to sharing the Good News and building up Christ's Church;

Let us pray for those who have drifted from their faith, that their hearts will be moved to return;

And let us pray for a full end to this pandemic, for everyone who suffered loss or despair, and for everyone who valiantly served others, that God may bring them peace and comfort.