

Frequently Asked Questions about our Sunday Obligation and COVID-19

(Taken from the Diocese of Madison Website: madisondiocese.org/faqcovid)

When does the suspension of the Sunday Mass obligation get lifted in the Diocese of Madison?

In the Diocese of Madison, Bishop Hying has decided that his previous dispensation will be lifted the weekend of September 26-27, 2020.

What if I have been exposed to COVID-19?

In accordance with the principles of canon law and moral theology, those who are prevented from attending Mass for grave reasons such as illness (including COVID-19, Influenza, and other communicable disease) or the care of infants (CCC #2181) are consequently not bound by the obligation to attend Mass in the first place, and they may therefore miss Mass on a day of obligation without the fear that they are thereby sinning, displeasing the Lord, or failing in their obligations as a Catholic

I am a senior citizen, am I obliged to attend Sunday Mass?

Those for whom, in their own prudent and prayerful judgment, attending Mass would pose greater than normal risk, either to themselves, to their families and others with whom they have contact, or to those attending Mass, whether the source of the additional risk is their age, health, possible recent exposure, difficulty in observing social distancing guidelines and other hygienic measures, or any other cause, gauged in proportion to the gravity of the obligation in question. This includes the elderly and those who care for them.

I have serious health problems, am I obliged to attend Sunday Mass?

Those for whom, in their own prudent and prayerful judgment, attending Mass would pose greater than normal risk, either to themselves, to their families and others with whom they have contact, or to those attending Mass, whether the source of the additional risk is their age, health, possible recent exposure, difficulty in observing social distancing guidelines and other hygienic measures, or any other cause, gauged in proportion to the gravity of the obligation in question

What if mass is already too crowded (at 50% Capacity)?

Those who attempt to attend Mass but, due to the limitations on church capacity imposed by ecclesiastical or civil authority, are either unable to enter the church or else upon arrival voluntarily abstain from doing so in order that others may attend, even if it would be possible to attend another Mass without extreme difficulty are dispensed from their obligation.

I haven't been to Mass since March, what precautions are being taken at Mass to keep us safe?

The Diocese of Madison has shared guidelines and suggestions to priests and parishes throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. These have been shared widely in recent months and we make them available to you here. [Click here](#)

My parish is at capacity, do I need to drive around to find another Mass?

Not necessarily. Those who attempt to attend Mass but, due to the limitations on church capacity imposed by ecclesiastical or civil authority, are either unable to enter the church or else upon arrival voluntarily abstain from doing so in order that others may attend, even if it would be possible to attend another Mass without extreme difficulty are dispensed from their obligation.

If I am older or immunodeficient, am I sinning if I miss Sunday Mass?

No. Those not bound by the obligation to attend Mass in the first place, and they may therefore miss Mass on a day of obligation without the fear that they are thereby sinning, displeasing the Lord, or failing in their obligations as a Catholic

What if I share a household with somebody who is elderly, immunodeficient or who is at high risk? Am I still obligated?

No. Similar to those being vulnerable themselves, those in their household are not bound by the obligation to attend Mass in the first place, and they may therefore miss Mass on a day of obligation without the fear that they are thereby sinning, displeasing the Lord, or failing in their obligations as a Catholic

Isn't watching a streaming Mass and making a Spiritual Communion enough?

Sunday Eucharist is the heart and center of the Church. It is the source and summit of the Christian life. In short, it is central to who we are as children of God. In Mass, we participate in the sacrifice of Christ, hearing the Word and receiving the Eucharist. Our people need the sacred nourishment of Mass as the most essential service. Watching Mass at home and making a spiritual communion, when not subject to the obligation to assist at Mass, is a good and pious practice in these months of quarantine, but it can never substitute for the efficacy of participating in even one celebration of the Eucharist.

If I do not attend because I am excused, what should I do on Sunday to keep it Holy?

Anyone who legitimately does not attend Mass on a given holy day, whether in virtue of this dispensation or for some reason that excuses the obligation by its very nature, is urged to sanctify the day through prayer and pious works such as reading Scripture, praying the rosary, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, or watching the Mass on television.