



*Go Make Disciples*

## OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

April 12, 2021

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the Risen Lord! May these glorious days of Easter be a season of joy and renewal for you and your loved ones.

We have faced many challenges this past year due to COVID-19. We all have suffered loss in some form – from disruption of our normal everyday patterns to the loss of jobs and even the loss of loved ones and fellow parishioners.

One of the most difficult things for many has been the inability to participate regularly in the Mass and sacraments of the Church. That was especially true when public Masses were suspended due to the dangers posed by the pandemic. I have heard many expressions of gratitude for the guidelines and mandates put in place last summer to make it safer to return to public celebrations of the Mass. The dispensation from the Sunday obligation has been a temporary provision to enable Catholics of the archdiocese to return when it was safe for them to do so and when there would be room for them in churches with limited capacities due to social distancing.

I also have heard from some who were unhappy with our mandates and safety precautions. In every case, I have done what I believe is in the best interest of the flock entrusted to my care. I am grateful for the patience and charity so many have shown in following these guidelines. I am grateful for the creativity of pastors, staff and volunteers who have provided access to Mass on virtual platforms. This has been a helpful provisional measure providing parishioners a way to participate spiritually in the Mass when they could not be present in person.

Virtual participation in the Mass was never meant to become a permanent substitute for us. Indeed, it cannot become a permanent substitute. Christ is truly present in the Eucharist – body, blood, soul and divinity.

Neither was the dispensation from the Sunday obligation intended to be permanent. Participation in Sunday Mass for Catholics is an essential way we fulfill the divine commandment to keep the Lord's Day holy. We are a sacramental people. We need to come together to worship God, receive the sacraments and bear witness to our faith, not just virtually, but in person.

God wraps himself in visible form in the humanity of Jesus and, in the sacraments, offers himself to us in the liturgy of the Church giving us a real participation in the heavenly liturgy. The sacraments communicate invisible realities under visible, tangible forms. They

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are unique channels of grace that Christ instituted for our salvation. We need Mass and the sacraments!

With growing interest, I welcome reports of declining COVID infections, hospitalizations and deaths coupled with the now widespread availability of vaccines in Oklahoma and increasing numbers of vaccinated adults.

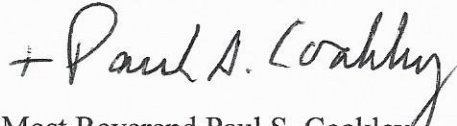
Considering these encouraging developments, and after consultations with pastors, staff and other professionals, I am authorizing further modifications to the COVID guidelines for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, effective April 24, 2021.

Most significantly, I am lifting the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, effective Saturday, April 24, 2021. While there will be exemptions for specific situations, it is time for most of us to return to Mass!

The attached guidelines give more specific information.

With the assurance of my prayers and every good wish, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Paul S. Coakley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley  
Archbishop of Oklahoma City