

Introduction

During this time of the Coronavirus, many people feel afraid and helpless. As Christians, we are called to do good through our example of words, actions and prayer. The good that we do can have a positive impact upon others at such challenging times. Pope Francis offers us encouragement: “Let us call upon him today, firmly rooted in prayer, for without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 259)

What does it mean to be Dispensed from the Obligation to Participate in Sunday (Weekend) Mass?

A dispensation from the diocesan Bishop releases Catholics from fulfilling their Sunday (weekend) obligation to participate in Mass. Since public Masses are cancelled in the Diocese of Pittsburgh until further notice because of the outbreak of the Coronavirus, this means that if you live in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, the right thing to do is to stay home for your safety and the safety of others. Catholics are encouraged to offer up their sickness or pastoral care for the sake of those who are seriously ill and for those who have died.

What do I do if I cannot participate in Sunday (Weekend) Mass?

In such instances, Catholics are called to make what is described as a “spiritual communion.” This has been an established practice in the Church for centuries and is also recommended by the saints. Saint Teresa of Jesus says: “When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you.” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 34). Catholics in the Diocese of Pittsburgh are encouraged to watch weekend Mass on the television (see the homepage of our parish website for the links).

How Do I Make a Spiritual Communion?

Below are recommendations for how to make a 'spiritual communion' when unable to participate in Mass. The recommendations can be adapted based upon your personal and family needs.

- Gather with others in your household and begin a time of prayer with the Sign of the Cross.
- Take time to read and reflect upon the readings from Sunday (weekend) Mass. You can find the Scripture Readings (posted daily) on the homepage of our parish website. You can also find the Readings at USCCB.org. Additionally, a daily Mass and weekly televised Sunday Mass is available to watch. See the homepage of our parish website for the links.
- Share prayer intentions quietly or aloud.
- Pray the Lord's Prayer.
- Pray one of the following prayers of spiritual communion (see below).
- Close with the Sign of the Cross.

Prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified

Behold, O good and loving Jesus, that I cast myself on my knees before you and, with the greatest fervor of spirit, I pray and beseech you to instill into my heart ardent sentiments of faith, hope and charity, with true repentance for my sins and a most firm purpose of amendment. With deep affection and sorrow I ponder intimately and contemplate in my mind your five wounds, having before my eyes what the prophet David had already put in your mouth about yourself, O good Jesus: They have pierced my hands and my feet; they have numbered all my bones (Ps. 21: 17-18).

An Act of Spiritual Communion by Saint Alphonsus Liguori

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.