

Participating in online broadcasts of the Mass – an overview and explanation

What are we missing in not going to Mass?

The Celebration of the Eucharist, which we commonly refer to as 'going to Mass, is the opportunity to participate in the single most important event in the history of the world. At Mass, time is suspended, and we mystically participate in the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, all at once. The fullness of grace is poured out in the Mass in a unique and special way. All grace flows to us through the Cross of Christ, and we participate in the Paschal Mystery at every Mass. This actual grace is significant; it is the highest form of grace we can receive as we participate in Jesus' offering up of Himself to the Father. However, sometimes the faithful might forget about the very real graces they can receive whenever they assist at the Mass. This grace is powerful in aiding those in Purgatory on their way to Heaven, in causing conversions, in healings, and in all of our needs. When we cannot attend Mass, we are not able to receive that same grace, but grace is available nonetheless. So we can receive grace outside of the celebration of Mass but those graces are different.

During this time of trial, when we are not able to go to public Masses, many are turning to a live-streamed Mass. This option has been available for some time in different methods for those who are ill or homebound. There are now many parishes and pastors quickly trying to get online, and have become creative in their ways to stream their Masses to the public. So the question arises: is watching or even participating in a live-streamed Mass the same as being at Mass? The quick answer is no. If the obligation were not lifted for the public at this time a live-streamed Mass cannot fulfill the obligation. However, as we continue to use theology to inform the proper use of technology, we can see that especially during this time there is a benefit to attending a live-streamed Mass.

While participating in a live-streamed Mass does not offer the same graces as participating in person, all participants will have the grace of the prayers they say, the Scriptures they hear, and the community with which they come together to participate. Live-streamed Mass will aid in the faithful being connected. While we know that we are connected as the Body of Christ, being isolated due to health, or even currently due to government restrictions, hinders the feeling of connectiveness. Observing and participating in a live-streamed Mass will help to mitigate the distancing, as well as to find healing and comfort in times of need. It is an opportunity to unite our prayers together as a community, and to ask for God's healing on our world. Finally, it also stands as a way during this time to keep holy the Lord's Day. The effect on the weekly spiritual life of the faithful that attend a live-streamed Mass cannot be understated. Physically, we continue to participate in the longing for the unity of Heaven and Earth. When Mass is again open to the public, those who have continued to participate in the Mass in these methods will be best prepared to again participate fully in the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist at Mass. A live-streamed Mass presently provides the best means by which the faithful are most able to participate fully, as they enter into the Mystery in real time.

When participating in a live-streamed Mass, it is best to participate as fully as you are able. Prayerfully settle your mind, pray each prayer, listen to the Scriptures, perform the gestures, and devoutly pray an Act of Spiritual Communion. Ask the Holy Spirit to stir up within you a longing for the day when you can again receive Our Lord in the Eucharist. It is a time to increase our desire for the day we can again fully, actively, with all our conscience, participate in the Mass, and receive the full graces that are offered by being present at and praying faithfully in the Holy Sacrifice.

Pre-recorded Masses still offer grace, if one cannot ~~to~~ participate in a live-stream Mass. While we pray and listen to the Scriptures, we receive the grace of God. However, these Masses are less ideal, as they separate out the active participation with the community. Every effort should be made to allow the faithful during this time to participate in a live Mass. If you are only able to observe a recorded Mass, know that grace is available in the hearing of the Scriptures, and in the prayers of the faithful watching. A recorded Mass, like a live-streamed Mass, will still assist those seeking to avail themselves of the opportunity to keep that weekly commitment to keep the Lord's Day holy.

While we earnestly pray daily for an end to this pandemic, and a return to the regularity of the life of the Church, this use of technology can provide a partial remedy to the faithful, in order that very soon ~~so~~ they may be able to participate fully at the Mass.