



+ November 4, 2021

My dear brother priests,

While the last 20 months have been challenging, we continue to bring the light of Christ to others. I commend you and your teams for your flexibility, strength and courage as we've entered new territory serving our communities during this global pandemic. I remain firm in my resolve to keep our people safe – including the most vulnerable among us - so that we can continue safely celebrating the Eucharist.

Our Coronavirus Taskforce is tracking the latest science to inform the guidance we are issuing. This data has led to *temporary* changes for how we do things. These changes are warranted to keep people safe while not compromising on the sanctity of the Mass. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have celebrated tens of thousands of Masses with only a handful of cases of coronavirus spread, which have been traced to people not following our safety guidance. In general, this indicates that our protocols are effectively protecting our people and providing a safe environment for worship. This is something for which we can be very grateful!

As such, the general obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation (including the Saturday/Vigil Mass) is to be reinstated (CIC, can. 1247) during Advent on December 8th – the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. As has always been the case, those who have a serious reason are exempt from attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2181). This includes those who are ill, have significant health risk factors or care for someone who is immuno-compromised or ill, as well as those who have significant fear or anxiety of contracting the coronavirus in a large group of persons.

I wish to share this with you now, so you can prepare to invite your parishioners back to the Eucharist. It is time to renew the faith through personal reception of the Sacraments and rebuild the relationships and community life of our parishes. I will be issuing a public video next week to invite people back and I encourage you to share it with your communities.

You are a beacon of Christ's light. Thank you for continuing to shine for your people. I continue to pray for you and I ask for your prayers as well. As always, I remain,

In the Heart of Christ,

Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Archbishop of Seattle