



Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Providence
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May 13, 2021
The Ascension of the Lord

To the Church in the
Diocese of Providence:

*"O God, bring me to your holy mountain,
to the place of your dwelling,
that I may come to the altar of God,
to God, my joy, my delight." (Ps 43: 3-4)*

Dear brothers and sisters, it's time. It's time to come home. It's time to return to Sunday Mass.

For that reason, I have now signed a formal decree restoring the obligation to attend Sunday Mass in the Diocese of Providence, effective Sunday, June 6, 2021, the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. This means that Catholics, in observance of the Lord's Day and in fulfillment of the law of the Church, are once again obliged to attend Holy Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, unless they are otherwise dispensed for some serious reason.

It is important to emphasize that, since the pandemic is still lingering in our midst, some individuals are not obliged to attend Sunday Mass, and perhaps *should not* attend Mass to protect their health and safety, and that of others. These include those who are elderly and frail, those who have underlying health conditions, and those who have been advised by their health care providers to avoid public gatherings. And as always, Catholics are dispensed from the Sunday obligation for other grave reasons such as illness, caring for the ill, the unavoidable obligations of their employment, and travel that disrupts their schedules.

While the moral and canonical obligation to attend Holy Mass each and every Sunday is an essential part of being Catholic, there are also other very compelling reasons to do so. We attend Mass because we love God and we want to thank him for all the gifts and blessings he has given us. We attend Mass to hear his sacred

Word proclaimed, to receive the Holy Eucharist, and to be with other members of our faith community. In short, attending Holy Mass is an obligation, a serious obligation, but more importantly, it is a great privilege and an incomparable source of grace and peace.

The lifting of the Sunday Mass dispensation marks an important moment in our return to more normal, typical pastoral life. But it also provides a wonderful opportunity for us to renew our appreciation and love for the Holy Eucharist and all the sacraments and devotions of the Church. I encourage our priests, deacons and parish leaders to be creative and proactive, to do all they can to reach out to their parishioners, to invite them to return, and to provide a warm and welcoming experience for them when they do.

As we celebrate the beautiful Solemnity of Corpus Christi, let us renew our love for the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, the Bread of Life. And may the aspiration of the Psalm mentioned above be ours as well as we return to Holy Mass with joyful thanksgiving, saying: *"I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy, my delight!"*

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. J. Tobin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Thomas J. Tobin
Bishop of Providence