

June 30, 2021
Year of Saint Joseph

Dear Family of the Archdiocese of New York,

May I raise two points with you today?

First, as we approach the Independence Day weekend, allow me to wish all of you an enjoyable Summer. It is my hope that, after the trials and difficulties of these past 16 months, you will have an opportunity for some much-needed rest and relaxation. I am very much looking forward to spending some time with family and friends that I have not seen for more than a year!

Second, let me remind you that there is still a sacred obligation to attend Sunday Mass, even if you are on vacation. Unfortunately, there has been some confusion recently over whether or not a “dispensation” from Sunday Mass has been in effect. Here in the Archdiocese of New York, there has never been a dispensation from Sunday Mass, because no man can “dispense” or set aside a Divine (as opposed to man-made) law. The Third Commandment says, “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day,” and I can no more say that this no longer applies than I can say that we can forget about “Thou shalt not steal” or “Honor thy father and thy mother.” To deliberately miss Mass is a sin.

Of course, the Church has always held that there may be some justifiable reasons why a person can miss Mass, including old age, illness, and infirmity; this is still the case. During this pandemic, public Mass was not being celebrated for several months, and when Mass resumed, there was still a possibility of catching or spreading the coronavirus, and individuals could, after carefully consulting their conscience, decide not to return to Mass right away. However, now that vaccination rates are up, Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted, and people are returning to a more normal way of living, this excuse cannot be said to exist any longer. If you’re going to the mall, having dinner out in restaurants, heading to the ballgame, visiting the hairdresser, and the like, then you should also be at Mass!

Please be assured of a remembrance in my Mass and prayers during these Summer months. Might I ask for a remembrance in yours?

A blessed Summer.

Faithfully in Christ,
Cardinal Timothy Dolan
Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York