



**DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN**  
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July 15, 2021

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### **Obligation for Catholics to Attend Mass Will Resume August 15**

With vaccination rates rising and nearly all Coronavirus restrictions lifted, Bishop Alfred Schlert has joined bishops around Pennsylvania in determining that the obligation for Catholics to attend Mass will resume on August 15.

“We thank God that this terrible pandemic has continued to ease, and that people in our communities have been able to begin reclaiming a sense of normalcy in their lives,” Bishop Schlert said. “We also thank God that Catholics can once again get back to their normal and regular attendance at Mass.”

Here is a joint statement issued today (7/15) by the Bishops of Pennsylvania:

*“As life returns to normalcy in so many ways, each Catholic Bishop in Pennsylvania will reinstate the obligation to attend Mass in person on Sundays and Holy Days beginning on Sunday, August 15, 2021, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Bishops had dispensed you from this obligation in March of 2020 as the developing coronavirus pandemic required people not to assemble in group settings. Now, with the impact of the pandemic considerably reduced, it is again possible for the faithful to assemble for the Eucharist and the time for us to lift the dispensation from the obligation.”*

*The obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days comes from our Baptism as Christians. Baptism compels Christians to unite themselves with Christ at the altar in his saving Sacrifice of the Cross. “Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2182).”*

*This is the foundation for the law of the Church that binds Catholics to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days (Code of Canon Law, canon 1247) and the Christian way fully to observe the Third Commandment, to keep holy the Lord's Day (Deuteronomy 5: 12; Exodus 31: 15; Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 2180-2181).*

*This obligation, as is always the case, does not apply to those who are seriously ill, have a serious health risk, as well as those who have serious anxiety of being a part of large groups at this time. Likewise, the obligation does not apply to those who care for those who cannot attend Mass in person (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2181). Those who are legitimately excused from Mass on Sundays and Holy Days are encouraged to spend time in prayer, meditating on the Death and Resurrection of the Lord, reading the Sacred Scriptures, and uniting themselves to Christ in his worship of the Father of us all. Those who are legitimately excused are also encouraged to view a broadcast of the Mass which is intended for those who cannot participate in person.*

*As your Bishops, we welcome this moment of the reinstatement of the obligation for all Catholics in Pennsylvania. This is a moment to thank God anew for the great gift of the Mass and the Real Presence of Jesus to us in his Holy Body and Blood as well as the joy of gathering together as people of faith.”*

Catholics around Pennsylvania received a dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation on March 12, 2020, as part of a comprehensive series of safety measures designed to limit the spread of disease at the height of the pandemic. Diocesan schools switched to remote learning on March 13, 2020.

On March 16, 2020, Bishop Schlert temporarily suspended public participation in Mass, but asked that churches around the Diocese remain open so that the faithful would have a place of refuge for private prayer in a time of great uncertainty and anxiety.

With social distancing and other safety measures in place, Masses reopened to the public on June 1, 2020, subject to capacity limits, and on August 31, 2020, all diocesan schools reopened for in-person learning. Masses at all parishes are now open for all with no capacity limits.

As always, Catholics are not obligated to attend Mass if they are ill, if they believe they have been exposed to a contagious illness, if they have serious underlying

health conditions, or if they are confined to their home, to the hospital, or to a nursing facility.

The Diocese will continue to monitor virus conditions and guidance from medical experts and public health officials, and will adjust its precautions if necessary to protect the health of the faithful and the clergy.

*Note to editors: Bishop Schlert sent a pastoral letter to the faithful of the Diocese of Allentown today. It contains more information about the restoration of the Mass obligation. It can be found at [www.ad-today.com](http://www.ad-today.com).*

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