

Come Home to Hope

Frequently Asked Questions

When will the general dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation expire?

The general dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation will expire on Saturday, March 13.

Why is the general dispensation ending now?

During these difficult months of pandemic, our pastors, parishes, and all the faithful have adapted in order to ensure the health and well-being of everyone in our local communities. The safety precautions in place at our churches, such as capacity limits and rigorous cleaning protocols, have proven effective at facilitating essential public worship without undue risk of accelerating the pandemic. And while livestreamed Masses have been a means to help Catholics nourish their souls when they could not be present for Mass, we must remember that it cannot become the norm. God did not come to us virtually. He came to us — and continues to come to us — in the flesh. As Catholics, unmediated contact with the Real Presence of the flesh and blood of Our Lord in offering this sacrifice to the Father is irreplaceable and essential. We recall Christ's own words when he foretold the gift of the Holy Eucharist:

“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.” (John 6: 54-56)

In recognition of the essential and central nature of the Holy Eucharist in our lives as Catholics, it is important that the faithful begin to return to Mass, when and where possible.

Was this decision made in consultation with healthcare experts?

Yes. We have monitored the guidelines and requirements from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services as well as county health officials. All decisions regarding our practices during the pandemic have been informed and guided by experts in the medical community.

Does this mean everyone is now obligated to go to Mass again?

No. We know that there remains the concern for the spread of infection and we must remain vigilant to limit its spread, particularly among those most vulnerable. With this in mind, there are particular dispensations granted to people in certain circumstances, including those who are ill and those who care for anyone who is at risk of serious complications from COVID-19.

In allowing the general dispensation to expire, we must welcome back to Mass all Catholics who have been engaged in other activities that would present a similar or greater risk of exposure, such as eating out at restaurants, traveling, partaking in non-essential shopping, and widening one's circle of contacts. These individuals should also prepare to return to Mass in recognition of its preeminence in our lives as Catholics.

Who is still dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass?

- If you live in the Archdiocese (or are visiting within the Archdiocese on a Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation), you do not have an obligation to attend Mass on Sunday in the following circumstances:
- You are ill or your health condition would be significantly compromised if you were to contract a communicable illness (i.e., you have underlying conditions or are in a high-risk category). Please use the dispensation and do not attend Mass.
- You exhibit flu-like symptoms. Please use the dispensation and do not attend Mass.
- You have good reason to think you might be asymptomatic of a contagious illness (e.g., you were in recent contact with someone who tested positive for a contagious illness such as COVID or influenza). Please use the dispensation and do not attend Mass.
- You care for the sick, homebound, or infirmed.
- You are pregnant.
- Those 65 years of age or older (per the CDC's recommendation of high-risk individuals).
- You cannot attend Mass through no fault of your own (e.g., no Mass is offered, you are infirmed, or, while wanting to go, you are prevented for some reason you cannot control (e.g., your ride did not show up, the church was at capacity).
- If you have significant fear or anxiety of becoming ill by being at Mass.

I am unsure if the particular dispensations apply to me. What should I do?

For questions about the application of any of the circumstances warranting a dispensation, please contact your pastor or any priest.

Are masks and other safety precautions still required?

Yes. The health and safety of our communities is and always will be paramount as we continue to closely monitor local conditions. For that reason, the liturgical directive remains in effect that all the faithful present at Mass, with the exception of small children, wear a mask or face-covering. If this proves impossible for you or a family member, please speak with your priest. All parishes will also continue the rigorous cleaning protocols that have been in place since public Masses resumed in May.

Are there still capacity restrictions at churches in the Archdiocese of Detroit?

Yes. For now, churches in the Archdiocese of Detroit will remain limited to no more than 50 percent of available capacity to allow for proper social distancing. Their total capacity should be less than 50 percent if this number cannot be obtained while maintaining physical distancing.

Will parishes add additional Masses to accommodate everyone who wants to attend Mass?

The Archdiocese is committed to assisting pastors to adjust Mass schedules or offer additional public Masses, insofar as possible, to make it easier for as many of the faithful as possible to attend Mass while still practicing social distancing. Rest assured that any Catholic who approaches a church and is turned away due to the church's capacity having been reached, has faithfully fulfilled his obligation.

Will parishes still livestream Masses?

Parishes are encouraged to continue offering livestreams of their Masses to help nourish the souls of Catholics who cannot be present for Mass.

Might the general dispensation be reinstated if the pandemic worsens locally?

We continue to monitor the incidence of coronavirus in southeast Michigan and the effectiveness of our safety precautions. We will make any adjustments necessary in order to preserve the health and wellness of everyone in our community.

Why are Catholics normally obligated to attend Mass?

The command to keep holy the Lord's day comes to us from God's 10 Commandments to Moses (cf. Ex. 20:8-11). We have a moral obligation to honor the Lord's Day – moved from Saturday in the Old Testament to Sunday by virtue of Jesus's Resurrection from the dead on this day – which no law can invalidate. Always and everywhere, Christians are obliged to set Sunday apart for worship of God and as a day unlike others. The most salutary way we do this is by participating at Sunday Mass.

Therefore, the Sacred Liturgy, and particularly the Holy Eucharist, is the very heart and foundation of our Catholic faith. It is during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that the saving death and resurrection of Jesus are made present to us, our covenant with Our Lord is renewed, and God, in the person of Jesus Christ, comes to us and makes himself truly present for us in his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. It is an irreplaceable gift; a foretaste of Heaven itself. We know the challenges of the Christian life are great and we need nourishment and community to successfully "run the race" (cf. 2Tim. 4:7). Gathering at Mass on Sunday to hear God's word and to offer our lives as spiritual worship (cf. Rm. 12:1) along with the Body and Blood of the Lord present on the altar are indispensable tools God gives us for our salvation.