



Archdiocese of New Orleans

Office of the Archbishop

7887 Walmsley Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125-3496
Office: (504) 861-9521
Fax (504) 314-9614
Email: archbishop@arch-no.org

May 1, 2021

To all Clergy, Religious, and Laity of the Archdiocese of New Orleans:

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, we recall that the third Commandment is to keep holy the Lord's Day. The Jewish community took this very seriously. Not only did they see it as an expectation from God that they worship together on the Sabbath, but to also avoid work and spend quality time with God and with others. It is important that we understand this concept because it is the root of what we now know today as the "obligation for Catholics to participate in Mass every Sunday."

This "obligation" to celebrate Mass on Sunday need not be seen simply as "you must go"; instead, it is God saying, "Come to me and worship as a community. Come hear my Word in the Scriptures, receive the Risen Christ in the Eucharist and reserve time for me and those whom you love." The obligation is an invitation from God to grow in love with him and to better know ourselves as Catholics, and he awaits our response.

I remain grateful for the creativity and ministry of our clergy who have continued to make Mass and the sacraments available to their parishioners throughout the pandemic. I am humbled by the desire of so many who have already returned to Mass each Sunday. For you and for your faith, I give thanks to God. As we look to the future, on June 6, the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, better known as Corpus Christi, the obligation will be restored in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. On this day, we will celebrate God's loving invitation to set aside Sundays to receive his gift of the Eucharist with one another and to spend quality time with those we love. This is how we respond to Christ's invitation to "come to the table."

I have consulted with medical experts who have confirmed that with proper precautions including wearing masks, this is an appropriate time to take these actions. If you remain concerned, I encourage you to contact your parish for the specifics of their COVID precautions.

It is understood that there are those for whom returning to Sunday Mass is impossible. Those who are homebound or who live in nursing homes or hospitals as well as those who are sick or vulnerable, or who are fearful because of underlying health conditions are excused from attending Mass in-person on Sundays. However, those who cannot attend are invited and encouraged to participate via television or online with live streaming and to make an Act of Spiritual Communion.

For those of us who have now begun to more frequently shop, socialize, go to the gym, and participate in other activities outside of our homes and have not yet returned to Mass, I encourage us in a special way to consider the Lord's invitation to "come *back* to the table."

I know that for many, the pandemic has been a time of spiritual renewal, a deeper appreciation for the Mass and a desire to receive Christ in the Eucharist. Through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we encounter the Risen Christ who waits to meet us there. This is why as a family we gather at the table to be nourished with God's Word and by the gift of the Eucharist.

Please join me in celebrating the Eucharist on June 6th.

Wishing you God's blessings, I am

Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond
Archbishop of New Orleans