



Preparing to Return to Mass: FAQs

Q: If I can work from home, why can't I worship from home?

A: It is powerful when we come together to pray. Jesus tells us, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20) Certainly, we can pray anywhere; the Lord invites us to relationship with Him. But there is something extra special about coming together in worship on the Sabbath (Saturday evening-Sunday) in the sanctuary. St. John Chrysostom said, "You cannot pray at home as at church, where there is a great multitude, where exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priests" (CCC 2179).

Q: Why is receiving Communion vital to the Catholic faith?

A: Holy Communion is "the source and summit of the Christian Life." (CCC 1324). The Apostles and earliest Christian communities joined in community for celebration of the Eucharist. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read, "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42). St. Paul also refers to the celebration of communion, writing, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Jesus chose such a moment to reveal his identity soon after the resurrection, following his journey alongside two travelers on the road to Emmaus: "And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight... Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24: 30-31, 35).

Q: How are parishes keeping us safe when we attend Mass?

A: Parishes follow stringent liturgical protocols to ensure the safety of all participating in the Mass. Find the latest liturgical protocols from the archdiocesan Office of Worship, as well as guidelines for returning to Mass safely and returning to Communion:

- archspm.org/liturgicalprotocols
- archspm.org/returntomass
- archspm.org/returnto communion

Q: If I've been worshipping from home for over a year, why should I go back now?



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A: Since resuming public worship in May 2020, parishes have taken great care to ensure safety protocols are followed by staff, as well as Mass-goers. With the rise in percentage of the population vaccinated, cases are decreasing and we are starting to see the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel. For these reasons and more, Gov. Walz announced in Executive Order 21:21 that social distancing will no longer be mandated indoors beginning Friday, May 28 – meaning that parishes prepared to do so may open at full capacity at that time. Masks are still required for all ages five and over, and recommended for those ages two and over. Parishes stand ready and eager to welcome back the faithful for in-person worship.

Q: What is the purpose of the Sunday obligation?

A: God gave his people the gift of the Sabbath (Saturday evening – Sunday), and in the Third Commandment instructed for our wellbeing that we keep it holy. For more on this, read five reasons why attending Mass weekly is essential to our faith at archspm.org/5reasons.

The Sunday obligation to attend Mass in person was temporarily lifted during the pandemic out of concern for the safety of our most vulnerable. The faithful who do not attend Mass in person are asked to find a Mass on TV, the radio or online and make a Spiritual Communion. Where that is not an option, it would be appropriate to pray the Liturgy of the Hours or the Rosary.

As the pandemic subsides and health risks lessen, the bishops of Minnesota are discussing when the Sunday obligation will be reinstated. Even after that time, there remains reasons why a Catholic have a dispensation from the Sunday obligation, including when he or she is ill or serving as caretaker for one who cannot attend Mass.

Q: Will Mass look different?

A: Yes, a bit. Even after social distancing is no longer mandated indoors, parishes may still have designated seating areas as they transition back to full capacity. Face coverings are still mandated indoors in Minnesota for all those ages five and over, and recommended for those ages two and over. Additionally, baptismal fonts and holy water stoups remain empty, restrooms may have capacity limits, congregational singing may be discouraged, coffee and donuts may not be offered yet, and parishes may provide hand sanitizer for all those participating in the Mass.

Yet more powerful than the differences are what remains the same: Jesus in the Eucharist. The sense of community and fellowship among those worshipping. And the opportunity to participate in the sacrifice of the Mass, just as believers have since the very beginning of Christianity.