



RETURN TO MASS FAQ

BY THE DIOCESE OF PUEBLO

FAQ on Restoring the Sunday and Holy Day Obligation May 23, 2021

When will the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation be restored?

Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021.

Catholics who have not already returned to Mass should use the Easter season to prayerfully discern if they have a serious reason that prevents them from attending in person. If not, they should begin to resume normal attendance over the next several weeks in anticipation of the obligation being restored.

Why are Catholics normally obligated to attend Mass?

As Catholics, we are invited by God to gather together in community, and participate fully in the Sunday Eucharist, which is the “source and summit of the Christian life.”

“Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” Catechism 2182

The Sunday and Holy Day obligation is not something God asks of us out of his own necessity or need to be worshipped, but rather a gift to the faithful for our own spiritual well-being, happiness, and eternal salvation. Recommended reading: <https://denvercatholic.org/only-one-thing-is-necessary/>

Why is the general dispensation being lifted?

A general dispensation was granted when public Masses were initially suspended and kept in place while it remained reasonable for any Catholic to decide it was prudent for them to stay home.

However, for the last several months we have been encouraging Catholics to prayerfully consider if they have a prudent reason to stay home, or if they are just using the dispensation as an excuse.

Now, as the worst of the pandemic seems to be behind us, access to the vaccine for those who desire it has increased, and many other areas of life continue to move back towards normal, the time has come that a general dispensation is no longer necessary for every Catholic.

Will there still be safety protocols at Masses?

Yes. Parishes have consistently followed the recommendations of public health experts during the pandemic and will continue to take prudent steps to ensure that public Masses are celebrated in a safe manner. As positivity rates and health protocols will continue to vary across the state, please check with your local parish for specific guidelines.

Are Masses safe to attend?

Over the past year, the dioceses and parishes have implemented thorough safety protocols based on the recommendations of health experts and have done our best to balance public health concerns while still providing access to the Mass and Sacraments to the faithful.

While entering into any public space has included some risk, the precautions taken by our parishes have proven to be extremely effective, and we are unaware of any issues of community spread happening at a public Mass.

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

All the faithful are urged to keep holy the Lord's Day by safely attending Mass in-person or reverently participating in Mass through the internet or other media.

It is important for Catholics to know that the Church has always provided for exceptions to the Sunday and Holy Day obligation, and that anyone with a "serious reason" or "grave cause" is excused from the obligation.

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Below is a list of specific criteria that you would remain dispensed.

- If you are ill or your health condition would be significantly compromised if you were to come in contact with someone who might be sick, for example, if you have an underlying condition or are in a high-risk category.
- If you exhibit flu-like symptoms.
- If you have good reason to think you might be asymptomatic of a contagious illness, for example if you were in recent contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 or the flu.
- If you care for the sick, homebound, or infirm and unable to leave them unattended.
- If you are pregnant
- If you are 65 years of age or older (per the CDC's recommendation of high-risk individuals).
- If you cannot attend Mass through no fault of your own. For example, if no Mass were offered, you are sick, or, while wanting to go, you are prevented for some reason you cannot control such as your ride does not show up, the church is at capacity.

I am unsure if I have a "serious reason" to stay home, what should I do?

Catholics are encouraged to consult with their pastor if they are unsure about their personal situation.

Is a vaccine required to return to Mass?

No. The Bishops of Colorado have affirmed that receiving certain COVID-19 vaccinations is morally acceptable, but that it is a matter of personal conscience and a private health decision. They have also stated that vaccination should never be a requirement for admittance at any public event including public Masses. However, regardless of if one gets vaccinated, all Catholics should continue to take prudent steps to prevent the spread of the coronavirus until this pandemic has completely passed.