



Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee

Office of the Bishop

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings in the Lord. Once again, I thank you for your attention to all of the safety protocols that were put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been through many months of social distancing, masks, limited seating in our churches, etc., and it has certainly paid off. I shudder to think about how many more people could have been infected and even died as the result of contracting this virus in one of our churches or schools. Thanks be to God, the numbers are going down considerably, and we all pray that they will continue to decline until the virus is eradicated completely.

On March 20, 2020, I issued a dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. I took this action in communion with other bishops in our area and in the entire United States as a way to protect the faithful and forestall any large outbreaks. It was a painful – but necessary – move to make. I am grateful to the pastors of our parishes who could adapt, offer opportunities to participate via livestream, and configure the space in church to allow for the maximum number of congregants while maintaining a level of distance.

The time has come to end the dispensation and ensure that all baptized Catholics return to the practice – indeed, the obligation – of attending the celebration of the Eucharist (i.e., Mass) every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation. **Therefore, the dispensation to attend Mass will end on the afternoon of June 19th. Thus, every Catholic in the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee should celebrate Mass in person beginning on June 20, 2021 (or the Vigil on June 19).**

The obligation to attend Mass is one of the precepts of the Church. It is considered a serious sin to miss Mass if one does not have a good reason to do so. Of course, one always has the ability to dispense himself or herself for a serious reason, such as sickness or the inability to attend Mass in person. Please see the second page of this announcement for more information on “particular dispensations.”

Some parishes will continue to offer livestream options for Mass every week, but this would only be for shut-ins and those who cannot attend in person. For the vast majority of Catholics, watching Mass on video does not fulfill one’s Sunday Obligation.

Our churches will still have some safety measures put in place – for instance, some distancing between people, not offering the Chalice for communion, and other measures – but for the most part they will be ready to welcome whoever wishes to come and worship with the community. You may wish to wear a mask in church or in large gatherings with non-family members, and that is perfectly acceptable, of course.

Let us go forward in hope together! We never know what the future holds, but we can be confident that the measures we have taken in the past have led us to the point where we can return (for the most part) to celebrating our faith in person, as God’s beloved sons and daughters.

God bless you always. I am,
Sincerely yours, in Christ,

Most Reverend William A. Wack, CSC
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee

PARTICULAR DISPENSATION INFORMATION

The general obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation (including the Vigil Mass at 4:00 pm or later on the previous day) is to be reinstated in the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, effective Saturday, June 19, 2021.

Considering the necessity of being physically present with our brothers and sisters at Mass on Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation for the Eucharist, Bishop Wack asks Catholics to make a sincere judgment about whether or not these circumstances apply. If there is doubt or confusion, consult your parish pastor for clarity.

While the general dispensation is removed, there are specific instances where the dispensation will continue. One does not have an obligation to attend Mass on Sunday in the following circumstances:

1. You are ill, or your health condition would be significantly compromised if you were to contract an infectious illness (i.e., you have underlying conditions or are in a high-risk category). Please use the dispensation and do not attend Mass.
2. You exhibit flu-like symptoms. Please use the dispensation and do not attend Mass.
3. 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.
4. You care for the sick, homebound, or infirmed.
5. You are pregnant.
6. 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).
7. If you have significant and reasonable fear or anxiety of becoming ill by being at Mass.