

Archdiocesan Guidance on returning to Mass

Updated May 8, 2020.

Archbishop Lucas has been in frequent contact with the pastors and priests of our archdiocese, offering them support and encouragement in their preparations to welcome the faithful back to the celebration of the Holy Mass. This situation is unprecedented for all of us, so please remember to be patient as priests, staff, and volunteers work through these challenging circumstances.

Who

The dispensation from the Sunday and Holy Day obligation to participate in the Mass remains in place for all Catholics in the Archdiocese of Omaha until further notice. Anyone who is in an at-risk group or does not feel safe attending a public gathering should stay home. Even with the best health practices and increased efforts to clean the Church, there is a risk of infection anytime a person enters a public space. Anyone who is sick or has recently been exposed to the coronavirus should refrain from attending a public Mass as it is an act of Christian charity to safeguard the health of others.

- **The following people should remain home for the time being:**
 - The elderly
 - People with underlying medical conditions
 - Family members who live with elderly people or those who are at risk
 - People who have access to those at risk in nursing institutions
 - People who have upper respiratory or flu like symptoms
 - People who live with someone with upper respiratory or flu-like symptoms
 - People with COVID-19 or live with someone with COVID-19
 - People who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19

When

Attendance at Masses will be restricted to adhere to the public health orders. Because the Sunday obligation has been dispensed, people are encouraged to take advantage of weekday Masses.

- **Each parish will determine its own scheduling and attendance procedures** to try and create a fair opportunity for every parishioner to attend Mass. It is important that you stay connected to your parish via the parish website, email, Flocknote, etc.
- **Please refrain from attending Mass at another parish.**
- Catholics should **continue to keep the Sabbath holy** with intentional time for prayer, including engagement in the readings for the day, which may be enhanced through watching a live-streamed Mass and making and act of spiritual communion.

What

Social distancing will be practiced at all public Masses. Parishioners should follow the guidance of any usher or posted sign and can expect for rows/pews to be roped off.

- **Families who live together can sit together**, but should be spaced at least 6 feet from other families.
- **Children must stay with their families.**
- **Everyone is encouraged to wear a mask** (except children 3 and under), and parishioners are encouraged to bring their hand sanitizer and/or sanitizing wipes.
- **For those receiving Holy Communion, please follow the instructions of your pastor** for lining up and receiving in a safe manner.
- **Nothing ought to be passed from person-to-person** (collections baskets, hymnals, etc.).
- **Groups should not gather and socialize** inside or outside of church buildings.

How

Please be patient as your pastor and parish staff members do their best to implement this guidance, especially if you have to wait a while longer for your turn to attend a public Mass.

We have all made many sacrifices over the last several weeks to benefit the common good. Let us continue to be prudent and not waste those efforts by rushing this process or ignoring the guidance and regulations.

Let us continue to ask Christ to have mercy on all who suffer, and to offer Him our frustration, confusion, and pain—especially our hunger for the Eucharist.