

Archbishop Don Bolen on Sunday Mass Attendance

August 30, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ of the Archdiocese of Regina,

Grace and peace to you all.

As you will remember, near the start of the pandemic, when it was no longer possible for us to gather in person for Mass, or when our numbers were seriously restricted, we did what other dioceses around the world did, and dispensed the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays. Two months ago, at the beginning of July, when all restrictions around societal gatherings were finally removed, I made the decision that we would lift the dispensation to attend Sunday Mass, as of September 1st. Now we find ourselves in the midst of a fourth wave of the pandemic, and it is increasingly apparent that we need to adapt to living with Covid on the horizon for the foreseeable future.

Despite the fourth wave of Covid and high number counts of new cases in recent days, we are not experiencing a societal shutdown or the re-imposing of restrictions on a government level. Ordinary life has in many ways resumed, but with Covid-related precautions as part of our daily life.

While not all will agree, I am proceeding with the lifting of the dispensation as of the beginning of September. That said, I want to qualify that decision in two ways:

Firstly, I want to stress the need for each of you to be attentive to your particular situation, and want to remind the faithful that the sick and medically vulnerable have always been dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. If you are ill, elderly, or medically vulnerable in any way, you are urged to continue to take every precaution to keep yourself and others safe.

Secondly, as a diocese, we remain committed to keeping ourselves informed of provincial health and safety recommendations as they develop. Public Health officials have provided us Covid-19 prevention strategies and personal risk assessments to help to minimize the chance of contracting and spreading Covid-19. These guidelines aren't imposed on us but are best practices and we encourage everyone to abide by them, as they have proven to be effective: wash or sanitize your hands frequently, routinely clean common surfaces, consider being vaccinated if you haven't already been, be mindful of SHA guidelines around physical distance and masking.

We would also invite each parish to discern its own preventative measures.

Some have asked, why is restoring the Sunday Mass obligation important? We believe that the Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life. The Lord's day is a time when we give communal praise for what God has done for us in Christ, and what God continues to do for us. Receiving the Eucharist, we are sent forth in a renewed way to be witnesses to the Gospel, to share in Christ's mission, to be bearers of hope and joy in a world much in need of both. Gathering as a community of Christ's disciples and receiving the Lord anew in our lives strengthens us in our daily effort to live the Gospel. In other words, we are obligated to give worship on Sunday because it helps us become more authentically human, sustaining and deepening our spiritual lives, forming us into a community at the service of others, and helping us along our journey towards eternal life.

Over the past year and a half, when gathering for the Eucharist has not been possible, or has been possible in a limited way with restricted numbers, the livestreaming of Masses has enabled us to continue to connect as a family of faith across the Archdiocese. This service will continue to be offered.

Friends in Christ, in our lives, Jesus meets us where we are and invites us to draw near to Him. I encourage you to listen to His voice, and to respond with generosity and patience in the ways that you can. May the peace of Christ be with you all.