



Office of the Bishop

DECREE

ON THE RESTORATION OF OUR SUNDAY OBLIGATION

The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life.
Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 2177

The Holy Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life.” It is the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ who is truly present under the appearances of bread and wine. It is by the Eucharist that we are united to God and united to each other. Nothing we do is more important than receiving the Holy Eucharist in a worthy manner (CCC n. 1324-25, 76).

Sunday is the Lord's Day. It is the fulfillment of the Old Testament commandment to “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy,” as it is the day memorializing the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Catholics have been gathering on the “day of the sun” to worship the Son, Jesus, since the beginning of our Church. And as the Holy Mass is the highest form of Christian prayer, our participation in Mass on Sunday is how we honor God and keep His day holy. Our Sunday obligation is, in fact, a great opportunity. For it is an obligation to the soul like breathing or drinking is to the body. It is an obligation that brings life and nourishes us in our relationship with Christ (CCC n. 2174-77, 80-81)

In gratitude for the providential lessening of the danger of the pandemic and for our good and for our salvation, it is with joy that I restore our Sunday obligation starting Saturday, May 22, 2021, the Vigil of the Solemnity of Pentecost, and issue updated policies and procedures regarding COVID-19.

Thus, like the empowerment of the Apostles at Pentecost, may the Holy Spirit help us use this time to deepen our devotion to the Holy Eucharist and to reclaim Sunday as a day of worship, leisure, and family time (CCC n. 2184, 86).

Given at the Chancery on this Friday, the fourteenth of May, in the year of our Lord 2021.

Most Rev. David A. Konderla

Most. Rev. David A. Konderla
Bishop of the Diocese of Tulsa & Eastern Oklahoma



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COVID-19 POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR THE PUBLIC MASS & SACRAMENTS

Promulgated May 14, 2021
Effective May 22, 2021, Vigil Mass

I. Preamble

This “COVID-19 Policies & Procedures for the Public Mass & Sacraments” (“Policies”) revises and supersedes any and all prior COVID-19 policies and procedures except for those governing the diocesan elementary schools. For the sake of continuity, the procedures at our diocesan elementary schools will remain in effect until the end of the academic year.

COVID-19 Policies & Procedures

II. Sunday Mass Obligation & Exemptions

- A. **Obligation for Sunday Mass:** The general dispensation from the Sunday obligation and from other holy days of obligation will be lifted and the obligations restored and reinstated starting Sunday, May 23, 2021, the Solemnity of Pentecost.
- B. **Exemptions to the Obligation:** The exemptions or excuses for the Sunday obligation and from other holy days of obligation remain under the normal conditions:

“The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin” (CCC n. 2181).

Furthermore, it remains that anyone who is sick or is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should not attend Mass.

III. General Mass Protocols

- A. **Face Coverings for those Attending Mass:** Unless a municipal mandate is in effect, persons attending Mass have the option of wearing a face-covering, i.e., mask. The pastor cannot mandate that masks be worn by those attending Mass (except as described in **Section III.B**) nor can he mandate they not be worn.
- B. **Social Distancing at Mass:** Pastors may designate some seating at Mass where wearing a mask and social distancing is still required, but this designated area should not comprise more than one-third of the total seating capacity of the sanctuary. Alternatively, pastors may establish special Mass times in which all are required to wear masks and social distance. Overall, the majority of Masses offered by a parish and the



majority of all seating at any Mass, except for the special Mass described herein, should be mask-optional and open seating.

- C. **Masks & Social Distancing for Clerics, Etc.:** Those participating in the Mass, e.g., priests, deacons, altar servers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, etc., are not required to wear masks nor may they be mandated to do so unless at a special Mass as described in **Section III.B**). Social distancing is no longer required for those serving in the Mass.
- D. **Reinstated Practices:** The following should be reinstated (a) the use of hymnals, missalettes, and other similar materials; (b) the use of Holy Water founts (i.e., stoups); (c) the normal practice of collections during Mass; (d) the procession of the gifts; (e) the sign of peace; (f) a normal routine of sanctuary sanitization; (g) a normal routine of exiting the sanctuary after Mass; (h) “cry rooms” and other similar facilities; (i) social receptions after Mass; and (j) the use of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.
- E. **Distribution of Holy Communion:** As social distancing is no longer required, pastors should reinstitute a normal practice for forming lines for the distribution of Holy Communion. The practice of priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion sanitizing their hands and wearing a mask for the distribution of Holy Communion is optional and at the discretion of the individual (**Section III.C**). Pastors may continue to institute various protocols for those who wish to receive on the tongue. Distribution of the Precious Blood remains suspended. The practice of intinction for concelebrants and deacons is optional.
- F. **General Prohibitions:** (a) Masses held in the parking lots of parishes or other similar venues are prohibited; (b) Masses may still be livestream via social media, but should not otherwise be posted or stored online—persons viewing a livestream should only have the opportunity to do so during the live celebration of the Mass; and (c) holding hands during the Lord’s Prayer is prohibited, as, regardless of these Policies regarding COVID-19, it is not part of the Mass in the Roman rite.
- G. **Pastoral Discretion:** As pastors best understand their facilities and parishioners, pastors are encouraged to adopt and apply local policies and procedures that supplement these diocesan Policies. Pastoral discretion is not permitted to contradict these Policies unless otherwise approved by Bishop Konderla.

End of Policies

Revised May 14, 2021
Office of the Bishop