

Parish Town Hall - September 15, 2020

Archbishop ListECKI ended the dispensation from Sunday Mass on September 14. Therefore, this coming weekend is the first Sunday the obligation to attend Sunday Mass has returned.

We have always had the ability to excuse oneself to attend Mass for certain conditions. There are many reasons to excuse yourself from Sunday obligation. We therefore still have the ability to excuse ourselves from the Sunday Mass without sinning. To excuse oneself, you must in good conscience have a valid reason not to attend.

The Arch first reopened churches at 25% capacity.

What we have done so far:

- 3-6 feet physical distancing
- Mask wearing
- Shortened Masses; homilies are shorter. Masses averaging 45 minutes. The longer you are indoors, the more your chances are heightened to contract virus.
- Lessened the amount of singing: shortened the processional, recessional and movement (whereas some churches have removed singing altogether. Evidence of COVID case came from a choir that was indoors for 2 hours singing.)
- No congregating in narthex
- Physical distancing – i.e., Communion, Kiss of Peace, Our Father, etc.
- Minimal shared tactile opportunities: fewer things for people to touch
- Livestreamed our 9:00 AM Sunday Mass
- Use of the PAAC for overflow.
- Moving forward, Saturday 4:30 PM, Sunday 9:00 and 11:00 AM will have a back-up Mass in PAAC; we can accommodate about another 140 people in the PAAC. We will examine this for 2 weeks and then see how it goes. We are prepared to add PAAC for 7:30 AM if necessary.
 - Rumors that with the dispensation lifted, more people can be in the church. None of the rules are changing. What this translates to is: if you have a bigger church, you are now allowed to use that space – with physical distancing.
- If both spaces are filling regularly, our next consideration will be to add weekend Mass times.

What does it mean to be able to excuse yourself from Mass?

- Archbishop explains that if you have a good conscience (upright and truthful), you can make a decision to excuse yourself from Mass. Right now it's the same people who shouldn't be at church in the 1st place: elderly, compromised immune system, etc.; caretakers of the sick; those with an infant at home; a healthcare worker
 - Example: 87-year old called Father and asked if he has to come to Mass. He hasn't left his home; he lives in senior living. He is scared... This person should feel comfortable being excused from attending Mass.
 - Example: A priest at the Deanery meeting said a man shared he likes the televised Masses, sitting in his pajamas, drinking coffee, but he has some free time and became a

Walmart greeter. He should go to Mass. Viewing Mass does not relieve you of the obligation. It's the next best thing, but it is not THE Mass.

- Archbishop said you make the decision with your conscience. If you're seriously scared, you need not go. But if you are not attending out of inconvenience, you should go.
- Father says being seriously afraid of COVID is enough to excuse yourself from Mass.
- We are prepared for 150 more people with our additional Mass options.

Questions and Answers

Q: Does one Mass have a mask requirement?

A: It's a state law that goes through the end of September. Therefore, every Mass requires it.

Q: Are the guidelines going to be consistent throughout the state?

A: Archbishop can only speak for this archdiocese; but he is trying to coordinate with all the bishops in the state, so it should be fairly consistent across the state.

Q: What do priests do for comforting the sick or dying in their homes?

A: Access is starting to open up. Example: Dixon Hollow, Lakewood. We have done Anointing in those places. Last week we began training lay ministers to distribute the Eucharist to the homebound. So, one volunteer to 1-2 homebound (because we don't want the same volunteer going to many places and seeing many people.)

Q: Does dispensation include someone who lives with an individual with health problems?

A: You are dispensed if you are living with someone who is compromised. However, if you are in very occasional contact with someone like that, you should probably attend. This is where your conscience comes in. I cannot give specific direction. If you are not sure, contact your priest and discuss.

Q: When state mask requirement expires, will we drop mandate?

A: Not answering it at this time, but probably not. It will depend on the numbers attending.

Q: Funerals?

A: We have been having funerals, but no visitations because it's so hard to ensure distancing in this context. We have livestreamed funerals so family members out-of-state could watch.

We are not offering some of our devotions, but we do have Eucharistic Adoration at our normal hours on Tuesdays at 1:00-7:30 PM. The church is still open weekdays until 6:00 PM.

All weekday Masses are celebrated at their regular times. School Masses are celebrated separately and are closed to the public.

If you're very uncomfortable about attending a weekend Mass, while it doesn't help you with the obligation, per se, Father encourages attendance at a weekday Mass which sees fewer people and it may help your fear about returning.

Father can give individual (not parish-wide) dispensation. Father wants people to feel comfortable. His and Father Aaron's lines are open.