

October 16, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Archdiocese of San Antonio,

The dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation which I initially granted on March 13 and have renewed at various points since that time remains in effect.

While the number of COVID-19 cases in the areas of the archdiocese are beginning to decline, we are still cautious and concerned for the health of everyone in our local churches.

All of the guidelines and best practices that were implemented to keep our places of worship safe and healthy remain in effect. We will continue to work diligently to decrease the risk to the people of God. These protocols include social distancing, requiring masks in church, and the use of sanitization procedures. Indeed, it is due to these stringent measures that we are currently seeing a low rate of infection. We agree with these measures that public officials and health authorities have advocated. With flu season and colder weather soon upon us, we must keep our guard up and not become lax in our practices.

I do strongly encourage parishioners to come back to Mass with their community if they are able. However, I emphasize that if you are ill, do not come to church. Any parishioners who are uncomfortable attending Sunday Mass due to the coronavirus or safety measures implemented at their parish are excused from the obligation to attend. Also, if parishioners are in a high risk category due to illness, age, or a chronic health condition or compromised immune system, they are to remain at home. Catholics are encouraged to offer up their hardship, sickness or pastoral care for the sake of those who are seriously ill and for those who have died.

While this dispensation is extended, the faithful need to continue to tend to their spiritual lives. If unable to attend Mass, Catholics are encouraged to make a “spiritual communion.” St. John Paul II wrote, “It is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist.”

Our parishes are to return to their pre-pandemic Mass schedules for Sunday and daily Mass and confessions. There may need to be some adjustment to schedules in order to have extra time to disinfect pews and clean other regularly touched surfaces between liturgies, but a full Mass schedule needs to be offered.

I also ask pastors to continue their outreach through livestreaming their liturgies on social media and websites. Many people are connected to us through these means at this time.

I continue to be eternally grateful for the extra service you are called to in this time. Please keep me and the Pastoral Center staff in your prayers as we pray for you.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for all of us,

Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS

Archbishop of San Antonio