

June 18, 2021



Office of the Bishop

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As Catholics, the Covid pandemic brought home to us in a powerful way two realities of our faith. The first is that in a world where we often place our priorities in the pursuit of happiness or security, it is the mercy and love of our God that is the true foundation for peace and fulfillment on our earthly pilgrimage. And the second is that we as human beings and as people of faith cannot exist in isolation and individuality, but need to participate in the communities that give richness and meaning to our lives.

It is these two realities that form the foundation for the Church's constant teaching that Catholics have an obligation to attend Mass on Sunday in order to worship God, integrate our faith into our daily lives and form communities centered upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sunday is the day of Christ's Resurrection, and central moment for us to gather as community and encounter the Sacrament of the Eucharist which makes present in our midst the mystery of Christ's passion, death and resurrection by which we have been redeemed.

During the heart of the pandemic, I joined with bishops throughout the world in dispensing the general obligation to attend Mass on Saturday night or Sunday because both public health and compassion for the well-founded fears of our people had demanded it. Now that the intensity of the danger of Covid has greatly diminished, it is time for our Catholic communities in San Diego and Imperial Counties to return to the full practice of attending weekly Eucharist. Thus as of July first, the deep moral obligation of Catholics to attend Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday will be restored.

I recognize that Covid has not completely passed, and that its effects linger in the lives of many faith-filled Catholics. For this reason, individual Catholics who are ill, have physical or emotional vulnerabilities which make Mass attendance difficult, or have fears about personal safety and social interaction will continue to be exempt from the obligation to attend Mass.

For us as people of faith, we have arrived at a moment when the full and active participation of the Catholic community in weekly worship must once again be a vibrant support for and witness to our discipleship in Christ. And for all that the Lord has given us, we rejoice.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert W. McElroy
Bishop of San Diego