



+ November 10, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Blessings and joy of our Lord be with each of you!

Thank you to everyone who has worked so hard keeping our parishes and schools running so that we can continue our mission. Despite the challenges and darkness of this pandemic, we continue to bring the light of Christ to others as seen in our outreach ministries, food banks, visits to the homebound, prayer groups, faith formation, adoration, and much more. Thank you to all the volunteers, staff, students and others who have creatively nurtured our parish communities! You are His light in our world today.

Our Coronavirus Taskforce has been tracking the latest science to inform the guidance we are issuing. As you know, this data has led to *temporary* changes to how we do things. These changes are warranted to keep people safe while not compromising the sanctity of the Mass. I remain firm in my resolve to keep our people safe — including the most vulnerable among us — so that we can continue safely celebrating the Eucharist.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have celebrated tens of thousands of Masses with only a handful of cases of coronavirus spread, which have been traced to people not following our safety guidance. In general, this indicates that our protocols are effectively protecting people and providing a safe environment for worship. This is something for which we can be very grateful!

As such, the general obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation (including the Saturday/vigil Mass) is to be reinstated (CIC, can. 1247) during Advent on December 8, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Advent is a wonderful time to draw near to Christ. It is time to renew our faith through personal reception of the sacraments and rebuild the relationships and community life of our parishes.

As has always been the case, those who have a serious reason are excused from attending Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2181). This includes those who are ill, have significant health risk factors or care for someone who is ill or immunocompromised, as well as those who have significant fear or anxiety about contracting COVID in a large group.

I invite you to come back to church. Be a part of our family of faith. Make the Lord's Day a true celebration of the Resurrection, and a great celebration of being renewed in his life, mercy and love. I continue to pray for you, and I ask for your prayers as well. As always, I remain,

In the Heart of Christ,

Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Archbishop of Seattle