

Dear Parishioners,

Yesterday, the Catholic Conference of Bishops of the State of New Jersey announced the following:

*"At this time, due to the observance of public safety protocols and the increase in the availability of vaccines, we have begun to return to some sense of normalcy in various sectors of our society. Therefore, we, the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey, are lifting the dispensation of the Sunday and Holy Days Mass obligation beginning on Saturday, June 5, 2021, and Sunday, June 6, 2021, Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. We welcome the Christian faithful to return to the regular participation in the Sunday Eucharist, the source and summit of our Catholic faith. **This obligation does not apply to those who are ill; those who have reason to believe that they were recently exposed to the coronavirus or another serious contagious illness; those who are confined to their home, a hospital, or nursing facility; or those with serious underlying health conditions.** One should consult the local pastor if questions arise about the obligation to attend Mass. Finally, safety protocols (such as wearing masks, physical distancing, etc.) in each New Jersey Diocese remains in place until modified or revoked by the respective Diocesan Bishop."*

My dear friends, as you are well aware the Bishops of New Jersey take **extremely** seriously the state affairs surrounding the pandemic. For them to agree to make such a collective statement can only mean one thing: they would not have made such a proclamation if they felt that lives were in danger when it comes to attending Mass on Sundays. In other words, the freedom to abstain from attending Mass on Sundays is no longer in effect (come the weekend of June 5,6). As you have read above, unless you or your loved ones meet the requirements for choosing to refrain from attending Mass, it is technically a sin in the eyes of the Catholic Church. Church teaching is extremely clear - unless one is elderly or sick, it is sinful to refrain from coming to Mass on Sundays and during Holy Days of obligation. Please know that these teachings are the official teachings of the Catholic Church - these teachings do not come from me, but from Mother Church herself. I have no authority whatsoever in overturning this divine mandate.

I understand that some of you make take issue with this recent statement from the Archdiocese of Newark. I understand that many of you are still hesitant to attend large gatherings in enclosed spaces and that this coronavirus "phobia" will remain for quite some time. However, as the Center for Disease Control

(the highest medical authority in the country) has stated, it is incumbent upon us to trust the science and believe in the validity of these vaccines. Our Commander in Chief, Joe Biden, has affirmed the CDC's decision and quite simply, it is time for us to resume life as we knew it prior to the pandemic. **As you read above, the mask mandate and spatial distancing remain in effect (while inside) in the State of New Jersey until Governor Phil Murphy decides otherwise.

I am **BEYOND** happy to welcome all of you back and I am fully confident that our parish will continue to flourish as we did prior to this evil, deadly and vicious virus reached our shores. The Catholic Church is in the business of saving lives, not endangering them. Taken into prayerful consideration of what you just read, and as outlined by the Catholic Conference of Bishops in the Garden State, the time for excusing ourselves from attending Mass on Sundays is officially over. Again, this decision did not come from yours truly and if you wish to protest this new course of action, then you should feel free to contact the Archdiocese of Newark for a more thorough explanation, although I do contend that the aforementioned statement speaks quite clearly for itself.

I, for one, do wholeheartedly agree with this decision. I believe in the Cardinal Archbishop of Newark, Joseph Tobin, and furthermore, I absolutely subscribe to the Center for Disease Control and the countless hours of research and scientific data supporting the decision it took to make this move. My dear friends, America is back!!!

God bless you all!!!
~Fr. Eric