

What should Catholics do when ... They Cannot Attend Holy Mass

Coronavirus Dispensation and Prayers



What is a Dispensation from Holy Mass?

In the Diocese of Providence, Bishop Tobin has dispensed all Catholics from the Obligation to attend Holy Mass, effective immediately and through March 29, 2020. This means that the penalty of mortal sin is lifted if one misses Holy Mass. Even though Masses are not canceled at this time, Catholics should feel free to decide for themselves if they should attend Holy Mass. In the event that public Masses are eventually canceled, it is necessary to stay home for the health and safety of all. Though there is a sadness for not being able to participate at Holy Mass, one should not feel guilty for not going to Mass. Catholics are encouraged to offer up their sickness or pastoral care for the sake of those who are seriously ill and for those who have died.

Catholics are encouraged to make a 'spiritual communion'.

St. John Paul II writes that "it is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of 'spiritual communion', which has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life. Saint Teresa of Jesus wrote: 'When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you.'"
(Ecclesia de Eucharistia, no. 34)

Catholics should watch Holy Mass on TV or the Internet



How do I make a Spiritual Communion?

Below are recommendations for how to make a 'spiritual communion' when unable to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. These are only recommendations and can always be adapted based upon personal needs.

- Gather with others in your household and begin a time of prayer with the sign of the cross.
- Take time to read and reflect upon the readings from Sunday Mass. The readings are available at usccb.org and a Sunday Gospel reflection can be found at the same website or during Lent at dioceseofprovidence.org
- Share prayer intentions quietly or aloud.
- Pray the Lord's Prayer.
- Pray one of the following prayers of spiritual communion (see below).
- Close with the sign of the cross.

Act of Spiritual Communion by St. Alphonsus Liguori (A.D. 1696-1787)

My Jesus, I believe that Thou art present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love Thee above all things and I desire Thee in my soul. Since I cannot now receive Thee sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though thou wert already there, I embrace Thee and unite myself wholly to Thee; permit not that I should ever be separated from Thee.

Act of Spiritual Communion

O Immaculate Queen of Heaven and Earth, Mother of God and Mediatrix of every grace: I believe that Thy dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, is truly, really, and substantially contained in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love Him above all things and I long to receive Him into my heart. Since I cannot now receive Him sacramentally, be so good as to place Him spiritually in my soul.

O my Jesus, I embrace Thee as One who has already come, and I unite myself entirely to Thee. Never permit me to be separated from Thee. Amen.

Act of Spiritual Communion

As I cannot this day enjoy the happiness of assisting at the holy Mysteries, O my God! I transport myself in spirit at the foot of Thine altar; I unite with the Church, which by the hands of the priest, offers Thee Thine adorable Son in the Holy Sacrifice; I offer myself with Him, by Him, and in His Name. I adore, I praise, and thank Thee, imploring Thy mercy, invoking Thine assistance, and presenting Thee the homage I owe Thee as my Creator, the love due to Thee as my Savior.

Apply to my soul, I beseech Thee, O merciful Jesus, Thine infinite merits; apply them also to those for whom I particularly wish to pray. I desire to communicate spiritually, that Thy Blood may purify, Thy Flesh strengthen, and Thy Spirit sanctify me. May I never forget that Thou, my divine Redeemer, hast died for me; may I die to all that is not Thee, that hereafter I may live eternally with Thee. Amen.



Prayer to the Most Holy Redeemer (Anima Christi)

Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, embolden me. Water from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus, hear me. Within thy wounds hide me. Never permit me to be parted from you. From the evil Enemy defend me. In the hour of my death call me. And bid me come to thee, that with your saints I may praise thee for age upon age. Amen.

Prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified

Behold, O good and loving Jesus, that I cast myself on my knees before you and, with the greatest fervor of spirit, I pray and beseech you to instill into my heart ardent sentiments of faith, hope and charity, with true repentance for my sins and a most firm purpose of amendment. With deep affection and sorrow I ponder intimately and contemplate in my mind your five wounds, having before my eyes what the prophet David had already put in your mouth about yourself, O good Jesus: They have pierced my hands and my feet; they have numbered all my bones (Ps. 21: 17-18).