



Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

123 Nelson Rd
Saskatoon SK S7S 1H1
www.rcdos.ca

Phone: 306-242-1500
Fax: 306-244-6010
Toll free: 877-661-5005



March 25, 2022

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

**Restoration of the Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation
starting Saturday, April 2, 2022**

Dear Pastors and Clergy; Parish Life Directors; Faithful Brothers and Sisters of the Diocese of Saskatoon:

The Sacred Liturgy and the Eucharist is indeed the source and summit of the Church: *"the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons and daughters of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper. The liturgy in its turn moves the faithful, filled with 'the paschal sacraments,' to be 'one in holiness.'"* (Sacrosanctum Concilium, §10)

This irreplaceable and essential gift to the People of God has strengthened and sustained us during the past two years. With the limits on gathering sizes during the pandemic, it was necessary to dispense the obligation of the lay faithful to attend and participate in person at Sunday liturgies. During the months of the pandemic to follow, our pastors, parishes, and the faithful continued to ensure the health and well-being of parishioners while continuing to grow in their faith. I offer my thanks and gratitude for the efforts that were undertaken to implement and maintain the precautionary measures that kept our parishes safe in very difficult circumstances.

Many parishes live-streamed Masses over the internet during the past years and may continue to do so. This has indeed helped Catholics nourish their spiritual life when they could not be physically present for the Mass. Yet for those who are not prohibited from attending in person, this cannot be the norm forever. For the Son of God did not come to us virtually or from afar – but came to dwell with us. He came to us – and continues to come to us – in the flesh. As Catholics, direct contact with the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Our Lord in the sacrificial offering of the Mass is irreplaceable. The worshipping community also needs to come together and unite in a real and incarnational way with one another. To walk with each other and to share in the lives of one another in love, service, and joy is what it means to be a pilgrim people.

We now near the end of this Lenten season, and we soon will celebrate Holy Week and the Passion of Our Lord. It has been over two years since the dispensation to attend

Sundays and Days of Obligation was made for our diocese. As a people, I am grateful that we are able now to move into a period of life whereby we are more able to cope with the remaining effects of the pandemic. ***Thus, I hereby restore the obligation for Catholics to attend and assist at Sunday Masses and Holy Days of obligation (December 25 and January 1 in Canada) starting Saturday, April 2, 2022.***

Obligation does not mean to be a burden, but rather that which enlivens our spirit and nourishes our relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church. I also recognize that for many parishioners, you still may be unable to fulfill this obligation to attend. The Church's laws or precepts are medicinal and not meant to be unreasonable or an undue burden to anyone. As has always been the case, anyone with a "serious reason" or "grave cause" is excused from this obligation.

These particular circumstances or others may be cause for one being excused from participation at the Mass:

- anyone who is sick, especially those who are symptomatic and have been recently exposed to COVID;
- anyone with significant health risk factors that requires them to avoid public gatherings;
- anyone who lives with and cares for someone with significant risk factors;
- anyone who cannot attend Mass through no fault of their own because of frailty, old age, or limitations exacerbated by distance or immobility, etc.

Please also make note of the following:

Liturgical Practices

Appropriate cleaning of high-use areas within the church is encouraged and hand sanitizer and/or alternate sanitizing options should remain available throughout the church. Pastors may still choose to have collection baskets (or any other materials) stationary and not to be passed from one family to another, however, the use of the offertory basket is not prohibited. The Sign of Peace is permitted, however, pastors may choose to continue encouraging the Sign of Peace by a simple gesture or omit the gesture which is an option for the liturgy.

Although the use of masks in the church and other church facilities is no longer required – churches will continue to make available masks for use by those who may choose to wear them. The use of masks by priests and extraordinary ministers who distribute Holy Communion is optional. Pastors are to use discretion regarding the non-use of a mask keeping in mind the age and health of the general congregation, the dynamics of the parish community and the health of the pastor.

The priest and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist should continue to sanitize their hands before distributing Communion. Care should be taken to avoid physical contact when placing the host in the communicant's hands or upon the tongue. The presider or

extraordinary ministers of Communion are encouraged to sanitize intermittently as necessary. The option of distribution of the Holy Communion (Blood of Christ) from a common chalice continues to be omitted at this time. For those who are gluten intolerant, special arrangements are to be made with the pastor for the consecration of low-gluten hosts.

Again, I appreciate these changes will be well received by some and reservedly by others - and I ask for empathy, compassion, and respect toward those with different perspectives. While we have all experienced the disorder in society - we have also witnessed many examples of generosity and kindness.

I express profound gratitude for your perseverance in faith and charity during these times of challenge as our parishes throughout our diocese offer the Sacraments, ministry, and support to our people and communities.

Let us do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. (see Micah 6:8)

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Mark A. Hagemoen". The signature is written in a cursive style.

✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen