



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

16 August 2021

COVID-19 variants and Sunday Mass attendance

The pandemic isn't over yet; indeed, the delta variant of the coronavirus is spreading in the US of A, and now the lambda variant is starting to rear its ugly head here.

Some might be anxious about a breakthrough infection, or putting the health of a loved one at risk, because the dispensation has ended and we're therefore obliged to participate at Sunday Mass in church.

Fear not, for our holy Catholic Church teaches (*Catechism*, para. 2181) that you can excuse yourself from that obligation, with no guilt of sin, if you have a serious reason:

- 1) You're frail from age or illness
- 2) You're caring for someone sick or homebound
- 3) You're pregnant, or caring for an infant
- 4) You're doing a work of mercy that was unplanned, or took longer than planned
- 5) You've no way to get to church
- 6) Your work schedule conflicts with the parish Mass schedule, and you need to work
- 7) You're afraid to travel because of bad weather
- 8) You're afraid of getting the COVID from people outside your household

This is by no means an exhaustive list. For serious reasons like these, you don't need permission from the archbishop or your pastor to absent yourself from Sunday Mass. Use your good sense to excuse yourself, and find another way to pray in order to keep holy the Lord's Day.

Basically, it isn't a sin to miss Mass if you would go if you could go, but you can't go to Mass (or anywhere else for that matter) due to circumstances outside your control. Put another way, missing Mass is only a sin if you could go, but you choose not to go, and maybe do nothing at all with that time, or go somewhere else instead.

If you are unable to go to Sunday Mass in church, know that you will be missed, and that you'll be lifted up in prayer. We all long for the day when the holy community can gather safely in church to worship God at Holy Mass, to be transformed by receiving Holy Communion, and to be sent out as agents of transformation in the world.

Michael O. Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque