



ARCHDIOCESE FOR THE MILITARY SERVICES, USA
The Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio

7 May 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As individual installations begin to review the guidelines for daily operations and the possibilities for gatherings with social distancing, it is important to recall some fundamental elements of Catholic teaching.

The Catholic Church calls all her faithful to full and active participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass at least once a week on Sundays, the Day of the Lord. Full and active participation means being in the place where the Mass is celebrated. It is significant that for major events in the Vatican, when the numbers obliged the organization of a celebration in the Basilica of St. Peter with a video-link to the Paul VI Audience Hall, a Mass was also celebrated in the Audience Hall so that people could fulfill their Sunday obligation.

Last March when I gave the rather broad dispensation from physical presence at Sunday Mass, because of the pandemic, I made clear that “virtual presence is never a substitute for physical presence” at the celebration. The dispensation granted will cease when it is possible to organize Mass on installations. Obviously, the sick and the aged always have a dispensation.

An integral part of the celebration of the Eucharist is the distribution of Holy Communion. In fact, Catholics at Mass who meet the conditions and are so disposed have a right to present themselves for Holy Communion.

In most instances, the space available for Sunday Masses would certainly allow for social distancing. I think particularly of the Naval Academy and current use of a theater at the Air Force Academy, but there are many other installations that have very large chapels. There is also the possibility to celebrate Mass out of doors in the warmer weather. That adds yet another option to help Catholics fulfill their obligation and exercise their right to freedom of religion.

I am very grateful for the many initiatives undertaken by priests to make Mass and the sacraments accessible to so many. Their efforts and creativity have been powerful signs of divine grace at work in priestly hearts.

Invoking abundant blessings upon all of you and anxious to resume my visits to your communities, I remain

Sincerely in Christ,

(The Most Reverend) Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA