



OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE

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August 12, 2021

Dear Father,

May God bless you! Given our expanded reopening of our churches in June and the end of physical distancing requirements, increased vaccinations, and with the input of the Pastor COVID-19 Committee, I believe that it is now time to restore the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Unless serious barriers intervene, I am restoring this obligation as the weekend of September 4-5, 2021.

It will be important to work with those parishioners who continue to experience fears or who have health conditions that put them at greater risk with COVID-19. Please remind parishioners that by long-standing Church law (CCC #2181), this obligation does not apply to those who are:

- Sick.
- Have a serious health risk or live in a household with those at risk.
- Serve as primary caregivers to those at risk.
- Have serious anxiety or concerns about being in a large-group setting due to COVID-19.
- Are unable to attend Mass in person.
- In addition, prudent caution may be exercised about Mass attendance for those who are unable to be vaccinated, such as children under the age of 12.

Please continue to urge parishioners to benefit from vaccinations. Because of the high transmission of the Delta variant, I am requiring masks at Mass and other Church settings for those who are unvaccinated. Of course, anyone should be supported in wearing a mask if he or she prefers to do so.

Please note that masks are required of all students, faculty, staff, and visitors in school settings, including school Masses. Masks also are required in any other settings involving children who cannot be vaccinated, such as children's religious education programs.

As I have said many times before, mask wearing and vaccinations are exercises of the common good and should be supported.

Many of you have spoken about the need for outreach and pastoral care as we welcome the faithful back in significant numbers. Parishioners may have lost family members or experienced severe illness themselves or in their families. As you reach out to those who are hurting, we should monitor what additional steps may need to be taken to assist those in need. I welcome your suggestions.

I will announce the restoration of the Sunday/Holy Day obligation in the September 2 issue of *The Record* and will include a “Message to the Faithful” in that issue. To assist your communication about this announcement, video messages of invitation and about the Sunday Mass obligation as an “obligation of love” have been prepared. Archdiocesan staff also will prepare and share social media messages about the Mass and the centrality of the Eucharist in our lives as Catholics. You will receive more information about these efforts from our Communication and Worship offices.

In the meantime, we have attached language that you can use to share this information with parishioners. This language is included on the attached guidance about specific issues related to Mass and other church ministries.

As always, the COVID-19 Pastor Committee and the Office of Worship are available to discuss any specific challenges:

COVID-19 Pastor Committee:

Archbishop Joseph Kurtz: jkurtz@archlou.org or (502) 777-7070.

Father Paul Beach: fatherbeach@gmail.com or (502) 468-8806

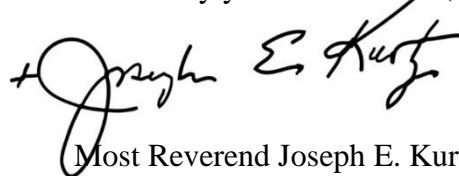
Father Anthony Chandler: Alc527@aol.com or (502) 794-9815

Father Martin Linebach: mlinebach@archlou.org or (502) 373-7575

Father Jeff Shooner: jshooner@stpatlou.org or (502) 558-8350

I again thank you for the tremendous care for your people that you have demonstrated throughout this very challenging time. Your patience, fortitude, and deep faith have been an inspiration to me and to those you serve. You are in my prayers.

Faternally yours in our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph E. Kurtz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a cross at the end of the line.

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.
Archbishop of Louisville

Attachment (1)