



June 3, 2021

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I write to you with important news and a grateful heart. After much prayer, consultation, and discussion, the Catholic bishops of Minnesota today announced that the Sunday Mass obligation will return the weekend of July 3-4. I encourage each of you to read the full text of the Minnesota bishops' statement, which may be found [here](#). It includes the rationale for the decision, the importance of the return to the Mass, and possible exceptions to the Sunday obligation.

Many of you have generously shared with me over the past 15 months stories of how difficult the pandemic has been on you, your loved ones, your jobs, your parishes, your communities and beyond. So many have lost so much, including family and friends. Please join me in remembering those who have died and those among us who continue to grieve their loss.

At the same time, many of you have shared stories of great sacrifice by healthcare workers, doctors and others who risked their own health and safety to help others in the midst of the pandemic. These women and men continue to exemplify real charity and courage as they move from treating COVID-19 patients to resuming their assigned roles in our clinics, hospitals, nursing homes and other care facilities. I know my appreciation for our sisters and brothers in healthcare and emergency services has only grown during this crisis. I am truly grateful to them and to their family members, who also endured heightened risks to health and safety.

My gratitude extends, as well, to all the faithful of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. Some of you have sacrificed Sunday and daily Mass attendance for more than a year to minimize the risk to the loved ones with whom you live, and often for whom you care, and to the healthcare personnel who would have to care for you in the event that you became ill. You have shared with me the heartbreak you experienced by not being able to receive our Lord in the Eucharist. Many others, thankfully, have been able to safely return to in-person Mass since the end of last May due to the diligence and extraordinary coordination and safety protocols put into place by our dedicated priests, parish staffs and volunteers. These same teams also worked creatively, instituting parking lot Masses and initiating efforts to make the Mass available through livestreaming and digital ministries. The generosity of so many has kept our parishes open and operating – providing support and services to our sisters and brothers who count on them for spiritual assistance and accompaniment and even social services.

I continue to be grateful to our parish and school staffs. Their hard work and flexibility during constantly changing conditions and directives made it possible for the work of Christ to continue. Our Catholic school and religious education students were able to learn continuously – in-person and remotely – throughout the year. Parish staffs have supported existing ministries and started new ones, often times behind-the-scenes with little or no recognition for their innovation and creativity.

The hard work of our parishes and school staff have allowed us to gather safely throughout this year. That safety has only increased as we gratefully see so many signs that the pandemic is receding. Given those positive developments, I want to encourage those who have stayed away to come back and worship together. We know that we need the strength that comes from the sacraments in order to live our Christian life and we know that our parish communities are not complete without you.

As we fully return to the Sunday Mass in early July, please join me in praying for the souls of those who have died from COVID-19, those who grieve them and for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic around the globe. Please also join my prayers of gratitude for the faithful of the Archdiocese and for those who serve so many in our parishes, schools and Catholic entities. May you know an abundance of divine blessings as we all return to the Lord's table.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+Bernard A Hebda". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda  
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis