

How Catholics can cope with Mass-less Sundays

By Dr. Mark Miravalle

March 16, 2020 (*Marian Times*) – Sunday mass cancellations and dispensations are now ubiquitous throughout the Catholic Church in the United States. During the weekend of March 14–15, over 20 archdioceses and dioceses experienced Sunday mass cancellations, including in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New York, San Diego, Boston, Newark, San Antonio, and Detroit. Many other cardinals, archbishops, and bishops have granted a variety of dispensations from mass attendance for the Catholic faithful within their ecclesiastical jurisdictions.

In Italy, the Diocese of Rome and the Italian Episcopal Conference have suspended all masses throughout the country until April 3. Masses had already been canceled in Northern Italy due to its coronavirus epicenter status. Mass cancellations are now taking place in varied places worldwide, including Japan, Italy, the Netherlands, and other parts of Europe.

In speaking with a European bishop whose country just suspended masses for the near future, he reported that after weeks of isolated cases, the exponential spiking of Coronavirus that was seen first in China, and then Italy, is now happening within his own western European nation, which led to the nationwide suspension of masses. Numerous international medical experts estimate that the United States is only a few weeks away from a similar bell curve spiking in CV.

For many Catholics in the U.S., it's time to spiritually and pastorally prepare for Mass-less Sundays in the immediate future.

Here are four concrete ways that the Catholic faithful in the U.S. can spiritually prepare and “pray through” this purging period of Mass-less Sundays:

1. Watch Sunday Mass on television. Through television and the internet, most of us have access to the celebration of Holy Mass, either nationally or locally. While watching the Eucharistic Liturgy on a screen obviously doesn't provide the same existential blessing of being physically present, it nonetheless conveys significant secondary spiritual blessings through virtual participation of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

When possible, obtain the scripture readings from the Mass. If you don't have access to the liturgy via technology, prayerfully read and meditate upon the scripture readings from Sunday Mass. Offer your newly experienced sufferings in union with the sufferings of Jesus and Mary at Calvary, which is mystical though truly present and continued at every Mass.

2. Make Spiritual Communions. Spiritual Communions comprise classic spiritual practices that call for an immediate renewal during our present Mass-less Sunday experience. A Spiritual Communion is a spiritual practice in which the Christian, after professing his or her belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, requests Jesus to spiritually enter the soul.

Saint Thomas Aquinas describes a Spiritual Communion as a holy desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, and a loving embrace from Jesus as though we had already received him. Saint after saint has recommended this powerfully spiritual practice. St. Catherine of Siena compared it to receiving Jesus from a “silver Chalice” instead of the gold chalice of the Eucharist, and St. Padre Pio spoke of great efficacy in spiritually uniting with Jesus throughout the day.

Pope St. John Paul II strongly recommends the practice of Spiritual Communions in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*: ... It is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of “spiritual communion,” which has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life. St. Teresa of Jesus wrote: “When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you” [*The Way of Perfection*, Ch. 35] (EE,34).

The basic elements for a Spiritual Communion are as follows:

1. Express your belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist: "Jesus, I love you and I believe that you are really present, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Eucharist."
2. Express your inability to receive Jesus sacramentally in the Eucharist: "Jesus, unfortunately, I cannot receive you sacramentally in Holy Communion at this time."
3. Invite Jesus to spiritually enter your soul: "Jesus, I now ask you to spiritually enter my soul" (followed a brief time of silence and receptivity to the spiritual entrance of Jesus into your soul).
4. Offer your thanksgiving: "Jesus, thank you for spiritually entering my soul. I love you, I praise you, and I adore you for your infinite grace and mercy."

If you are able to watch the Mass on television, make your Spiritual Communion after the "Lamb of God," when you would normally receive Holy Communion.

3. Increase Eucharistic Adoration

Even at a time when masses are being canceled across the world and now within our country, access to Jesus in the Eucharist remains open in many places in the sublime form of Eucharistic Adoration and visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

It is not an over-simplification to say that all human challenges can find their ultimate answer and remedy in the Eucharist. Jesus is the Eucharist. The Eucharist is Jesus. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, and his Sacred and Eucharistic Heart possesses the most effective solution and consolation to every human trial. Where possible, take some time each day to adore Jesus in the Eucharist, or tell him every present fear and anxiety of our weary hearts before the Blessed Sacrament. These acts of Adoration bring heavenly balms for earthly hearts that feel overburdened. Like John, the Beloved Disciple (cf. Jn. 13:25), when we symbolically rest our head on his Jesus' heart before the Blessed Sacrament, we typically feel the fear and anxiety dissipate by the moment.

It is time to become more generous in Eucharistic Adoration when, for many of us, Jesus in Mass and Holy Communion will at least temporarily become an offering of loss rather than an easily accessible heavenly privilege.

4. Practice "Internal" Adoration of Jesus

It is also a perennial doctrinal truth of our Catholic Faith that the Trinity dwells in the souls of the just. The spiritual presence of Jesus in the soul that possesses sanctifying grace is a true presence, (though not physical as in the Eucharist), which according to Pope Leo XIII, differs only in degree from the presence of God that beatifies the saints in heaven (Divinum Illud Munus, 9). That's why St. Catherine, St. Teresa, St. Francis de Sales, and many other saints encouraged a type of "internal adoration," "adoring his Majesty within," or making an "internal spiritual retreat" with the indwelling Jesus, by acknowledging and thereby adoring the true spiritual presence of Jesus in the tabernacle of the Christian soul. Even in cases where there is absolutely no access to our Eucharistic Jesus, it should bring great consolation for the Christian to recall Jesus' true presence in our souls for, "if we love one another, God dwells in us and our love is perfected in us. Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he is in us because he has given us of his Spirit... (1 Jn. 4:12).

Through the difficult days ahead, let us keep Mary constantly in mind and heart—she who is the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of the Eucharist, the Mother of the Church, and the Mother of all peoples. Along with the ever-powerful prayer of the Rosary, I invite you to pray a prayer given by the "Mother of All Peoples" during her locally church approved apparitions in Amsterdam, (local ecclesiastical approval, May 31, 2002) during which Our Lady revealed the following prayer by which to specifically battle "degeneration, disasters, and war." Surely, the Coronavirus pandemic now qualifies as a global disaster.

Let us invoke, and solemnly proclaim, the powerful intercession of the Mother of all peoples to spiritually respond to a lethal pandemic which is now, in fact, reaching all peoples:

Lord, Jesus Christ,

Son of the Father,

send now your Spirit over the earth.

Let the Holy Spirit live in the hearts of all nations,

that they may be preserved from degeneration, disasters and war.

May the Lady of All Nations, the Blessed Virgin Mary, be our Advocate. Amen.