



ARCHDIOCESE *of* KINGSTON

29 March 2023

Returning to Mass at Pentecost

As I look back over the last three years, I wish to begin by acknowledging the courage, generosity and understanding that have been displayed in the face of adversity and unforeseen challenges. Many people, in their different walks of life and with their varied responsibilities, gave of themselves so generously. Amongst them, I want to express my gratitude to those who gave of their time and energy to keep open our churches. The parishes of our archdiocese have realised Pope Francis' vision that they be "a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 28). I want to acknowledge all those who developed creative, new patterns of prayer and made participation in parish Masses possible through the internet.

A beautiful and profound aspect of our Catholic faith is the desire to participate in the Holy Mass and share in the Eucharist. We do so in gratitude and with joy. We are made for the worship of God, and we give expression to this fundamental aspect of our human nature and our Christian identity by our presence at, and participation in, the celebration of Mass.

Moreover, as Henri de Lubac reminded us, the Eucharist makes the Church, and the Church makes the Eucharist. The Eucharist gives the Church her identity, enabling us to worship God and be a visible sign of faith in the world. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the lifeblood of the Church, in which the Lord Jesus entrusted to us the precious gift of Himself. Attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days is the greatest of all privileges, requiring our participation and our presence.

During the Covid pandemic, the Sunday Obligation was impeded and needed to be fulfilled in other ways. I thank God that this situation has now changed and the reasons that have prevented Catholics from attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation no longer apply. The challenge before us now is the restoration of the Sunday Mass to its rightful centrality in our lives. Sunday is a weekly gift from God to His people. It is not something that we can do without. The Sunday Eucharist is food for each one of us in our personal lives, and in the unique task with which we have been entrusted.

I understand there are still some members of the faithful who, for reasons of health, do not yet feel able to return to Mass. It has always been the teaching of the Church that it is not a breach of the Sunday Obligation when a Catholic is impeded from attending Mass in person

Page 1 of 2

because of situations such as ill health or care for the sick. Our Catholic people and parishes have benefitted from the online streaming of Mass but 'Virtual Masses' online or on television do not fulfil the Sunday Obligation, even while they are a source of continued spiritual comfort to those who cannot attend Mass in person (such as those who are elderly and sick), to whom the obligation does not apply.

We are a Eucharistic people for whom attendance at Mass is essential. I invite all Catholics who have not yet done so to return to attending Mass in person this Pentecost Sunday, May 28, 2023. Nourished by our encounter with the Risen Lord Jesus, fed by His Body and Blood in Holy Communion, we receive the grace and strength to serve the Lord and glorify Him with our lives. It is to be the foundation stone of our lives, bringing together every aspect of our life and mission. In the days to come let us cultivate a deeper desire for the Real Presence of the Lord. The Eucharist is the cause of our deepest joy, enabling us to offer our profoundest thanks to God.

With prayerful best wishes, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Michael Mulhall". The signature is written in a cursive style.

+Michael Mulhall
Archbishop of Kingston