

YOU WERE ASKING . . . by Msgr. Pat Stilla

Q. As a practising Catholic, I am happy that Sunday Masses have now resumed in most of our churches, but, as a senior parishioner who is not in the best of health, I still feel that I should stay home for a while longer for fear of contracting Covid-19. Am I still excused from Mass attendance and for how long?

A. Not only are you excused from attending Mass in your particular situation but, I suggest that you definitely not attend Sunday Mass until you feel ready and confident enough to do so.

The exemption (dispensation) to attend weekend Masses that Bishop Colli granted to all Catholics in our Diocese last March continues to be extended to you until such time that you feel ready to attend. Besides this, the Church teaches that a Catholic's Sunday obligation to participate in the Eucharist is always automatically suspended:

n if one is ill, elderly or feels unwell;



n in cases of moral or physical impossibility;
n for the spiritual and/or physical wellbeing of the people, or;
n for any other truly 'just cause' (like curbing the spread of disease or safe-guarding the health of the most vulnerable).

In the meantime, continue to pray at home, as I'm sure you have been doing all your life and especially since the closures of our churches. Continuing to watch live-streamed Masses on T.V., praying the Rosary or reading the Sunday Readings if they are available to you are all sufficient for now until you feel ready to return.



Q. Although I found it very strange at the beginning of this pandemic, I have now gotten used to staying at home and watching Sunday Mass on line or on television. Is it possible for me to simply continue practising my Catholic Faith from time to time in this new virtual way?

A. While virtual Masses, Prayer Services and online homilies have kept us in touch with our Parishes and with our Catholic Faith during this pandemic, this method of worship is simply a temporary "band-aid" solution for those who feel well enough to physically gather together for Mass. They are certainly not the norm for Faith practice. Community Is Essential Humans are social beings who need physical and



emotional interaction with each other to survive and to flourish. We know that, although God chose individuals to lead His People throughout history, He always called persons together in community, who would interact with each other to celebrate common beliefs,

values, and bonds of family and friendship. Physically gathering together as God's People, to celebrate our Faith, to pray and to praise the Lord is the norm of our Faith practice, unless it is impossible to do so. We gather together around

the Eucharist, as a community of persons of one mind and heart to praise the Lord through liturgical rituals of prayer, praise, music and song.

The Parish Community More specifically and on a local level, the pivotal importance of our Parish Communities of Faith is to be cherished and upheld. It is in the Parish where laypersons, lay ministers, Faith leaders and clergy all work together as a team to achieve a common goal, in worship of God and in service to each other.