

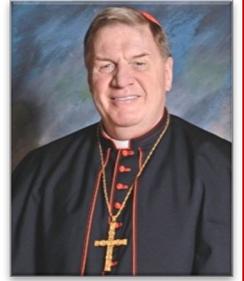


Rejoice in the Lord

By Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

Archbishop of Newark

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In the Eucharist, Christ satisfies hungry hearts

Two weeks ago, the bishops of New Jersey announced that effective this weekend (The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, June 5-6), we have reinstated the general obligation to attend Sunday Mass. As members of the Body of Christ, we welcome the Christian faithful to return to the regular participation in the Sunday Eucharist, the source and summit of our Catholic faith. (See statement below).

The Church teaches that life in Christ begins with baptism and is nourished by our reception of the holy Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ, and the other sacraments. In his 1943 encyclical, “*Mystici Corporis Christi*” (The Mystical Body of Christ), Pope Pius XII writes: “If we would define this true Church of Jesus Christ ... we shall find no expression more noble, more sublime or more divine than the phrase which calls it the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ” (#13).

The Second Vatican Council, and all subsequent popes, have reinforced this teaching about the absolute unity of Christ and his Church and its most powerful, sacramental expression in the Eucharist. Our unity as Christians is guaranteed by our participation in the life of Christ, which is accomplished once and for all at baptism and nurtured, restored and sanctified by our frequent reception of his most holy body and blood in the Eucharist.

In his miracle of the loaves and fish, Jesus feeds a crowd of “about five thousand” from the meager resources available, and the result is not only the complete satisfaction of all who were present but “leftovers” filling 12 wicker baskets. This incredible story demonstrates the Lord’s power over material things (the loaves and fish), but more importantly, it foreshadows the great gift that he will give that feeds the souls of his disciples and satisfies completely the longing of our hungry hearts.

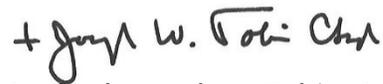
The Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, is called to continue Christ’s work on Earth. We are to care for the bodily needs of all our sisters and brothers through the corporal works of mercy: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, caring for the sick, visiting the imprisoned and burying the dead.

But we are also called to satisfy hearts that are famished spiritually by means of what are called the spiritual works of mercy: sharing knowledge, giving advice to those in need, comforting the sick, being patient with others, forgiving those who hurt us, giving correction to those who need it, and praying for the living and the dead. We perform these works of mercy because we are the Body of Christ and because without us (every one of us), the Church cannot effectively carry out its divine mission.

Pope Francis reminds us that we are missionary disciples who embody the love and mercy of Jesus Christ in our daily lives. The Eucharist is what feeds us—giving us the nourishment we need to love and forgive others, to care for their physical needs and to minister to their spiritual needs. Christ satisfies our hungry hearts by means of the great gift of himself that is really present to us in the sacrament of his body and blood.

Now that we have the opportunity to “return to grace” as described in the excerpt from my recent pastoral letter (see below), let’s be especially thankful for the mystery of the Eucharist and for the many ways we are blessed as members of Christ’s body. Let’s pray that the Lord will continue to work miracles that satisfy the spiritual and material needs of all. Let’s be the Body of Christ for others—missionary disciples who pray for the grace to help satisfy the hunger of all our sisters and brothers in Christ.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark

STATEMENT OF THE NEW JERSEY BISHOPS

Reinstating the General Obligation to Attend Mass

At this time, due to the observance of public safety protocols and the increase in the availability of vaccines, we have begun a return to some sense of normalcy in various sectors of our society.

Therefore, we the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey, are lifting the dispensation of the Sunday and Holy Days Mass obligation beginning on Saturday, June 5, 2021, and Sunday, June 6, 2021, Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. We welcome the Christian faithful to return to the regular participation in the Sunday Eucharist, the source and summit of our Catholic faith (cf. Code of Canon Law canon 1247 and Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2180).

This obligation does not apply to those who are ill; those who have reason to believe that they were recently exposed to the coronavirus or another serious or contagious illness; those who are confined to their home, a hospital, or a nursing facility; or those with serious underlying health conditions. One should consult the local pastor if questions arise about the obligation to attend Mass (canon 87).

Finally, safety protocols (such as wearing masks, social distancing, etc.) and liturgical directives (communion in the hand, communion under one species, etc.) in each New Jersey Diocese remains in place until modified or revoked by the respective Diocesan Bishop.

Given on May 20, 2021, the memorial of St. Bernardine of Siena.

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop, Archdiocese of Newark

Most Reverend James F. Checchio
Bishop, Diocese of Metuchen

Most Reverend David M. O'Connell, C.M.
Bishop, Diocese of Trenton

Most Reverend Kurt Burnette
Bishop, Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

Most Reverend Dennis J. Sullivan
Bishop, Diocese of Camden

Most Reverend Yousif B. Habash
*Bishop, Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac
Catholic Diocese*

Most Reverend Kevin J. Sweeney
Bishop, Diocese of Paterson

Representing the Archdiocese of Newark, Diocese of Camden, Diocese of Metuchen, Diocese of Paterson, Diocese of Trenton, Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic and Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Diocese



Marie Terese (Kerwin) Tobin, mother of Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R. and his 12 sisters and brothers, passed away peacefully surrounded by her loving family on May 23, the Solemnity of Pentecost. Cardinal Tobin expresses his “heartfelt thanks” for all the prayers and condolences he has received following the death of his mother.

Recognizing Jesus— and ourselves—in the Eucharist

Like true love, the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is a mystery we can never fully comprehend. It is grace itself, an unmerited gift from God that we are invited and challenged to accept with an open mind and a grateful heart. We are called to recognize Jesus as truly present in the consecrated bread and wine, His Body and Blood. We are also called to recognize ourselves as true members of the same Body and Blood of Christ who are intimately united with Him and with each other through the miracle that occurs each time we receive the Eucharist. For this reason, the priest or minister never says, “receive Jesus,” but rather, “The Body of Christ.”

The “Amen” that we respond can never be perfunctory. It should be a genuine, heartfelt expression of our faith in Christ who comes to us as Lord and brother, who becomes one with us in the most intimate communion that is possible for us and creates communion among all the members of His Body. Each time we receive the Holy Eucharist, we accept the Lord’s great commission to proclaim His Gospel and to minister to His people in every nation to the ends of the earth.

What can each of us do to help our brothers and sisters here in northern New Jersey return to the Grace and Beauty of the Eucharist? How will we encourage those who hesitate to join us in personally celebrating the Mass with our fellow parishioners each Sunday when it is safe to do so in greater numbers? Is it possible that the Great Eucharistic Fast of 2020 will prove to be a blessing in disguise—a great awakening—for those of us who have consciously or unconsciously “walked away” from Jesus and His Church?

With this pastoral letter, I want to invite all members of this local Church to follow the counsel of Pope Francis quoted above. We should listen to those who no longer see the beauty of Christ’s Eucharistic presence, pray that we can help our sisters and brothers Return to Grace with open minds and grateful hearts. We should discern what is truly good for ourselves, our families and our communities. We should stay close to one another—spiritually if not physically. And we should make prudent decisions about our participation in the life of the Church, especially her worship and her ministry, without anxiety or fear.

If we trust in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the continual reopening of our parishes, schools and archdiocesan ministries will truly be a Return to Grace for the Archdiocese of Newark. As Pope Francis reminds us, we are now in a crisis, and no one will emerge from this pandemic unchanged. Things will be different. The challenge is: will they be better or worse? We hope and pray that God’s people will emerge from this crisis renewed in the Spirit with an even greater love for Jesus’ astonishing gift of Himself to us in the Eucharist.

A selection from Returning to Grace: A Pastoral Letter on the Eucharist by Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Newark, published February 2021

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

The Eucharist communicates the Lord’s love for us: a love so great that it nourishes us with Himself; a freely given love, always available to every person who hungers and needs to regenerate his own strength. To live the experience of faith means to allow oneself to be nourished by the Lord and to build one’s own existence not with material goods but with the reality that does not perish: the gifts of God, his Word and his Body.



If we look around, we realize that there are so many offers of food which do not come from the Lord and which appear to be more satisfying. Some nourish themselves with money, others with success and vanity, others with power and pride. But the food that truly nourishes and satiates us is only that which the Lord gives us! The food the Lord offers us is different from other food, and perhaps it doesn't seem as flavourful to us as certain other dishes the world offers us. So we dream of other dishes, like the Hebrews in the desert, who longed for the meat and onions they ate in Egypt, but forgot that they had eaten those meals at the table of slavery. In those moments of temptation, they had a memory, but a sick memory, a selective memory. A slave memory, not a free one.

We, today, may ask ourselves: what about me? Where do I want to eat? At which table do I want to be nourished? At the Lord's table? Or do I dream about eating flavorful foods, but in slavery? Moreover, we may ask ourselves: what do I recall? The Lord who saves me, or the garlic and onions of slavery? Which recollection satiates my soul?

The Father tells us: "I fed you with manna, which you did not know." Let us recover this memory. This is the task, to recover that memory. And let us learn to recognize the false bread that deceives and corrupts, because it comes from selfishness, from self-reliance and from sin.

(Pope Francis, June 14, 2019, Solemnity of Corpus Christi)

My Prayer for You

Jesus, we thank you for the gift you give us every week in the Sunday Eucharist. Help us to be responsible stewards of this precious gift by our full, conscious and active participation in the Sunday liturgy. May we listen attentively to your Word. May we embrace your presence in the holy Eucharist. And may we commit ourselves to carry out the mission you entrust to our care at the conclusion of each Sunday Mass to transform the world by the witness of our lives. Amen.

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

