



BY FR. STEPHEN PULLIS

# Keeping Sunday holy in a time without Mass: Six tips for the faithful

Cande and Rosemary de Leon and their family pray the rosary together at home in this file photo. During a time of “social distancing” when Masses are suspended for the public good, the faithful can still keep Sundays holy by praying the rosary, watching Mass livestreams and checking in on friends and neighbors. (Archdiocese of Detroit photo)

This will be a Lent we all remember, I am sure. In the midst of the growing spread of COVID-19, which the World Health Organization has described as a global pandemic, [all Sunday and weekday Masses have been suspended](#) in Archdiocese of Detroit and in many other local churches, including the churches of our Chaldean brothers and sisters in Metro Detroit.

For many of us, Sunday Mass is a staple of our week and our spiritual life. We look forward to Sunday as a day of rest and a day to worship God in the way most pleasing to him, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Less than one year ago, our local shepherd released a pastoral note titled *The Day of the Lord*. This was an encouragement and a challenge to us to live Sunday as a something different, as something holy. When it is not possible for us to participate at Mass, how can we still keep holy the Lord’s Day?

## 1. Watch a livestream of the Mass

Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron will be livestreaming Mass without a congregation from the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament at 12 p.m. on Sunday. Gather as a family, with a small group of friends or neighbors or by yourself, and watch the Mass.

While digital participation can never replace actual presence at Mass, livestream Mass is a great way of keeping our connection with the Mass when it is not possible to be there in person. We can make an offering in our heart to be united spiritually to this offering, which is more spiritually efficacious than any other prayer. We should silence our phones, eliminate (as best we can!) distractions in our home, and try to give all of our attention to what is happening at the Mass so we can fully participate in this remote way.

[Here is our list of ways](#) to watch Mass on TV or through the internet. Numerous other places, such as Mary’s Shrine in Washington, D.C., are offering livestream Masses as well.

## 2. Make a spiritual communion

An ancient practice of the Church for those who cannot be present at Mass is to make a spiritual communion. We have a [simple prayer](#) you can pray with longing in your heart to be united to Jesus. I know many who are too ill to attend Mass regularly, imprisoned, or in places where they are prevented from participating at Mass because of persecution or a shortage of priests have the regular practice of making a weekly — or daily — spiritual communion.

## 3. Read the Sunday readings as a family

These can easily be found at [uscgb.org/bible](#) by clicking on “Today’s Readings.” *Magnificat* (a daily prayer book) is also offering free digital resources during this time, including the Sunday readings and a reflection.

Reading Scripture individually or together with others — especially in our families — is an excellent spiritual practice. In fact, Archbishop Vigneron’s pastoral letter, *Unleash the Gospel*, calls for Catholics to “commit to forming your family in the love and power of sacred Scripture by placing it at the center of your family life. Study and reflect on Scripture, especially on the Sunday readings.”

One easy way to do this is through a new resource called “[52 Sundays](#).” You can find discussion questions (and a whole lot more) to spark a conversation in your family or with others about the Gospel reading. By thinking about the readings, asking questions, and listening to how God might respond in your heart, the Sunday readings can provide spiritual nourishment to you and your loved ones. During this time of “social distancing,” you could also reach out to a friend from church to have this conversation together.

## 4. Check in on those around you

Because those who are older are most susceptible to complications from COVID-19, health officials are encouraging them to minimize their time away from home. It is a great act of charity to reach out to these brothers and sisters in our faith communities to check in on them. Do they need groceries or help with something in their homes? Caring for each other — especially those who are most vulnerable during this time — is a demand of the Gospel. It is the enactment of our life as joyful missionary disciples.

## 5. Pray a family Rosary

*Unleash the Gospel* also calls for families to reclaim the Rosary as a way to be united to Mary, the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of the Church. She is the perfect model of a disciple and our great intercessor. If you don’t know how to pray this prayer, [check out this video](#) from the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal and pray along with them.

## 6. Go to a church and pray

Many of our churches will be open so that the faithful can pray privately. Check with your parish to see when it will be open. If you are not sick, take some time on Sunday to “make a visit” to a parish and pray before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament for your family, your parish and your neighborhood.

As Archbishop Vigneron has reminded us, we should pray for our elected leaders, researchers and health care workers in this time for wisdom and prudence in their decisions and perseverance in their work. A growing list of prayer resources have been compiled [here](#). Also, pray for families during this time. Join the thousands of families who have signed up for the [Lenten Prayer Family Challenge](#).

While all of these practices can help us during this time, nothing can replace actual participation at Sunday Mass. While we hunger for the spiritual food of the Eucharist, we can be reminded of the plight of those who have gone months and years without this “Bread of Angels.” Many persecuted Catholics in the world today long to feast upon this Sacred Offering with the frequency and convenience we can so easily take for granted week by week, and day by day. As we fast from the Eucharist during this pandemic as an extraordinary measure to serve the common good, may God grant us a renewed realization of the awesomeness of the Eucharist and a renewed commitment to keep holy the Lord’s Day.

*Fr. Stephen Pullis is director of the Archdiocese of Detroit’s Department of Evangelization and Missionary Discipleship.*