

Dispensation from Easter Duties

In their letter of Dispensation 18th March 2020, the President and the Vice-President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales said "in these emergency circumstances, and for as long as they last, the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days is removed. This is, without doubt, the teaching of the Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2181). This pandemic is the 'serious reason' why this obligation does not apply at this time."

Many of the faithful will be aware of their Easter Duties; that is to receive Holy Communion during the Easter Season and by custom, to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation beforehand. The Code of Canon Law (CIC 920) says each of the faithful is obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year. This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter season unless it is fulfilled for a just cause at another time during the year. The requirement for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation comes from the need to be in a state of grace to receive Holy Communion (CIC 916).

Since it is not possible for the faithful to receive Holy Communion at this time, and into the future, the Bishops of England and Wales have dispensed the Easter Duties for the year 2020.

The Bishops have asked that all should make a Perfect Act of Contrition at this time. Perfect contrition (or a Contrition of Charity) is true and real sorrow for our sins which is created when we realise the immense love of God for each one of us. We express this contrition when we realise how we offend God by our sinful words, deeds and omissions in contrast to the immeasurable love and mercy that He continually shows us.

This requires us to be contrite of heart for what we have done, know and be overwhelmed by the love and mercy of God for His children, and to approach this grace with humility and resolution not to sin again.

An Act of Contrition

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Saviour Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.