News

A family kneels in a living room while watching Mass livestreamed on TV

Kevin and Tiffany Dickinson of Fayetteville, Arkansas, watch a livestream Mass with their children celebrated by Fr. John Connell from St. Raphael Church in nearby Springdale March 29, 2020. (CNS/ Arkansas Catholic/Travis McAfee)



by Brittany Wilmes

Engagement Editor

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(NCR, GSR logo/Toni-Ann Ortiz)

We recently asked readers in a call-out form to share with us whether you're returning to Mass a year into the coronavirus pandemic.

You told us about your experiences, which range widely from "visiting" new churches and parishes via virtual services, to attending Mass in a park, to returning to your home parish, masked and distanced, to receive Eucharist.

Answers below are edited for length and clarity.

Video conferencing has enabled me to participate in liturgies at churches I would normally not be able to visit because they are too far away. I have heard smart, engaging homilies from priests I will follow always.

W.B. SMITH

Greater Philadelphia area

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My wife and I attend a virtual United Church liturgy each Sunday since the lockdown. They have done very well with their virtual liturgy, using many different church members, focusing on social justice issues and contemplation, unlike the Catholic virtual Mass with only one camera focused on the priest.

JIM RYAN

Georgetown, Ontario, Canada

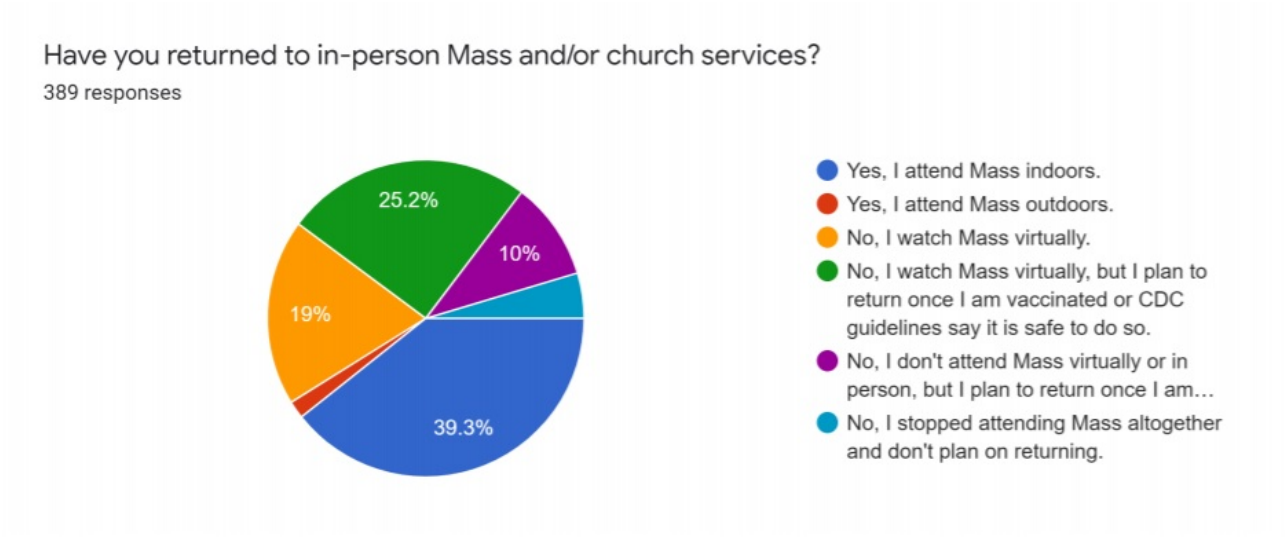
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I did return to Mass for a short time, but when the cases surged again here in Arizona I stopped since I am in a vulnerable category. But the main reason I stopped is that the hospitality ministers did not take the social distancing seriously enough and often tried to put extra people in the pews so the distance was not maintained. I do plan to return to Mass eventually, but I think the mandatory Mass requirement under pain of sin should not be reestablished.

NANCY F. HANSHAW

Phoenix, Arizona

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We received 389 responses to the poll question in our reader survey. Here's what readers said about returning to in-person Mass.

I love Mass, and yet attending online has been a cold experience, and the few times I attended in person were strange and disappointing. It didn't help that our pastor was reassigned during the pandemic. Our new pastor is quite "clerical" and not as approachable. So I'm now looking for a new parish or church. In the meantime, I gather online every Sunday with a group of holy Catholic and Christian women to reflect on the Gospel reading and pray together.

LISA STEINER

Louisville, Kentucky

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The church I attend practices social distancing, mask wearing and keeps track of Mass attendees in case there is a need for contact tracing. There is a feeling of safety when we are together. But being in the presence of the Real Presence is what draws me there.

MARY L. HICKIN

Erie, Pennsylvania

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I only started [attending] three weeks ago after I got my second vaccination. I really missed the Eucharist. Masks and social distancing are practiced at my parish.

MARY JOAN JENNINGS

Baltimore, Maryland

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I'm a relatively healthy and somewhat young (30s) adult with no underlying conditions. I believe that receiving the Eucharist saved me from a crippling mental illness that was threatening to take my life due to the isolation of the initial lockdown. I don't judge those who have a healthy home life who choose to stay home and worship; however, I believe it is vital for those who feel most alone at this time to be able to safely get back to Mass. That being said, there are people who are flagrantly disregarding safety precautions at some nearby parishes. I choose to worship at parishes that are taking the situation more seriously.

ERIKA REINDERS

Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

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Our outdoor Mass feels very Franciscan. We are in a courtyard with statues of St. Francis and St. Clare, trees and flowers. It is simple and sacred. I like to think that Francis is smiling.

SUSAN KENNEY

Carmichael, California

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I have missed Mass terribly in these 12 months, but the rhythms and routines of my daily life and schedule have also adapted. As the positivity rate drops in Chicago I wonder if I should be going back, but I am in a high risk group and still feel I need to be cautious around other people, especially those I don't know well. I am considering going back monthly on my own for now, without my family, to minimize the risk. I hope that our family will someday return as regular Sunday Mass goers, but I also see how easy it is to let that fall out of your family routine. I think it may take time for us to fully return, and make the habit stick again.

RACHEL MCDONNELL

Chicago, Illinois

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I'm going back this week because I've been fully vaccinated. The biggest loss has been not receiving the Eucharist. I'm actually surprised otherwise how connected I feel to my parish.

I hope they never stop streaming though. I think it's a hugely useful practice that would help the homebound and even be a service during weather disasters. It could also be a huge evangelization tool for the curious, lapsed and occasional attendees.

KEVIN ROONEY

Cinnaminson, New Jersey

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This story appears in the **Coronavirus: One year later** feature series. View the full series.