

## Restoring the Church after the COVID-19 epidemic



Will the Church become yet one more victim of the coronavirus? In many places in France there seems to have been a massive decline in Sunday worship. The lifting of the 30-person limit does not appear to have provoked a massive return of believers. Some elderly people have perhaps considered that it is not prudent to expose themselves to the disease by returning to Mass in their parishes. Perhaps, with the help of the winter season, they discovered

that the televised Mass was sufficient to nourish their faith. It seems that in many parishes, they are the ones who are now absent from Sunday Mass. While it allows for a real quality of prayer, the televised Mass does not, however, offer certain dimensions of the Eucharist that are -- or should be -- important: a true participation through responses or singing, the possibility of communion, and -- finally -- the community dimension. This last point deserves more reflection. If some of the faithful are not in a hurry to return to the bosom of their parish church, perhaps it is because the community dimension was hardly perceptible to them.

### A challenge to pastoral workers

Perhaps, some will say they had only a very reductive view of the Eucharist if they no longer have an appetite for communion today. But simply reproaching them without questioning ourselves in turn would be insufficient. If these fellow Catholics do not return once the pandemic is over, the Sunday gathering will be greatly reduced. In some places, especially in rural areas, the elderly make up a large proportion of the assembly, sometimes 70 to 80%. COVID-19 has accelerated a phenomenon of the steady decline of the weekly Mass attendance. The fall now appears brutal. Shouldn't this challenge pastoral workers to put the love of God and neighbor, translated into a true fraternity within the heart of the Christian community, back into the foreground of what is essential? To this end, perhaps we could give decisive encouragement to the creation of small, "basic communities" whose members would all know each other, care for each other and meet regularly for common prayer. Most often, these communities could have a geographical base, a village, a neighborhood. But they could also have other faces, for example, a professional community. Aren't the Catholic Action and spirituality movements already figures in such communities? The pastoral work promoted by the "Church for the World" movement is also moving in this direction.

*Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/restoring-the-church-after-the-covid-19-epidemic/13607>*