

Letter from the Vatican to Bishop Thomas Paprocki, Chairman of the Committee on Canonical Affairs :



DICASTERIUM
DE LEGUM TEXTIBUS

Vatican City, 04 September 2024

Prot. N. 18329/2024

Your Excellency,


In a letter dated July 5, in your capacity as the President of the Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, you asked this Dicastery the following question: «If a Holy Day of Obligation in the Advent, Lent or Easter season falls on a Sunday and the Solemnity is transferred to Monday, does the obligation to attend Mass still apply?».

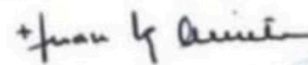
We will only give a few clarifications below since the canonical norms relating to the subject are clear. As a matter of fact, can. 1246, § 1, establishes the feasts that must be observed as days of obligation. The canon does not provide for exceptions. For those reasons, those feasts are always days of obligation, and so, even when the aforementioned transfer of the feast occurs. Therefore, in that year, the feast must be observed as a day of obligation on the day to which it is transferred. Additionally, the purpose of the § 1 of the above-mentioned canon is to indicate that Sunday and the other feasts listed are days of obligation (cf. «*servanda est*» and «*servari debent*»).

It is, however, important to keep in mind that canon law explicitly addresses the situation in which a grave cause renders it impossible to attend Holy Mass (cf. can. 1248, § 2), and, since no one is bound to the impossible, a dispensation is not even needed in those situations. It is in this sense that n. 2181 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* states that «the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor» (for a just cause). In n. 2185 of the *CCC* it is specified that “Family needs or important social service can legitimately excuse from the obligation of Sunday rest” (or other holidays); in other cases, however, for a just cause, one could obtain a dispensation. (Cf. cann. 1247, 1245, 87 and 90).

With the hope that this response may be useful, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ 
* Filippo Iannone
Prefect

+ 
* Juan Ignacio Arrieta
Secretary



(Copy for the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments)

H.E. The Most Rev. THOMAS JOHN PAPROCKI
Bishop of Springfield, Illinois
Chairman, Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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