



Why Must I Attend Sunday Mass?

Fr. Thomas G. Morrow



- Jesus said, "Do this in memory of me" (Lk. 22:19) at the Last Supper. The only way I can fulfill this command is by attending Mass.
- Jesus said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you" (Jn. 6:53). To have no "life within you" is to be without sanctifying grace, which is necessary for friendship with God, and ultimately, for salvation. May you receive the Eucharist (the flesh of Jesus) if you don't attend Sunday Mass regularly? No, because:
- It is a serious sin to miss Mass on Sundays or holy days. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches:

On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass (can. 1247).... The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason 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 (can. 1245). Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin (par. 2181).



- Thus, you cannot receive the Eucharist worthily if you don't attend Sunday Mass weekly, since being in grave sin means that you may not receive the sacraments. If you are in grave sin, you must go to confession before receiving the Eucharist again.
- The third commandment is still in effect: "Keep holy the Lord's day." What could be holier than the Mass? The Mass sanctifies our Sundays and holy days.
 - "From the liturgy... especially from the Eucharist, grace is poured

- forth upon us as from a fountain, and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God to which all other activities of the Church are directed, as toward their end, are achieved with maximum effectiveness." (Vatican II, Decree on Sacred Liturgy, par. 10)
- "But I work on Sunday!" some say. For an occasional crisis, you can be excused from Sunday Mass, if you work from early morning until late at night Saturday and Sunday. But, in many places, early morning or evening Masses are available at nearby churches. Anyone who works every Sunday and does not need to do so in order to provide basic necessities such as food and clothing should find a way to avoid Sunday work. Those who give themselves and their time to God first find that they are blessed and need not work so hard. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things [food, drink, clothing] will be given you besides" (Mt 6:33).
 - "But I don't get anything out of it!" When a husband does what his wife wants rather than what he wants, does he get anything out of it? When we go to Mass we're not trying to get something, but to give back, because of all

that Jesus did for us. Is one hour on Sunday too much to ask?

- "But I'm a good person. I do many good works for my neighbor," you say? First, loving your neighbor is the *second* great commandment, not the first. The first is to love God with all your heart, soul and mind (Mt. 22:37). Also, as St. John Vianney said, "All good works put together are not equivalent to the sacrifice of the Mass, because they are the works of men and the Holy Mass is the work of God."

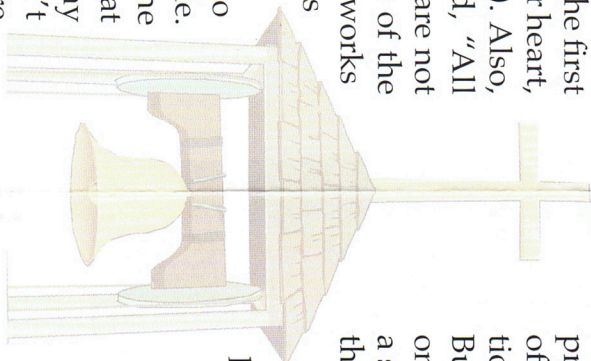
- Jesus died on the cross to make our salvation possible. The Mass is primarily the re-offering of this one great sacrifice of love. Can we say we love God if we won't even come to simply share in offering this holy sacrifice at least once a week?

- If only we knew how many graces we receive from the Mass, how powerful an offering it is for our departed relatives in Purgatory, how pleasing it is to God, we would consider going to Mass every day! On the other hand, if only we knew how displeasing it is to God for us to miss Sunday Mass, we would move mountains in order to be there *every* Sunday, and never, *never* miss, except when

sick, caring for the sick, or prevented by lack of transportation.

- Finally, don't think that going to Mass every Sunday and holy day will guarantee your salvation. It won't. God expects much more: prayer, receiving the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, good works for others, etc. But intentionally missing Mass on Sunday or a holy day without a serious reason is to fall short of the *minimum* obligations of love.

The eternal consequences of this are frightening, to say the least!

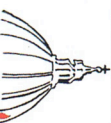


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