

SERIES ON THE MASS

PART 1: Is Skipping Mass a Grave [Mortal] Sin? Confession?

Catholics need to be continually reminded of the importance and seriousness of our obligation in love to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass every Lord's Day and Holy Day of Obligation.

NOTE: **the phrase "skip" Sunday Mass, rather than "miss"**- thereby indicates the difference between **missing Mass for a grave reason** (e.g. being in the hospital, serious illnesses) and **skipping Mass for no good reason** (e.g. simply sleeping in, some sports activity).

It is God's third commandment and one which is emphasized by the Precepts of the Church which oblige Catholics to:

- attend Mass on Sundays and holy days,
- confess sins at least once a year,
- receive Holy Communion during the Easter season,
- observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence,
- obey the laws of the Church in regard to marriage,
- to support the Church conscientiously according to their means.

The third commandment—"Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day"—not as an obligation in a negative way but as an obligation in love. Our motive for worshiping God and giving Him thanks, which we do in a perfect way through Holy Mass, is one of love and not just obligation.

Unfortunately, some Catholics today regard the "Sunday Obligation" very lightly and skip Mass when they are out of their normal circumstances as when on vacation. What is worse is that they continue to receive Holy Communion even without repenting and having gone to Confession first. This simply compounds their

guilt and sinfulness, for to receive Holy Communion unworthily, that is, in the state of Mortal sin, is what is called a sacrilege and a further serious sin. It is of course more challenging to attend Sunday Mass when we are traveling or otherwise out of our normal circumstances, but there is the old adage—"Where there is a will, there is a way." It is even easier today than in the past to make plans and arrangements ahead of time since through the internet we can easily find Catholic churches and Mass times, and GPS gives us directions to them. We plan ahead for lodging and meals and entertainment. Why should we not do the same for our obligation to God?

Now, what about Confession?: If the Holy Father goes to Confession, shouldn't you? It is such a serious obligation that the Church has always taught that to neglect it through our own fault constitutes a grave (Mortal) sin, which must be confessed as soon as possible in order to be restored to God's grace and be able to receive Holy Communion worthily again.

PART 2: Skipping Sunday Mass?

"But Father, I only Skip a Sunday Mass occasionally."

NOTE: **the phrase "skip" Sunday Mass, rather than "miss"**- thereby indicates the difference between **missing Mass for a grave reason** (e.g. being in the hospital, serious illnesses) and **skipping Mass for no good reason** (e.g. simply sleeping in, some sports activity).

Thus, it is the teaching of the Catholic Church, that it is always a mortal sin intentionally to skip Mass on Sunday or on a Holy Day without a serious reason. Catholics are obligated to attend Mass either on Sunday itself, or on the Saturday evening before. A sin is mortal if it is grave

matter and committed freely and knowingly skipping Sunday Mass is grave matter. It is good here to recall that the Catechism teaches that "anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to Communion." (CCC 1385) The doctor of moral theology and patron of confessors, St. Alphonsus Liguori, states simply that the precept of attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days (as well as abstaining from unnecessary servile work) binds under pain of mortal sin. According to the current law of the Church, this obligation is fulfilled by attending Mass any time from the preceding evening until midnight of the day - thus, a Saturday evening Mass (whether for the Sunday or for the Saturday, or a wedding Mass, etc.) will fulfill the Sunday obligation. There are certainly circumstances which would excuse a man from attending Sunday Mass - as the obligation is grave, only a grave cause could excuse and certain grave circumstances do exist.

Why is it a Mortal Sin to Skip Mass on Sunday? The great St John Paul II states, "**The Code of Canon Law** of 1917 for the first time gathered this tradition into a universal law. The present Code reiterates this, saying that 'on Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to attend Mass'. This legislation has normally been understood as entailing a grave obligation: this is the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and it is easy to understand why if we keep in mind how vital Sunday is for the Christian life." (Dies Domini, 47)

Here, the Holy Pontiff indicates why it is that the Church obliges the faithful to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days under pain of mortal sin: Mass attendance is truly necessary for the Christian life. Participating in Sunday worship is of such great value and necessity to the soul,

that the Church holds the faithful bound to this participation by a grave obligation. We must admit that the following of this precept is of the greatest advantage to the Christian soul, which will quickly perish without the help of common worship, orthodox preaching, and the grace derived from the Sacrament of the Altar.

Furthermore, we must stress that it is the primary duty of the creature to honor his Creator. If God had commanded that every day should be given wholly to him, he would have been within his rights - for the whole man, together with all his time and energies, belongs entirely to God. However, God is most generous in demanding (through his Church) only Sundays and a very few other days which must be given to divine worship. It is such a small demand in his part, and those who fail to do even this little amount are guilty of an extreme boldness.

Missing Sunday Mass is a gross injustice against our very generous and loving God. He gives us 168 hours a week and He just asks for an hour to spend with Him in the Mass. If you are a grateful soul who acknowledges God's abundant blessings and if you believe in the True Presence in the Holy Eucharist you will NOT miss Sunday Mass.

For the love of God, please don't skip Sunday Mass.

Part 3: When You Miss 1 Holy Communion

It is well for you to consider what you lose every time that you pass up Holy Communion.

1. You miss a personal visit with Jesus, Author of all spiritual energy and of all holiness;
2. You lose a special increase of sanctifying grace, which makes your soul more pleasing to God;

3. You lose a quota of sacramental grace which entitles you to special help in times of temptation and in the discharge of your daily duties;
4. You lose a precious opportunity of having all of your venial sins wiped away;
5. You miss the special preserving influence which each Holy Communion confers against the fires of passion;
6. You miss the opportunity of having remitted a part, or all, of the temporal punishments due to your sins;
7. You lose the spiritual joy, the sweetness and particular comfort that come from a fervent Holy Communion;
8. You lose a part of the glory that your body might enjoy at its resurrection on the Last Day;
9. You lose the greater degree of glory you would possess in Heaven for all eternity;
10. You may lose: a) complete victory over some fault or passion; b) some particular grace long prayed for; c) the conversion or salvation of some soul; d) deliverance of a relative or friend from Purgatory; e) many graces for others, both the living and the dead.

Will a few extra minutes of sleep repay you for all these losses? What riches hundreds of thousands of Catholics deprive themselves daily by neglecting Mass. It in itself is the best preparation for Holy Communion. **At the hour of death our greatest consolation will be the Masses we have heard and the worthy Holy Communion received.**

What do we place on the Paten and in the Chalice at Mass?

We offer our day and our lives: All-loving Father, I place myself on the paten with all that I am: my soul, my body, my intelligence, my will. I offer myself totally to You. On the paten, I lay my joys, my sorrows, my work with its fatigue, my successes and my failures. I also place on the paten all those I love, those who help me and those who have done so, those who cause me sorrow, wilfully or not, those who suffer in body or in soul, all those who have asked me for prayers. May this offering, united to that of Jesus, be agreeable to you, Lord, and obtain for me and for all souls graces of sanctification and salvation.

United in Christ the drop of water mixed with the wine in the chalice represents my share of the offering. May my life, Lord, be thus sanctified and deified by the Blood of your Son, to become praise to the adorable Trinity. In the chalice, I also place the life and sufferings of all those who do not think of offering them, to unite them to the offering of Christ who has lived and suffered like them and who died for them.

May my life, united to that of Jesus, become a thanksgiving to you, all-loving Father, and obtain the salvation of my brothers and sisters who, like me, place their hope in your infinite mercy.

I unite myself fervently to all the masses celebrated throughout the world. Thus I wish to remain, always in a state of offering before you, Lord, who has given me all that I have and pardoned me.