



From the Pastor  
28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in  
Ordinary Time - A  
October 15, 2023

**EXCUSES FOR NOT GOING TO MASS.**

This is #4 of our 5-part miniseries on the excuses used by some people for not fulfilling their obligation to attend weekly **Mass**. We gleaned these from the [www.catholiclink.org](http://www.catholiclink.org)

website, which offers

timely insight into the challenges faced by the **Catholic Church** these days.

**Reason #10: Handshakes. I just can't handle physical contact with all those people.** This concern certainly abated as **COVID** constraints were commuted or cancelled. Not to cause alarm among any germophobes, but we're exposed to all sorts of potentially harmful things at **Mass** - and every other public event: doorknobs; pews; seats; kid-gnawed hymnals; etc. We cannot live in a bubble - which might be somewhat necessary for those dealing with major health concerns or other similar issues. As a community, we are called to gather as one, to sing together, to join hands and to openly express our unity and solidarity as the **One Body of Christ**.

This being said, there is no prescribed rubric for offering the **Sign of Peace** - which is **NOT OPTIONAL!** Any locally acceptable expression: a handshake; a nod with one's hands folded in prayer; a smile or friendly hand gesture - fulfills **Jesus'** mandate: **"Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift."** [Matthew 5:23-24] And another timely reminder: while receiving **BOTH** the **Body** and **Blood** of **Christ** is sometimes offered, only one or the other is necessary.

**Reason #11: I will go when I feel I need it. Forced, never.** Forgive me, but sometimes I just want to say to some people, **"Oh, just grow up!"** Once again, another analogy. Our **physical bodies** need many things in order to survive: food and water, rest and hygienic care, sunlight and many other things. Who waits until they are famished or dehydrated, exhausted or filthy, unable to function **BEFORE** eating or drinking,

sleeping or washing, getting fresh air, etc.? And who waits to be **ORDERED** or **COMPELLED** to do these things? No one! The same is true of the needs of our **spiritual soul's** need to be fed by **God's Word**, quenched with **Divine Mercy**, comforted and consoled, cleansed of sin, prepared for our heavenly homeland. Have we forgotten what **Jesus** solemnly stated: **"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. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day."** [John 6:53-54] Obviously, **GOD** strongly 'feels' that we should be at **Mass!**

**Reason #12: I always go to Mass, but I don't see any change in me.** We mere mortals do not see many things that actively occur around us. In a mysterious way, **Earth** 'dies' each **Autumn** yet comes 'alive' each **Spring**. We do not 'see' how drugs 'change' us - for better or for worse - at least not at first - but we take medicines that cure us and are warned not to 'do drugs' that can 'possess' and kill us - even though they seem like 'fun' and relaxation. We wisely choose to do the things that keep us healthy and avoid those things which are detrimental to our physical health - even though we see little, if any, change.

Similarly, we usually do not see 'alterations' in ourselves as we take part in spiritual practices like weekly **Mass**. Nor do our woes and worries, problems and peculiarities, suddenly vanish as we pray or receive **Holy Communion** - although miracles can occur! What can change is our attitude, our outlook, our sense that we are not facing anything alone, for **God** is at our side. For as **Jesus** told the man who pleaded with **Jesus** to cure his possessed son: **"Everything is possible to one who has faith."** [Mark 9:23] and as He said to those unable to cure the poor boy, **"This kind can only come out through prayer."** [9:29] Next week: the last 3 'excuses' for missing **Mass**.

In Christ,

*Father Mark*

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