

# **10 Reasons to Attend Mass**

*Every Week*

*Church is not the roof and  
walls and steeple;  
It is you, the good and  
faithful people.*

by Amy Devaney

The Catholic Church mandates that we attend Mass every weekend in addition to other holy days of obligation, but we all make our own decisions about doing so. Maybe we decide not to go because we don't have time, we're too tired, the kids have sports, we disagree with Church doctrine, we find Mass to be boring, or any other myriad reasons. It is counterproductive to direct, guilt, shame, or bribe anyone into going to Mass. But there are substantive reasons to attend Mass every week that should be expounded and promoted.

None of the reasons presented here involve "should" or "must" or a scolding tone reminiscent of parents waking us up on Sunday mornings. Instead, attending Mass can be something you want to do because doing so fulfills needs you have and enriches your life. Whether you currently attend Mass regularly or not at all, this guide hopes to inspire in you an appreciation for how attending Mass every week can positively affect your life and bring benefits to your family and the wider faith community. A thoughtful and intentional approach to attending Mass can help make it a rewarding and uplifting experience. Always know that there is a place for you at every Mass. You are welcome!

## **1. There's No Better Place**

Prayer, like other forms of meditation, reduces stress, promotes brain function, and improves mental health; indeed, it is one of the secrets of highly successful, productive, and healthy people. Most importantly, prayer is your direct connection to God. Daily prayer is a wonderful practice that can enrich your life and help keep you focused on the things that truly matter. Knowing you can always turn to God through prayer can be a source of immense comfort and strength in your life.

Maybe you already have a designated time and place for daily prayer or maybe you just pray whenever and wherever you can. And maybe it just doesn't happen very often or even at all. Attending Mass every week provides a dedicated time and place for prayer, both personal and communal. Being in the sacred space devoted to God allows us to reengage and deepen our relationship with Him without the distractions of everyday life. By receiving the Eucharist, we take Christ into ourselves, renewing our connection with Him in a literal, powerful way. Going to church to attend Mass or taking time to attend prayer services or even just sitting in a pew when no one else is around provides a time and place of complete immersion in contemplation of our lives and our relationship with God.

## 2. We Need You

Many studies have shown that people with ties to family, friends, and their wider community are happier, healthier, and live longer.

Interpersonal interactions and connections provide a support system, a sense of belonging, and a heart-warming feeling of kinship. By attending Mass every week, you can develop acquaintanceships that further evolve into friendships. Seeing familiar faces, exchanging smiles and greetings, offering each other the Sign of Peace, and praying together are all ways we connect with each other at Mass.

Although everyone attending Mass is unique and holds their own convictions about why they are there, the fact is that everyone is there *together*, thereby forming a community—indeed, a family of God’s children. You, too, are a member of this family and by attending Mass with your brothers and sisters in Christ, you build and strengthen the bonds of kinship and join your light, your energy, your personality, and your love and support with the wider community. It’s okay to merely attend Mass and not engage with others or you can be an active participant in ministry activities. In whatever way chosen, each individual contributes to the collective, making attendance at Mass a richer experience for everyone. There is no other opportunity quite like being part of a church community and attending Mass—in what other activities or events in life can you gather at least once a

week, every single week of your life, in the same space with hundreds of other people for the purpose of making your life better through devotion to God? Take advantage of this marvelous opportunity for your sake and ours!

## 3. Rekindle the Wonder

Many of you probably were taken (dragged?) to Mass by your parents when you were children. Maybe you didn’t like it then and therefore don’t like it now. But take a moment to awaken your senses to the nostalgia of being a child attending Mass with your family. Remember feeling wonder and curiosity about the mysterious rituals occurring in the beautiful sacred space of your childhood church. Take a breath and smell the fragrances of candle wax, furniture polish, incense, and chrism (holy oil). Catch a whiff of your mother’s perfume, burned matches, the ink and paper of church bulletins, and a hint of chlorine in the baptismal font. Taste the lightness of the consecrated Host. See the flicker of candlelight, the shine of the chalice, the sun streaming through the stained glass, and the solemn face of Jesus on the cross. Feel the tickle of incense in your nose, the droplets of holy water on your face, the whisper of ashes on your forehead, the callused hand sharing Peace with you, and the pinch of your Sunday shoes. Hear again the rich tones of the organ, the clunk of the kneelers, the clang of the censer, the chime of the bells, and the swish of the priest’s

garments. Let the gentle melody of old hymns flow into your heart. The sensory experience of attending Mass is wondrous, connecting you to your childhood and the long history of Catholics who have celebrated Mass before you. Every time you attend Mass you can rekindle that wonder and experience new levels of awareness and connection to the traditions we share. Allow yourself to be filled with the memories, the nostalgia, and the joy of attending Mass.

#### **4. It's Family Time**

With jam-packed schedules of extracurricular activities, sports, lessons, and homework and needing to meet endless work, home, and family obligations, many of us struggle to find time for quiet, quality enjoyment of our families. Opportunities for strengthening bonds with our extended family are even more rare. How about making attending Mass together every week a priority? Commit yourself and your family to a weekly routine that provides time to connect with each other, with the church community, and with God. Maybe you attend Mass on Saturday evenings and then have a family dinner and game night. Or maybe Sunday Mass goes well with pancakes and comics at your house. Or maybe all you can manage this week is just the time to attend Mass—that's fine, too. Find whatever day and time will work for your family each week (and there are so many options available, it can be

done!). Revive the traditions you experienced with your family as a child or make new traditions with your children. Not only will you be demonstrating to them how you personally embrace your faith and make God the center of your life but attending Mass together can offer a foundation for building loving bonds, stimulate conversation about important life issues, help ease intrafamily conflict, and provide an opportunity to simply share the same space and time in a unified purpose. Attending Mass can also be a way to reconnect with extended family members and invite reconciliation with estranged relatives. Go visit your elderly aunt in the nursing home and attend Mass with her there. There's no greater gift that you can give your loved ones than being together with them in the presence of God.

#### **5. There are Lessons to Learn**

The celebration of Mass is much more than just a series of rituals done by rote. The Liturgy of the Word offers a fresh look at Biblical teachings that can guide us in our lives. You may think you've heard all these readings before and, sure enough, you probably have. But have you really? How well have you listened in the past? How well did you understand what you heard? Did you even really try? Did you apply the lessons to your life? Priests and deacons work very hard each week preparing their homilies to present to us.

They provide the context we need to understand the readings and guide us in how to apply the message to our lives. No matter what our situation in life is, we always need to continue learning, growing, and being reminded of the path God calls us to follow. It's okay if you attend Mass and just zone out sometimes, carried off by the peaceful cadences of the liturgy. But do try to attend to the message being presented, appreciate the thought and the effort to inspire and touch your heart that were put into the homily, and leave the Mass with a mission to pay special attention to something or someone in your life or an idea to explore further. Try to keep that mission in mind for the rest of the week. Then attend Mass again next week and take in another thought-provoking message.

Some of you may be resistant to the guidance and messages offered by the Church because of your personal feelings about the human aspect of the Church. Look beyond the inherently flawed earthly framework of the Church to the opportunities it provides to explore your faith, nurture your relationship with God, and be a part of a community that shares your beliefs and values. Bring your doubts, your questions, your concerns, your ideas, and your hopes and wishes to this community—together we can commiserate, enlighten, and comfort each other and assist each other in finding God and orienting our lives to follow the path of love He has laid out for us.

## **6. Comfort in Ritual**

Probably the most common complaint from children (and adults, too) about going to Mass is that it's boring. How about reframing the Mass experience as being *familiar* and *comfortable*? The truth is that we just need to slow down, break away from the hecticness of everyday life, and attune ourselves to the calming rhythms of the Mass. There is tremendous comfort in the sameness of each Mass—we know what to expect and feel secure in the routine. Attending Mass provides a safe, sacred space to be our true selves and openly turn our faces to the Lord.

That's not to say there aren't many ways to add some variety to your experience of attending Mass every week. Change it up at your church by sitting in different parts of the church, attending Mass at a different time, or checking the schedule to attend a Mass at which a different priest is presiding. Occasionally attend Mass at other local churches, perhaps coordinating with another destination like your child's sports tournament or a family hiking outing. And always find a way to attend Mass if you're traveling away from home—you will have the opportunity to see beautiful churches, get a glimpse into the lives of other communities and cultures, and have your life enriched by a new experience. Yet, you will always feel welcome and the rituals of Catholic Mass will always be familiar to you—a source of comfort and a beacon of light for you wherever you are.

## **7. Lift Your Voice**

Have you played an instrument in a band or orchestra? Or sung in a choir or acted in a play? Or any other activity where your efforts were coordinated with others in a common endeavor? We have all seen, heard, and felt amazing performances by groups of people acting in unison, creating a whole far greater than the mere sum of its parts. Even though we may enjoy solitude and accomplishing things on our own, the experience of uniting with others in a common pursuit, particularly a musical or artistic pursuit, is incomparable. The sense of camaraderie is heart-warming and the feeling of creating something larger than ourselves is profoundly rewarding. When we attend Mass and join together to intone the ritual responses and, especially, to lift our voices in song, we can achieve this kind of unity. We are all at Mass to reach out to God, to give Him thanks and praise, to share our love for Him with each other. Feel that exuberance and let it out in hearty responses and joy-filled song. Let the music overflow from your heart, let your eyes shine, and share this wonderful experience with everyone around you at Mass. And then carry this feeling, this energy, this joy, this *love* for God and His children with you when you leave the church.

## **8. Refresh and Renew**

Many of us are just plain doing the best we can—raising our kids, doing our jobs, keeping up with housework, and making ends meet. Attending Mass regularly can be a touchpoint for us, providing a time and space for us to be relieved and grateful that we made it through another week and are ready to be spiritually renewed for the week ahead. Come to the haven offered by the sacred space of the church. Turn off the devices and devote your attention to God. Be still. Quiet your mind. Let the Holy Spirit wash over you. Reflect on the previous week: repent of your wrongdoings, forgive those who wronged you, rejoice in your successes, and celebrate the achievements of others. Thank God for His love and forgiveness and for all the good in your life. Stand strong and tall and look forward with hope and optimism to the week ahead. Always know that you are never alone: draw strength from His presence always, lean on Him when you stumble, and let Him carry you when you fall. Receive the blessings of the Eucharist into yourself, renew your spirit, and move boldly forward. You got this!

## **9. Keep the Passion Alive**

What is the purpose of your life? Do you have a personal mission statement? Do you have a vision of what you want your life to be? What are you passionate about? Are you just complacently letting the current of life carry you along? In thinking about the answers to these questions for your own life, how many times do the words “God” and “love” and “compassion” and “giving” and “others” come up? Could it be that you’re not on the best path for your life, not following the plan God wants for you? All of us can use a course correction from time to time and a reminder of what truly matters and what will bring us real joy. If you’re struggling to find something that instills passion in you, try looking to God and your church community. It is in sharing with others, helping others, giving to others, being a friend, and *loving* others that we serve the Lord and find true happiness and joy. By attending Mass each week, you can be reminded of these truths and have your passion for life revitalized. There are many ministries and opportunities provided by the Church to act on your passions and pursue the life you are meant to lead.

## **10. Because He Said So**

Yes, “because I said so” is the last-resort reason of parents everywhere, but our Heavenly Father did indeed say so in the fourth of the commandments given to Moses: keep holy the Sabbath day. This commandment doesn’t explicitly say we have to attend Mass on Sunday, but that is the intention and if we truly slow down, set aside our labors, take a break from the endless lineup of activities, and devote time to restful contemplation and prayer, then attending Mass will fit naturally into that time. Taking a day off isn’t just a divine mandate, it’s just plain a good idea: you need a break for your body and mind to rest and recuperate, to bond with family and friends, to appreciate nature, and to lift your heart and spirit to God.

See you at Mass!



St. Mary Catholic Faith Community  
Hales Corners, WI