

## TAKING CHILDREN TO MASS

According to Canon Law, by age seven, children should be attending Mass every Sunday. Here are some simple strategies for making Mass more pleasant with children:

- Decide ahead of time what Mass to attend.
- Set out everyone's clothes so getting ready is not a hassle.
- Bring along a picture book about the Mass.
- Make sure everyone has something to put into the collection basket.
- Sit in front so children can see.
- Bring children into the communion line, even if they are too young to receive.
- Praise children for good behavior.
- Celebrate good behavior by doing something special after Mass.

## GETTING INVOLVED

One of the best ways to get more out of the Mass is to volunteer for one of the liturgical, music, or hospitality ministries. Even if just one family member

is involved, that person represents the whole family in the celebration.

If you haven't introduced yourself to your pastor yet, make it a point to say hello

after Mass. He will appreciate meeting you and the members of your family, and you will feel a closer connection to the parish.



PHOTOS BY DESIGN PICS

## TIPS FOR PARENTS OF TEENS

Talk to your teens about Mass. If your teen loves to go to Mass, use this opportunity for faith sharing that strengthens your teen's relationship with you and with God.

If your teen is indifferent or doesn't like going to Mass, explain that there are some things in life that we do because they are good for us — whether we feel like doing those things or not. Mass is not about feelings. It is about giving ourselves to God. It is about discovering what purpose God has for our lives.

The best way to help your teen is by the witness of your own faith. If they see that the Mass gives meaning to your life, they will begin to search for that meaning in their own lives.



CROSSERS

## MORE THAN ENTERTAINMENT

When entertainment is the model for church worship services, the leaders try to induce particular feelings in the audience. The Mass, however, is just the opposite. It is a ritual in which people bring their own feelings and incorporate them into the liturgy. That's why it is possible for two people to attend Mass, one grieving a death and the other celebrating a birth, yet both feel connected. The whole point is to go beyond feelings into authentic prayer, which is the offering of oneself to God in Jesus Christ.

## For More Information:

### Books:

Dubruiel, Michael. *A Pocket Guide to the Mass*, Our Sunday Visitor, 2007.

———. *How to Get the Most Out of the Eucharist*, Our Sunday Visitor, 2005.

———. *The How to Book of the Mass*, Our Sunday Visitor, 2002, 2007.

Gortler, Rosemarie, and Donna Piscitelli. *The Mass Book for Children*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2004.

McBride, Alfred, O. Praem. *Celebrating the Mass: A Guide for Understanding and Loving the Mass More Deeply*. Our Sunday Visitor, 1999.

———. *The Holy Eucharist Prayer Book*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2005.

### Video:

*A Walk Through the Mass with Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl*. Our Sunday Visitor, 1999.

Also see [www.osv.com](http://www.osv.com) for additional Catholic resources.

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# Why do we “have to” go to MASS?

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“Blessed is he who shall eat bread  
in the Kingdom of God!”

Luke 14:15

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Whether you're eight years old or in your eighties, at some point in your life, you've probably struggled with the question, "Why do we have to go to Mass?"

- You just may not feel like going at times.
- You may not like the music or the homilies in your parish.
- You may think Mass is boring.
- You may feel as if the parish is not welcoming.
- You may try to convince yourself that you can pray just as well outdoors or in the comfort of your own home.

### THE POWER OF NEGATIVE THINKING

Even though you know that going to Mass is a good thing, you can talk yourself out of going by focusing on the negatives. At first, you may feel a little guilty, but eventually, you can justify your decision by convincing yourself that you are too busy, too tired, too bored, or too frustrated.

When that happens, you miss the great gift that God gives to us in the Eucharist.

### THINKING POSITIVELY

What if you changed your attitude about going to Mass? What if you began to think of Mass as the time in the day when you can connect with God and with other people in a special way? What if you concentrated on the things you like about your parish instead of what you don't like? What if you made Mass a priority?

The effects of these kinds of positive attitudes may surprise you. Research studies show that people who go to church every week are:

- less likely to suffer from depression.
- less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol.
- more likely to have a solid sense of right and wrong.
- more likely to live a longer and a happier life.

### HERE ARE TEN GOOD REASONS TO GO TO MASS:

**1 God asks us to make one day holy.** God asks us to set aside one day to refocus physically, mentally, and spiritually. We live in a secular world. Going to Mass helps us to see everything from a different perspective. We begin to see in the depths of our being that God is in charge. We can let go of our own agenda because we know that God will inspire us, guide us, and strengthen us for the week ahead.

**2 Jesus gives us the gift of himself.** When we go to Mass, we are doing what Jesus commanded his followers to do. It is a command to love and to be loved by God. Jesus offers himself to us in the Word of God that we hear and in his Real Presence, offered to us in the Blessed Sacrament at Communion.

**3 We need to be part of a community.** When we come together at Mass to pray and worship God, we fulfill a deep need inside of us to be in communion with other people. The other parishioners — even if we don't know all of them — give us support, affirmation, and encouragement in our attempt to live the Gospel message. They help us to see that we are not alone. They remind us that we are all part of the Body of Christ.

**4 God has a special message for us.** When we listen to the readings, the homily, and the prayers of the Mass, God speaks to us in a special way. We should come away from each Mass with at least one inspiration that will impact our lives in some way. We just have to pay attention and be open to what the Lord is trying to tell us.

**5 We need to talk to God.** When we go to Mass, we speak to God through our singing, our communal responses and prayers, and our personal prayers from the depths of our hearts. During the Mass, we have the opportunity to ask God for what we need, promise God that we will do what He wants us to do, and thank God for the many blessings He has bestowed upon us.

**6 People need our prayers.** We can pray for other people anytime, but when we pray for others during Mass, we pray in a special way. It doesn't matter if the other people are separated from us by distance or by death. The Mass brings us together in the Body of Christ, and we become the communion of saints. It is part of the cosmic dimension of the Mass that unites heaven and earth by reaching across time and space.

**7 We need to stand up for what we believe.** Being a follower of Jesus is counter-cultural. At every Mass, we have the opportunity to stand up and proclaim what we believe publicly. We admit that we believe in God, in Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, in the Catholic Church, in the communion of saints, in the forgiveness of sins, and in life after death. It is a powerful statement of allegiance and an opportunity to recommit ourselves.

**8 We need to acknowledge that we make mistakes.** At every Mass, we have the opportunity to review the past week. We admit that we have sinned in thought, in word, in deed, in what we have done and what we have failed to do. We seek forgiveness, and we are assured that God still loves us. Before we receive Communion,

we admit that we are not worthy and ask God to heal us. Going to Mass helps us to strengthen our commitment to live moral lives.

**9 We need ritual in our lives.** Mass is a ritual, which means that through the repetition of prayers, movements, and the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, we are formed, disciplined, and consoled. The "sameness" of the Mass carries us along the spiritual journey — even when we don't "feel" like praying. The "sameness" of the ritual allows us to be transformed on a soul level, even if we are unaware of what is happening.

**10 We need to experience something bigger than ourselves.** When we go to Mass, we share in the death and resurrection of Jesus. When we offer our ordinary lives to God through Jesus, we enter into God's great plan for the world. We are strengthened by the Eucharist and sent out into the world to bring the Gospel message to all people. The Mass gives meaning and purpose to our lives. It gives us a sense of destiny and offers the kind of peace that the world cannot give. It helps us develop a sense of wonder and awe. It helps us to see that there is something bigger than ourselves.

### WHY PRAYING AT HOME IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH

It's good to pray at home, but private prayer doesn't take the place of coming to Mass. When you pray at home, your prayer is personal and one-dimensional.

But when you come to Mass, you pray with your whole being. You use all of your senses. You see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. You use your body by genuflecting, sitting, kneeling, standing, walking, and singing.

The Mass also gives you the opportunity to:

- Seek forgiveness for your sins.
- Learn how God's word impacts your life in the homily.
- Offer yourself to the Lord.
- Experience the miracle of bread and wine changing into the Body and Blood of Christ.
- Reach out to others with the Peace of Christ.
- Admit that you are not worthy, and then come forward to receive the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ.
- Receive a special blessing.
- Be commissioned to go out and make the world a better place.



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