

My friend in the above story is still a long way from returning to the faith of his childhood and there appears to be many stumbling blocks in his way, but I am convinced that his journey has begun and in time the obstacles he faces will melt away.

In closing, I would like to add that if you happen to be away from the practice of your faith, why not give it a try once more. Slip into a back pew on a Sunday or attend a weekday Mass somewhere. If you live in a city of any size there is usually a Catholic Church somewhere in that city that offers a mid-day Mass. Whatever the reason is that keeps you away, don't let it stop you. Jesus is always welcoming and if you put yourself in his hands, He will find a way to bring you home.

William J. Bradley

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WHY SHOULD I GO TO MASS ON SUNDAY

One recent summer my eldest son went on an outing that would see him get home at a time that was past our rural parish Mass times. Although I am aware of the importance of attending Mass on Sunday, I thought that this situation would be a reasonable excuse for him to miss Mass, but to be certain, I mentioned it to our Pastor who promptly told me that there was a Sunday afternoon Mass at St. Columban's, forty miles away. Our Pastor knew that I had the means to travel those forty miles and so when my son got home, with his loud protests ringing in my ears, we went to St. Columban's for Mass.

It is interesting note that my eldest son is the eldest of five boys and at the time of our forty mile journey to St. Columban's he was about fourteen years old. That same boy is now nearly nineteen years old and if my wife and I are away from home on the weekend we know that our eldest will make sure that he and his all brothers get to church. There was only one rebellion that we heard about and that involved the second eldest of our sons. As they all trooped into church one week-end, when my wife and I were away, the second eldest dropped into the rearmost pew. The eldest did not notice until he got to our usual seats half way down the body of the church. If the second eldest thought he was going to get away

with this act of independence, he was sadly mistaken, as his older brother promptly marched back to where he was sitting and sent him scuttling down to our usual seating.

We only had to go to such extreme once, after that my wife and I established a rule in our family that said that our social life had to be organized around our Parish Mass times and if there was any conflict then it had to be resolved in favour of attending Mass.

What Father had done with me and my eldest son, over the St. Columban's episode, was to emphasize just how important it is to attend Mass every Sunday. And who knows, maybe that emphasis had a lot to do with my eldest still attending church now that he is an adult. The Church teaches that this is an obligation that can only be excused when we are ill, aged or physically unable to attend Mass. To skip Mass, especially on a regular basis is to show contempt for the Church and her laws.

When we go to Mass we tell the world around us who we are and what we represent. Simply by going to Mass makes us all evangelists to our family, friends, neighbours and the community in which we live. Jesus says very clearly in his Gospels that anyone who stands up for Him before the world, He will stand up for us before God the Father (Mt.10:32). In the light of our life in eternity, what more could anyone ask, for so little effort on our part.

Attendance at Mass is not just simply joining in a social or community action taking place in a certain type of building. We are actually and formally worshipping God in a community setting.

At this time we can thank Him for His many graces and favours to us over the past week and beg His indulgence for needs that are coming in our own lives and the lives of our family and community. Most of all, though, we can acknowledge our absolute dependence on Him. It is only by His grace and mercy that we get to draw our next breath, let alone anything else in our lives.

At Mass God is able to talk to us in a way that we will not find anywhere else. Through the prayers of the Mass itself, the scripture readings that change each day, and the sermon on Sundays, God is able to help, encourage and instruct us in a unique and personal way. Many times I have come away from Mass with a particular thought or phrase going through my mind, which usually and not surprisingly applies to something that is going on in my life at that time.

Unless we are ill, aged or shut-in, Mass is the only time when we get the opportunity to go forward and receive from the hands of the celebrating Priest or Eucharistic Minister, the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is not simply a memorial of the Last Supper. The wafer we receive is not a rite of remembrance but the most real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Once again, Jesus said very clearly in the Gospel of John: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.... My flesh is true food and My blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in Me and I in him.... who feeds on me will have life because of Me." (Jn.6:53,55-57). At Mass, and for most of us that is on a Saturday evening or Sunday morning, is the only time we can go forward and receive the food that will give us the life that Jesus talks about in the above quotation from the Gospel of John.

Over the years of my life many Catholics have told me that they can worship God just as well while strolling in the woods, or seated in some quiet place. This is true enough in its way but when you ask them when was the last time they strolled in the woods for an hour worshipping God, the chances are there would be no answer. Besides, what sort of Catholic Christian example and I setting for relatives, friends and neighbours, simply strolling in the woods? In what woods could a priest be found ready and able to feed me with the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ?

Many conversions to the faith have begun with a Catholic inviting a non-Catholic friend or relative to come to Mass with them. Sometimes these conversions can take years to complete but many a convert can and does trace the beginnings of their conversion back to a time when they went to Mass at the invitation of a friend. So many times their comment on that first visit was "It felt like I had finally come home".

Recently I invited a friend to attend Mass with me during the week. It was a noon hour Mass at a downtown church and the church was filled with workers from the surrounding offices. My friend had been born into the faith but had fallen away from practising it and was currently active in another Christian Denomination. A few weeks later my friend asked me if I would take him back to the same Mass, which I did, and then, a few weeks after that, he asked again and we went once more. After our last assistance at Mass he called me into his office the next day and said to me, "I don't know why, but for some reason I am deeply drawn toward the Catholic Faith!"