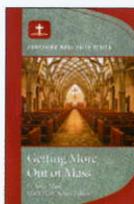


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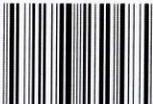
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the **WORD**
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WHY DO I
GO TO MASS
ANYWAY?





Why do you go to Mass? Perhaps it's because you grew up going to Mass and you can't imagine not going. Perhaps you go to set a good example for your children. Perhaps you're looking for God's help, peace, or healing. Or maybe you aren't sure why . . . you just keep going and wondering.

Whatever the reason, you've actually been drawn to Mass by a loving God: your heavenly Father. It is true. **God wants to help you get the most out of your time with him.** So answer the question of why you go to Mass as a springboard to explore why attending Mass is so vital to your spiritual health . . .

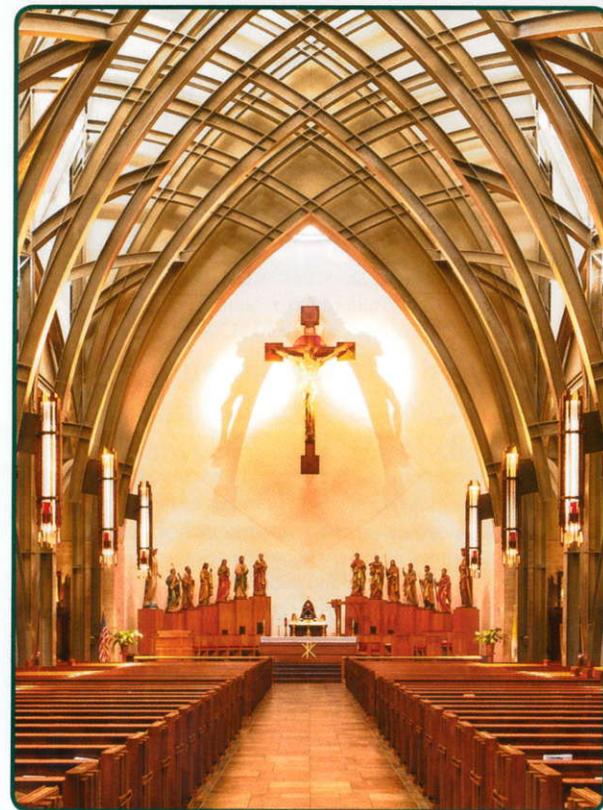
ENCOUNTERING GOD

One reason we go to Mass is to encounter God. That may sound mysterious, but it isn't! In fact, God is everywhere, and we encounter him in a special way the moment we enter the church. It's the reason we make the Sign of the Cross with holy

water and genuflect in front of the tabernacle, where Jesus is always present in the Blessed Sacrament. It's a way of acknowledging that he is present and honoring him.

Reflect on these thoughts while in the presence of God:

- You are the Father's *beloved* daughter or son.
- God wants you to know him and his love for you. **When you look up at the crucifix, consider that Jesus loves you so much that he was willing to leave heaven and become a person like you.** He died to pay the price for your sins. Jesus makes it possible for you to have a full life now and the promise of living with him forever.



RECEIVING FROM GOD

At Mass, you have the opportunity and privilege to receive from God, who created everything and gave you life! His greatest desire

is for you to receive his boundless love, his tender mercies, and his very life. This happens throughout the Mass. Here are some of the key moments:

Receiving Forgiveness: At the beginning of Mass, the priest says, “Let us acknowledge our sins.” God knows your sins and loves you still. You can ask forgiveness for the sins that immediately come to your mind. And then, at the moment when the priest says, “May Almighty God . . . forgive us our sins,” be reminded of the boundless mercy of Jesus. Remember the necessity of the sacrament of Confession, especially for serious sins, to receive the assurance of absolution.

Receiving God’s Word: God wants to speak personally to you through the Scriptures. The Mass readings are God’s words, and when you hear them, you hear God’s voice. Perhaps something will strike you. If so, receive it as God’s personal word for you.

Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist: You receive Jesus, the Bread of Life. The host is not an ordinary piece of bread. It is Jesus who walked this earth, Jesus who died, and Jesus who is now alive! Jesus tells us in John 6 that his flesh is real food and his body is real drink. As you receive him, you receive *his life*. Share with Jesus whatever is on your heart.

Receiving Peace from Jesus: Are you looking to find peace in your life? Whatever pre-occupations or fears you are carrying—whether



about a relationship, financial troubles, disappointment, or any other situation in your life or in the life of a loved one—imagine handing them over to Jesus. Then, open your heart, and ask him to fill you with his peace.

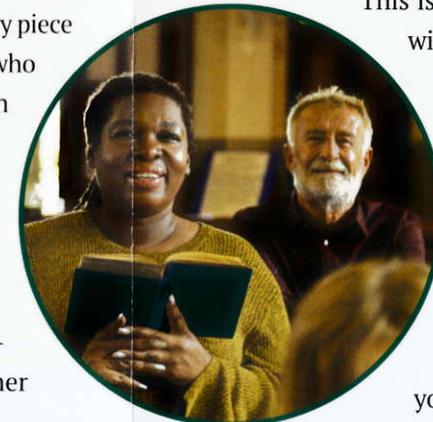
Receiving a Final Blessing: In the final blessing, God gives you his strength for the upcoming week. Don’t miss out on receiving graces from the final prayers and blessings as you leave Mass.

GIVING TO GOD

Imagine giving someone you love a special gift, and imagine their reaction. When you give gifts to God, he too is filled with joy.

Giving Your Heart: The best gift you can give to God is your heart. You can do this at any time during the Mass.

This is a precious, intimate moment with your Father in heaven. Keep the words simple: “God, I love you. I give you my life.”



Giving Thanks and Praise: Sometimes it is difficult to be thankful. It can feel like there are so many challenges in life. But are you able to think of a few things

for which you are thankful? Perhaps it's as simple as a sunny day. Or perhaps your coffee this morning was delicious. It doesn't matter how big or how small your gratitude is. In addition, thank and give God praise for meeting you at Mass and hearing your every prayer.

Giving an Offering: Can you imagine that a problem could be changed into something positive? God promises to do just that when we offer him our pain. When we come to Mass, we have the chance to offer God our suffering and our problems. As the bread and wine are lifted up to God by the priest, you can also offer your pain to God. Pray, "Jesus, I offer you my ____." It could be a difficult job situation, a troubled relationship, or difficulty with forgiving someone. Nothing is too small or trivial to be offered during Mass, and God can transform it into something good.

ENJOYING OTHERS

God doesn't want us to just have a relationship with him; he also wants us to enjoy life-giving relationships with one another.

Enjoying God's Family: Do most people at Mass seem like strangers to you? In many ways, our faith is personal. God loves us as unique individuals. But our faith is also meant to be shared with those around us. He intends for us to grow in friendship with each other. God intends for the people at church to be our brothers and sisters.



Enjoying Coming Together: Take time to greet those in your pew with a smile or a few words when you arrive and again at the sign of peace. Join with the people around you in singing the hymns and answering the prayer responses. You are worshipping God together!

Enjoying Friendships: Get to know other parishioners by sharing donuts and coffee after Mass or at some other church activity. It is during these times that new friendships are made and grow. It takes some effort to find and build them, but it will be worth it.

DON'T LEAVE GOD AT CHURCH

Throughout the Bible, whenever God revealed himself to someone, he also gave them a mission to accomplish. At the end of the Mass, the priest also sends you on a journey to serve God in your upcoming week. That may sound terrifying, but God's mission for you is to use the gifts he has given you... perhaps inviting someone to come to Mass with you or perhaps caring for someone who is sick or hurting. As you leave Mass, remember what St. Teresa of Calcutta often said: "Do something beautiful for God."