

THE CATHOLIC MASS: WHY SHOULD I GO?

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There are so many things going on in peoples' lives in modern society: work, school, sports, extracurriculars, college hunts, standardized tests, homework, volunteering, and trying to get some sleep in between it all! As a result, it begs the question "why should I go to mass?". While the question is simple, it takes a relatively deep dive into the very nature of Catholicism and what it is all about.

WHAT IS THE MASS?

Despite the Catholic Mass being a unified act of Worship, it can be broken down into two major parts (one could break it down even further but for simplicity, we'll stick to two): the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

During the Liturgy of the Word, excerpts are read from Scripture that tie into the Gospel message of the day along with a Psalm from Scripture being sung. There are, in total, three readings plus the responsorial psalm. Typically, the first reading comes from the Old Testament, the second reading comes from the New Testament, and the third reading is a Gospel reading. All of the readings are connected within their meaning just as all of the books of the Bible are connected through their meaning and intent.

The Liturgy of the Word is important because it contains a message directly from God through the Word of God (Scripture). Catholics (and many other denominations of the Christian Faith) trust that the Bible was divinely inspired, that is to say, that it is in fact the Word of God. While the Bible has numerous books with numerous authors with numerous stories, they all tie into one another in a shared theme, a theme that is referred to as Salvation History. The Bible tells the story of how humanity was created by God and was created perfectly and without sin. It then goes on to tell the story of how humanity chose to follow their own will rather than the Will of God thus bringing about imperfection, sin, and suffering. The rest of the Bible is the most epic story you can possibly imagine; the story of how God would continue to love us despite our sinful nature, despite how many times we turn away from Him, and despite how many times we choose ourselves over Him. The story of the Bible reaches its climax in the Gospels, the story of God becoming man through the person of Jesus Christ in order to conquer sin and death through His suffering and death on the cross and rising from the dead. But the story doesn't end there, Jesus left us, the Church, with a mission; to continue the work that He began and to show others the way to Him, the way towards Salvation: to show others Jesus.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the bread and wine is consecrated by the priest (through the power of the Holy Spirit) and becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. When we as Catholics receive the Eucharist, we are receiving Jesus, we are receiving the Grace of God, we are receiving the gift of Salvation that God promised us.

WHO CARES?

The USCCB states that the Eucharist is “the source and summit of Christian Life”. This is absolutely true. You might be wondering, if the Eucharist is “the source and summit of Christian Life”, then why can't I just receive Communion and not go to mass? The answer is simple, the Liturgy of the Word has just as much importance as the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Think about it, if there was never the story of man's fall, there would be no imperfection, sin, or suffering and thus no need for our salvation. But the point is, humanity did fall and God gave us the gift of a map of how to get back to Him and achieve Salvation, through His Son, Jesus Christ. Through the Eucharist, the remembrance of the sacrifice Christ made for us and the Communion with Christ, we are given the gift of Christ and His Salvation. Just like in the Bible, the story isn't supposed to stop there. It continues on to how we share it with others. How do we be Christ to others? We bring them to Him and share our Salvation with them.

WHY SHOULD I GO TO MASS?

So now, you still ask: why should I go to mass? It is simple: go to mass to be inspired. Go to mass to hear the most epic story in all of history. Go to mass to hear the great lengths God was willing to go to save humanity from itself and to see through that how much He loves you. Go to mass not just to receive a life with Christ through the Eucharist for yourself, but take that bit of Jesus with you and share it with others. Share it until there is nothing left then come back and get refueled. Come back with a desire to renew your strength for the mission and to live a life with Christ thus becoming the person that God intended you to be way back in the beginning in the Book of Genesis where God says “Let us make man in our own image and likeness” (Gen 1: 26). That is the purpose of mass, to prepare you to go out on the mission Christ gave you week after week; to “go and make disciples of all nations”.