

## Why Do We Attend Mass Every Sunday?

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Throughout my nine years as a priest I have learned about the challenge of having our children attend Mass together with their parents every Sunday. I invite you to reflect this week on five questions:

**1. How can we say no to God?** God is the one inviting us to Mass. In fact, He is commanding us to **remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy**. *“Six days you may labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, your God. No work may be done then.”* (Deuteronomy 5:13-14).

This is not a suggestion. It is an order from God. It is the Third Commandment. The Sabbath, which represented the completion of the first creation, has been replaced by **Sunday** which recalls the new creation inaugurated by the Resurrection of Christ (# 2190 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church - CCC). On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass (CCC # 2192). Yes, it is an obligation; a holy, loving obligation.

**2. Mass is heaven on earth: How can we refuse to come and meet God?** Many times I have repeated this saying from one of our greatest popes, Saint John Paul II: “Mass is Heaven on Earth.” This is a powerful reason why we are not to miss Sunday Mass. It is not only because it is an obligation as God orders us to come. It is also because not attending Mass is rejecting **God’s invitation to meet him!** How can we refuse God’s invitation to meet Him? At every Mass, **God is fully present** in the scripture readings and in the Eucharist. As we know from Pope Benedict XVI, **heaven is to be with God. How can we refuse to come and spend some time in heaven every Sunday, the day of the Lord?** Don’t we want to be in heaven?

**3. Do you want to find rest and peace?** Jesus invites us to come to be with Him and rest for one hour every week. When we come to Mass, we are all invited to leave behind our daily worries and enjoy the presence of our brothers and sisters who have also gathered to be with our **Lord God**. Only Jesus can give us rest and peace! At the time of the offerings of the bread and wine, all of us are invited to offer to God all our individual sufferings and joys of the past week.

**4. Do you want to hear God speak?** We can feel the presence of God at Mass in many ways. The first main part of the Mass, the **Liturgy of the Word**, is all about hearing the Word of God. Sure we can read the bible at home, and we are encouraged to do so as often as we can. But nothing can replace the **hearing** of scriptures at Mass - listening to the Word of God as a community in the same way people listened to Jesus' preaching in the synagogues. We are not to read, we are to **hear** and **listen** with our ears and our hearts! The most important reading, the Gospel, can be proclaimed at Mass only by the priest or deacon. At that moment, **Jesus is speaking to us**. The homily is to help us understand better the Word of God and apply it to our daily lives.

**5. Do you desire to receive God?** We believe that the Holy Spirit is at work throughout the Mass. It is the Holy Spirit sent by God who comes at every Mass, especially to assist the priest representing the person of Christ, to make the transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. This is the climax of the Mass. **Everyone who is a practicing Catholic in a state of grace** (without any major sin) is invited to join in this celestial banquet and **receive the body and blood of Christ**. Everyone receiving the Eucharist becomes **one with Christ** and **one with all others** receiving Communion. At that

very moment, **we are all one in Christ** united in the Eucharist! St. John Vianney is well known for his love of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and of the Eucharist. He said, "*Every consecrated host is made to burn itself up with love in a human heart.*" I like his image of the Eucharist **burning with love** in our hearts, transforming them into new hearts of love!

In this entire month of August, we are continuing to hear the Discourse on the Bread of Life from John's Chapter 6. It is all about the Mass and the Eucharist. As we receive the Eucharist, let us remember the words of Jesus in last week's Gospel: "***I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger...***" (John 6:35). Are we hungry for this eternal Bread of Life? **JESUS is inviting us to come to him every Sunday and stay with Him for one hour. He wants to show His deep love for each one of us and feed us spiritually with His body and blood.**

May we ask the **Holy Spirit** to help us understand better the **meaning of the Mass. Come Holy Spirit!** Help us to receive the many gifts of participating actively at Mass every Sunday! **Come Holy Spirit!** Help our children and their parents come together to celebrate your joy at every Sunday Mass!

**One in Christ,  
Fr. Alain**