

Sometimes I'll hear someone say, "*Mass is boring*". Unfortunately for them, Mass is an obligation, and we're told that to skip it is a grave sin (CCC, 2181). The obligation of Sunday Mass comes from God's 3rd Commandment, but if we don't understand *why it's meaningful*, and *why it's important* to you and your family, then I can understand why you would want to be anywhere else.

The notion of Mass itself, infers belief in a living and personal God, not just some nebulous reality, like *the Force* on Star Wars. We consider how God was involved in the lives of Adam, Abraham, Moses, and others. The Mass only makes sense, if you believe—or at least are trying to stoke the fires of belief—in a living and personal God, who wants to engage you. If you don't believe in God, or at least desire to, then it's pointless. *So, do you believe?*

And to understand the Mass, we must see it as worship. *What is worship?* Just as it was for Abraham and Moses, it's a formal act of acknowledging God, and our relationship with Him.

And as it did for them, our worship involves giving back to God in sacrifice, acknowledging that all that we have, is actually His in the first place—and so therefore, it's an expression of gratitude. Their worship, and ours too, involves praising God's greatness. Not because He needs adulation, but because we need constantly to remind ourselves that our one God created the heavens, the beauty in nature, the people we love, and you, all as an act of love. If not for Him, and his care in every moment, none of it would be, you would not be. Our worship involves remembering who we are to Him, and remembering His promises to us. All that is worship, and it's what we do in every Mass.

To that, some would say: *Okay, but I can worship at home*. Like any relationship, your relationship with God can't always be on your terms. He calls us here, to His house, with the community He's called us into.

But Father, we're bored! Part of the problem is that we're too busy—our lives are too filled up with stuff—and we're too distracted. All that has made it to where we can't concentrate and be still.

The other problem is the expectations we hold for this experience of worship. First of all, you're not primarily here to be entertained by music. It's not a concert. The music is meant to merely accompany our expression of worship. Secondly, it's not just about whatever inspiration you might hope to glean from the homily (though perhaps you surrendered that hope long ago!). Third, it's not just about seeing your friends. Community is wonderful, and in fact essential, but it's not principally about that, because after all, you can just invite them over for dinner.

And believe it or not, it's not just about getting communion. Although we're called to Mass every Sunday, sometimes we're not ready for communion. For missing Mass without good reason, or for any other serious sin, please go to confession first. St. Paul tells us that to receive the Eucharist unworthily, only makes things worse for us (1 Cor 11:27).

You will get more out of your worship, this Mass, if you think less about what you stand to receive—and even more, for this hour, stop thinking narrowly just about yourself—and focus more on God and what you stand to bring of yourself to Him. For whatever way you don't truly understand what the Mass is, learn. Start with that cream-colored tri-fold in your pews. Take it home and read it.

But Father, the Mass, it's the same thing every time....and it takes forever! It's an act of love. Let's do it with care, let's do it right, let's be present. As I see it, we have three options: We can do, as many have done, and just drift away in indifference and disobedience, and cut ourselves off from the life of grace. Second, we can simply endure this practice of the faith, with a minimalistic, punch-card approach, and get our thimble-full of grace. Or we can aspire to be open, leaving ourselves behind, to seek God, and let His grace fill us up.

I remember a bishop describing how he was asked to celebrate Mass for Mother Theresa's community, the Missionaries of Charity. As he was preparing, he saw a sign in the sacristy that read: "*O priest of God, celebrate this Mass as though it's your first Mass and your last Mass, your only Mass*". So, I

implore you: *"O people of God, be present in this Mass—heart, mind and body—as though it's the only Mass you'll attend, your last chance to offer yourself, your worship to God".*