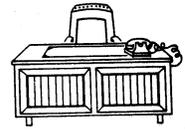


30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 28, 2018



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Importance of Mass attendance:

In our archdiocese as in many other dioceses in the United States and beyond, Mass attendance information is one of the criteria used in determining pastoral assignments and plans for future mergers and closures. Mass attendance is also an important statistic in keeping track of population movements that might warrant the building of new churches in different areas of the Archdiocese.

Many dioceses started tracking Mass attendance numbers more closely about the year 2000. The figures generally reveal a slow and steady decline in Mass attendance among Catholics almost across the board. Generally, about thirty percent of registered Catholics in any given parish attend Mass every weekend. This matches the estimated church attendance among most Protestant denominations, but surpassed by Muslim weekly worship attendance. This statistics on Mass attendance is quite revealing given that the Catholic Church mandates Mass attendance.

The Catechism states: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are **bound** to participate in the Mass." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2180). It further states: "The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason, the faithful are **obliged** to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a **grave sin**." (*Catechism*, #2181)

The sporadic nature of Mass attendance in our parish as in other parishes is disturbing. It is hard to understand why someone will choose to attend Mass one weekend and not on the other. Some stop going to Mass altogether and only show up on Christmas and Easter celebrations. Worst still, holy day obligations mean very little to so many. One would expect holy day Masses to be as well attended as weekend Masses. Perhaps, many either do not have their faith figured out or have their priorities skewed.

There is always something considered more important than attending Mass on weekends and holy days of obligation. We know the usual culprits - work, laziness, sports, righteous anger at God, the church, priests, other parishioners, etc. If only these people knew what they are depriving themselves by abstaining from Mass! Some wrongly believe that the Church has amended the rule regarding the obligation to attend Mass and the sinful consequences of not going to Mass. By the way, it is not enough to attend Mass, the rule also states that the faithful are "bound to participate" in the celebration. Hence, no one should come to Mass as a spectator expecting to be entertained.

The church teaches that the Holy Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life." (*Lumen Gentium*, # 11; *Catechism*, #1324). Many centuries before Vatican II, Saint Thomas Aquinas stated that the Eucharist is "the consummation of the whole spiritual life." (*Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 73, a.3). Chances are that Catholics who do not take Mass attendance obligation seriously have little spiritual depth. Let us not forget the words of Jesus in relation to the Eucharist: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life within you." (John 6:53). How could one eat and drink unless one is present at the banquet?

Have a great week! Fr. Romanus