

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, September 20, 2026

Brothers and Sisters, this Sunday, and the next four Sundays, for five in total, we will be looking at different aspects of the Mass. This is converted to a deeper understanding of the holy sacrifice of the Masses and to increase our love rather than our participation in the one true worship of Christ.

Now, Archbishop Fulton Sheen reminds us that the more we bring to the Mass, the more we will get out of it. So, on some level, we will have a little more to bring and we will get a little more out of it. So, we start with what the Mass is and why we go.

Now, some Catholics might explain to others why they go to Mass because It makes me feel good. Or that the Mass is a place to connect with the parish family members and friends. Some may even give a reason that the Mass is a place where we can get Jesus in Holy Communion.

However, after observing behaviors of some Catholics, one may conclude that Mass is just a burdensome obligation, a box to be checked. And then, if it's not too inconvenient, you know, if Mass doesn't interfere with one's vacation, or guests visiting, because we wouldn't want to impose our faith on anybody, you know? We don't even live our own faith out. They sometimes see Mass as something to be squeezed in between other activities of more importance, and something I have to find a time to do, so I can get to the kids' sporting event – a box to be checked again.

Moreover, after witnessing some Catholics who attend Mass, who come in late, stay just long enough to receive Holy Communion, and then jet off to the parking lot, you know, to beat the rush out of here,

one might just conclude that Mass is a type of communion service, where one goes to get something from God, kind of like a spiritual pitstop. I got the tires changed and now I can run the race.

I heard a priest give a homily once, and it wasn't this priest, but I heard a priest, you know, give a homily once, and he said it this way. He said, "I heard a priest say to his parishioners that just a reminder that at the Last Supper, Judas is the one who left first." [laughter] But I'm not saying it.

However, the point of attending Mass is first not about receiving Holy Communion, as important as it is to frequently, reverently, and worthily receive the Blessed Sacrament.. The first three precepts of the Catholic Church illustrate this point. Faithful practicing Catholics are to attend Masses on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation, to confess sins at least once a year and for every grave offense, and reverently, and worthily receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at least once a year during the Easter season.

So, let's just round up. We go to Mass sixty times per year; we are obligated to go to Confession once before we are obligated to receive Holy Communion. We go to Mass first. And when we're clean, we can receive totally the Eucharist. That discussion will come in other homilies. Catholics are still required to attend Mass, even if they're not in a state to receive Sacramental Communion because we see that attending the Holy Sacrifice and Mass is not about our understanding, meeting our expectations, or asking what does the Mass do for ourselves. Again, it is not about our understanding, meeting our expectations or asking, what does the Mass do for us. In the Gospel today, the workers in the vineyard

approach the workday from their understanding, with their own expectations and thinking their work was about them – ‘look what we have done.’ Whereas the landowner reminds them that the vineyard belongs to the master.

Likewise, to we participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, worship belongs to God. We are not coming on Sunday primarily to get something. We come because God is worthy of our worship. Without God's grace, human understanding is insufficient to grasp what belongs to man, that's justice, the virtue of justice. And what belongs to God, that's the virtue of religion. The Lord speaking through Isaiah in the first reading, says to you and me, to us, *“My thoughts are not your thoughts. My ways are not your ways.”*

And just as fish are affected by the water they swim in, so too are we affected by the culture in which we live in. We are living in a culture that says, prioritize convenience. Priority self, our happiness, prioritize feeling. What makes us feel good? That's what happens first until our Baptism, when we are meant to swim in divine water. We're being influenced by the Divine life of Christ, and our God says to us, *‘Come, worship me, seek me first. Love me with your whole being.’* The Mass teaches us to take God's thought instead of the world's thoughts.

In today's second reading, we hear Paul say to us, *“Christ will be magnified in my body.”* Notice that Paul is not asking, what can Christ do for me? Rather, he is asking, how can Christ be glorified through me. Christ is glorified for us when we worship God. To worship God is the First Commandment. When you question Christ on the greatest commandment, he replies, *“We shall love the Lord*

and God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment.”

Additionally, there is a shift going on here. There's a shift in focus. We are not merely to know about God, but we are to love our God, the worship of Him alone. Christ, in quoting Deuteronomy, says ‘Him alone shall you serve. Holy Mother Church teaches that worship is adoration and honor given to God, which is the first act of the virtue of religion. Paragraph 2096 in the Catechism of the Catholic Church for those who want to go look up the source. And that the public worship is given to God in the Church by the celebration of the Pascal mystery of Christ in the sacred liturgy of the Mass, to adore God to acknowledge him, as God, as the creator and savior, the Lord and master of everything that exists, as infinite and merciful love.

Brothers and sisters, the principal and central act of Catholic worship, is the public celebration of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. And essential to the worship is the Eucharist.

Today, the words Mass and Eucharist are often used almost interchangeably. Mass is a wider expression, however, since it embraces the introductory rites - the literature of the Word, as well as the Eucharist sacrifice, and sacraments. The Eucharist will be addressed in the coming weeks.

Today, we will focus on worship. We worship and adore God, to offer a new covenant sacrifice, Jesus is both priest and victim. At every Mass Christ makes present, sacramentally, his one sacrifice offered on Calvary. You look more deftly again, this mystery last week. Our Bishop Fulton Sheen, if we know something, we bring it down to our level, so we can understand it. We can see this when we're trying to

explain something to children. We bring it down to their level so they can grasp what's going on. But when we love something, we rise to meet its demands. A musician rises to meet the demands of music; athletes rise to reach the demands of the sport. A husband rises to become worthy of the love of his wife. As a husband rises, he becomes worthy of the love of his life. When we love something, we rise to that. The same is true of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. We do not bring the Mass down to our level. Through our love, the Mass rises to the top.

Worship is the act by which we rise to God in love. We do not worship God because he needs our praise. We worship because we are to be transformed by loving Him above all things. So, we see a progression starting with understanding but moving to love. We cannot truly love what we do not know - it's not a one and done thing. It's singular, the more we know, the more we love, the more we love, the more we live. If you are looking down, it looks like a circle. You look sideways, it looks like a screw or a string.

And the more noble the object of our love is, the more we rise to meet it. The more noble an object of our love is, the more we rise to meet it, and the Mass is the highest act of worship on earth. Therefore, rather than asking the Mass to conform to us, we allow our lives to be conformed to the full sacrifice of the Mass. The more highly we hold esteem for our worship, for the holy sacrifice, the more noble our worship becomes, the more reverently we approach the Mass, the more Christ transforms through our participation.

We can approach the Mass wondering, what am I going to get out of it today? Or... we can approach the Mass asking God: “Lord, how can I love and worship you today? “

The holy sacrifice of the Mass is the central worship of the Catholic faith, and the Eucharist is essential to the worship of the Mass. We go to Mass, to worship God, with all our hearts, with all our soul, with all our minds, because men love it above all things. The nobler the gift, the nobler we come to receive it well. The holy sacrifice of the Mass is noble worship.

Stay tuned, brother and sisters more to come on this topic.