



FAITH FORMATION NEWSLETTER



January 2026

GREETINGS AND HAPPY 2026 TO ALL ST JOHN'S PARISHIONERS!

Faith Formation is a life-long journey for each of us - from here to eternity. We're never too young or too old to grow in knowledge, understanding, and love of God, Christ's Church, and our neighbor. So, please read on...

On a global level, Pope Leo XIV has designated 2026 a special Jubilee Year of St Francis to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the saint's death and entrance into eternal life in Heaven. As God called St Francis to rebuild His church, each of us can consider this gift from the Holy Father as a year of spiritual renewal, growth, and maybe some rebuilding.

The Holy Mass is pivotal to our spiritual life. Indeed, the Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life (CCC 1324). Jesus said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day." (Jn 6:54 and all of Jn 6 "Bread of Life Discourse" by Jesus). The Precepts of the Catholic Church include, "You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor".

With that as background, I'd like to call each of you to make 2026 a "year of the Holy Mass" and a way to celebrate the Jubilee Year of St Francis. What a great opportunity to spiritually renew ourselves and our families, prioritizing weekly Mass attendance for a deeper understanding and appreciation of what God has done for us.

Beginning this month, I'd like to walk with you through the Mass, sharing some facts and insights that will hopefully touch you and reinforce your desires to grow in your Catholic faith.

Let's begin at the beginning. What is the Mass, really? Why do we have to go to Mass? Why do we call it "Mass" instead of "church service"?

The word Mass comes from the Latin word missa. This word is actually part of the expression or phrase *Ite missa est*. That means "Go, it is sent". So the Mass gets its name from the dismissal at the end of the Latin Mass when the priest sends "it", the Church, out to live and share the Gospel (the Good News of Jesus Christ). Recall Jesus' instructions to His apostles at the end of Matthew's Gospel (Matt 28:19-20) when He gave them the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." We also are commissioned to go share the Gospel and God's love.





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What is the Mass and why do we have to go? Each Sunday is a “little Easter” (Resurrection Day) when we remember and celebrate Christ’s passion, death, and His Resurrection. The celebration of Sunday Resurrection Day is so important that we don’t even count Sundays as days of penance during the season of Lent. Sundays are always joyful celebrations of Christ’s death as His conquest of our sin and death, His glorious resurrection, and His ascension into Heaven. We are called to fulfill this celebration in community with our Catholic brothers and sisters at Mass.

We owe everything to God. We are the created. He is the Creator. We come together as His Mystical Body, the people of God, to celebrate together (CCC 2182). The Mass is our obligation and our opportunity to worship Him. To praise Him. To glorify Him. To give Him thanks for all His great gifts and blessings.

So while it may seem surprising, the Mass is not about us. It’s not about us being entertained, energized, uplifted, or motivated. It’s about God. It’s about giving one hour per week to worship and honor our God who created us and everything and everyone around us. God doesn’t need our praise and worship. It is we who need to praise and worship Him.

And while the Mass is supposed to be all about God, He loves us so much that He fills us with the blessings of gathering with His people, hearing His word, and receiving His beloved Son; body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Holy Eucharist. Wow! Who can honestly say then, “I don’t get anything out of Mass”?!

As Catholic Christians, we take very seriously what Jesus taught His apostles, and further revealed to them through the Holy Spirit, as they built His Church. We are called to do exactly as He commanded us to do. We are obligated to attend Mass every single week, except in extenuating circumstances where we are sick or unable to attend. Jesus commanded us to “do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19). No one is judging those who don’t understand the importance of weekly Mass attendance, but rather lovingly encouraging and admonishing each other to increase and focus our prioritization of the Mass in our lives. Eventually, as we grow in love and understanding of the Mass, we transition from seeing Mass as an obligation to an opportunity. It becomes the highpoint and greatest priority of our week.

Next Month: Now that we’re in the door and ready to participate in the celebration of the Holy Mass, let’s discuss some of the deeply meaningful signs, symbols, traditions, and parts of the Mass.

Ed Anderson – Director of Faith Formation

