

## Participating in the Sunday Mass

(Sept. 16-17, 2017)

A few weeks ago, we announced changes to our Sunday morning schedule, which will take effect when we return upstairs to our newly restored church, on the weekend of October 7 & 8. If you haven't yet read Fr. Tom's letter explaining the changes and our plans for Sunday mornings, we encourage you to do so. Copies are available in the back, and you can also find it on our parish website and Facebook page.

In addition to Fr. Tom's letter, we have decided to offer a series of brief reflections over four consecutive Sundays, in which we go a little deeper into what we hope to achieve by the upcoming changes.

Today, we'll focus on our life of worship, especially the Mass.

Last week, we spoke of how we observe Sunday as the Lord's Day, and we said that the Sunday Mass is the most significant activity of the parish, the "source and summit" of our life (LG, 11). This phrase – "source and summit" is often quoted from the Second Vatican Council, but what does it mean? We can see in the Mass the two essential movements that sustain and animate us as Catholics. On the one hand, we receive from this source the sustenance we need to persevere as disciples of Jesus striving to live a holy life. Namely, we receive the Word of God proclaimed and interpreted for us, and then we are fed with the true bread from heaven, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ himself, broken and poured out for us. On the other hand, in our worship at Mass we bring to this summit all that we are, offering not only the bread, the wine, and monetary donations, but even our very selves, as gifts to be transformed and made holy. Therefore, we can hardly overstate the place that Sunday Mass should hold in the life of every Catholic.

Indeed, it is in our Eucharistic worship as a community that our identity as Catholic Christians is most clearly and powerfully expressed. This is why the manner of our celebration of Mass is such a high priority for us. The Mass should be dignified and beautiful, expressing our love and respect for the Lord through everything from the liturgical appointments and the music to the way we dress

and our punctuality. The priests and deacons, altar servers, music ministers, and other lay ministers, are called to carry out the roles entrusted to them with fitting reverence and dignity, without being aloof or rigid, in a manner faithful to what has been entrusted to us by Holy Mother Church. They should not seek to draw attention to themselves or make the liturgy their own personal property, but to serve in such a way that everyone present can be drawn up into the celebration of the sacred mysteries.

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the “full, conscious, and active participation” (SC, 14) of everyone at Mass – yes, even the person in the last seat of the last pew! Lifting our hearts and minds to God, listening attentively, and giving voice to the responses and acclamations, we become not mere spectators – as though we were in the audience at a theatrical production – but true participants!

Our hope is that the changes we are making to our Sunday schedule will afford us the opportunity to deepen our commitment to honor the Lord in the way that we celebrate the Mass. In addition, we hope that, by taking the opportunity to reflect more deeply and personally on the Word of God on Sunday mornings, our engagement and participation in the Mass will be enhanced.

The Sunday Mass is truly the high point of our life as Catholic Christians. When we are sent forth at the end of Mass, it is to bring what we have received here into the world, expressing our discipleship of Jesus in every aspect of our lives, both as individuals and as a community. Next week, we’ll look more closely at the call to discipleship in community.

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SC: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Second Vatican Council, 1963.

LG: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, Second Vatican Council, 1964.