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Why (and How) to Return to Sunday Mass

The Register's clip-out, photocopy and pass-on guides for Advent



Invite Someone

Catholics know there are problems in the world. We also know the source of peace: Christ.

This Advent, the Register invites readers to invite people back to Mass.

Reaching out and extending an invitation to the sacraments, starting with Mass, can make a blessed difference in someone's life.



- 1 God tells us to keep holy the Sabbath (Third Commandment) and holy days.
- 2 Jesus instituted the Mass at the Last Supper.
- 3 Mass honors God and changes our hearts.



Quick Tip 1 Arrive on time or be early. Then you will have time to prepare your heart to receive God's word and his body.

- 4 The saints were Massgoers. You can go every day. Daily Mass is a blessing!
- 5 "If we really understood the Mass, we would die of joy," said St. John Vianney, patron of parish priests.



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Quick Tip 2 Prepare for Communion. Being in a state of grace means that one is not conscious of having committed a serious sin (missing Sunday Mass, infidelity, etc.) since one's last confession. Fast one hour before Communion.

- 7 "It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without holy Mass." So said St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio).

- 8 You can hear Scripture at Mass. What is God saying to you through his holy word?

Quick Tip 3 Know what's happening. Follow along with the missalette, missal or another Mass aid, such as the *Magnificat*.



Quick Tip 4 Bow your head as a sign of reverence before receiving Communion.

- 9 Mass offers the faithful the Living Bread (John 6:51, 54, 56).

Quick Tip 5 Pray the *Anima Christi* prayer after receiving Communion: *Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, inebriate me. Water from Christ's side, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus, hear me. Within thy wounds, hide me. Suffer me not to be separated from thee. From the malicious enemy, defend me. In the hour of my death, call me. And bid me come unto thee, that I may praise thee with thy saints and with thy angels, forever and ever. Amen.*

- 10 The Catechism tells us that Mass unites us with Jesus, Mary and the saints (1419).

Quick Tip 6 Dress up for God and wear modest clothing.

Common 'Good Excuses'

I don't have to go to church to pray. Yes, you can pray anywhere. But the Mass is the Church's greatest prayer.

I am mad at the Church. Unfortunately, many people feel this way, especially due to the scandals. The Church is made up of flawed people, but the Church is Christ's, first and foremost. And Jesus wants you to be a part of his body.

I don't feel different after Mass. Strive to focus on each part of the Mass: the songs, the prayers, the readings — and, most importantly, the Eucharist. Even if the homily isn't enlightening or the music is not to your liking, Jesus offers you his Body and Blood.

I'm too busy. Sunday Mass is one hour of your week. It should be the best hour of your week.

I don't feel worthy. No one is. That's why we need Mass and confession, where Christ offers himself and his healing to us.



Quick Tip 7 Go to Mass with family or friends. Mass is a community prayer.

Additional copies: NCRRegister.com; click "Resources."

"Advent is a period of devout and expectant delight."

— Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar

Why (and How) to Return to Confession

The Register's clip-out, photocopy and pass-on guides for Advent



Peace Of Mind

This Advent, the Register encourages readers to go to confession and recommend it to friends and family. The guide provided here can help.

As Pope Francis has reminded us, when speaking about God's mercy, "In the confessional ... is an encounter with Jesus."

Jesus "donates to us the peace that only he gives," he said.

Pope Francis also explained that being ashamed of sins is "not only natural; it's a virtue that helps prepare us for God's forgiveness."

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops offers the following Examination of Conscience based on the Ten Commandments (online at USCCB.org):



1 I am the Lord your God: You shall not have strange Gods before me. Have I treated people, events or things as more important than God?

Step 1 Examine your conscience. See the USCCB guide on this page.

2 You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Have my words, actively or passively, put down God, the Church or people?

Step 2 When you enter the confessional or go behind the screen, the priest will bless you and greet you.

3 Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day. Do I go to Mass every Sunday (or Saturday vigil) and on holy days of obligation (Jan. 1; the Ascension; Aug. 15; Nov. 1; Dec. 8; Dec. 25)? Do I avoid, when possible, work that impedes worship to God, joy for the Lord's Day and proper relaxation of mind and body? Do I look for ways to spend time with family or in service on Sunday?

Step 3 Make the Sign of the Cross and say, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [give weeks, months or years] since my last confession."

4 Honor your father and your mother.

Do I show my parents due respect? Do I seek to maintain good communication with my parents where possible? Do I criticize them for lacking skills I think they should have?

Step 4 Confess your sins, most importantly any mortal sins. If you need help examining your conscience, the priest will assist you.

5 You shall not kill. Have I harmed another through physical, verbal or emotional means, including gossip or manipulation of any kind?



Step 5 The priest will assign you a penance and perhaps offer a word of advice/encouragement.

6 You shall not commit adultery. Have I respected the physical and sexual dignity of others and of myself?

7 You shall not steal. Have I taken or wasted time or resources that belonged to another?

Step 6 Make an Act of Contrition, such as this traditional version: "God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of your grace to confess my sins, do penance and to amend my life."

8 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Have I gossiped, told lies or embellished stories at the expense of another?

Step 7 Acting in the person of Christ, the priest will absolve you of your sins.

9 You shall not covet your neighbor's spouse. Have I honored my spouse with my full affection and exclusive love?

10 You shall not covet your neighbor's goods. Am I content with my own means and needs or do I compare myself to others unnecessarily?

Step 8 Do your penance. Then leave the church with the peace of forgiveness — and rejoice!
— Adapted from USCCB.org

What Is Sin?

"Sin is an act contrary to reason. It wounds man's nature and injures human solidarity" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1872).

Mortal vs. Venial

What constitutes "mortal sin"? "For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must together be met: 'Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent'" (Catechism, 1857).

The Catechism continues (1858): "Grave matter is specified by the Ten Commandments, corresponding to the answer of Jesus to the rich young man: 'Do not kill; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not defraud; honor your father and your mother.' The gravity of sins is more or less great: Murder is graver than theft. One must also take into account who is wronged: Violence against parents is in itself graver than violence against a stranger."

In addition, "Mortal sin requires full knowledge and complete consent. It presupposes knowledge of the sinful character of the act, of its opposition to God's law. It also implies a consent sufficiently deliberate to be a personal choice. Feigned ignorance and hardness of heart do not diminish, but rather increase, the voluntary character of a sin" (1859).

What is "venial sin"? As the Catechism explains, "One commits venial sin when, in a less serious matter, he does not observe the standard prescribed by the moral law or when he disobeys the moral law in a grave matter but without full knowledge or without complete consent" (1862).



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