

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

The Mass, Part 3 - Mom, Do I Have to Go?

Last week, we explored the various terms that we might use for the Mass, including Holy Communion and the Eucharistic Assembly. The terms we reviewed gave us some insights into the importance of the Mass for the life of the Church and our lives. As mentioned in our column on the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Sacrament is known as “the source and summit of the Christian life.” [*Lumen Gentium*, 11; cf. *Looking through Stained Glass*, Sept. 9, “The Eucharist – Source and Summit of our Lives”] By extension, the Mass takes on the same importance as the Sacrament it produces.

So far, we have described why it is important to receive the Eucharist – because it is the “source and summit of the Christian Life.” But, why should we *go to* Mass? Some might argue that they do not need the Church to approach God. Usually they follow this Statement with, “all I need is me and God.”

[Notice the order – me and God.] God is always available to us, but the Mass affords us a special opportunity to find communion with God. What we are advocating is joining with the community of the Church and approaching God as one Body of Christ. Why is that important? Let’s begin by recognizing the one who gave us the Eucharist – God Himself. Our God is a Trinity – a community – and our participation with God that comes from the Eucharist makes us part of this community. In other words, if community is the way God relates within Himself – and with us, He is asking us to relate to Him in the same way –

as a community. Why do you think that Jesus gave us the “*Our* Father” and not the “*My* Father?”

Also, we should participate in the Mass because Jesus, gathering His Apostles together as a community, said we should: “Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which will be given for you; **do this in memory of me.**’” [LK 22:19, emphasis added] When we celebrate the Mass, we are doing what Jesus asked us to do.

If we are still not convinced that we should join with our brothers and sisters to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, then perhaps we could talk about what we get from the Mass. When we celebrate the Mass, Jesus is truly present. In *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, we are told that Jesus is present in four distinct ways in the Mass: in the sacrament [Eucharist], in the minister, in His Word, and in the people. [SC, 7] We get to receive Jesus in all four ways, when we actively participate in the Mass. We are especially blessed to receive the Real Presence of Jesus – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – in the Eucharist [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1374]. We receive Him into our bodies and we truly become part of His Body.

Next week, we will take a more in-depth look at our active participation in the Mass.

