



## **Why does the Church put so much emphasis on going to Mass on Sunday?**

Although some people may think that the “Sunday obligation” is a humanly devised rule of the Church or something in the order of a “strong recommendation,” in fact, the observance of Sunday worship and rest comes to us from the Lord. The Third Commandment is: *Remember to keep holy the Sabbath*. From the beginning, Christians have understood Sunday to be the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day because it is the day of Christ’s Resurrection.

The Sunday observance includes both worship at Mass and refraining from unnecessary work. The “Sabbath rest” enables us to attend to the things of God, especially prayer and reflection and our families, as well as to carry out works of charity for our neighbors. Overall, Sunday is meant to be a day of spiritual, physical, and mental renewal.

Participation in the Sunday Eucharist every Sunday is of particular importance. Sharing in the Mass does not just represent an external obligation that is imposed on us. At the core of our being, we need to worship God and to renew our connection with the saving mysteries of Christ’s death and resurrection.

Deeply embedded in each one of us is a drive to find a center in our lives and to worship at that center. Of course, our worship ought to be directed to God who truly is at the center of our lives. Sometimes, however, we find ourselves routed in another direction. Something or someone else substitutes for God and becomes the center of our lives and the object of our worship. The writer Isaac Bashevis Singer once said that if we did not worship God we would probably end up worshipping ourselves. His point was well taken.

The fact that the Sunday Eucharist punctuates our lives on a weekly basis and does so in the context of a community with which we worship is very important. The flow and rhythm of time in our lives is spiritually significant. We find God and God finds us in our time, in our history. And we do not make this journey in and through time to God alone. We do so together. That is why the regular weekly and corporate celebration of the Eucharist is so important.

We need to worship God. We need to worship together. We need to hear God’s Word to illuminate our lives. We need to find strength in the Bread of Life to move forward on our life journeys. We need to hear our mission and purpose proclaimed and reiterated at the end of Mass, “The Mass is ended. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” In these needs and graced possibilities, we understand the central and decisive importance of our observance of Sunday as a day of worship and rest.