

REFLECTION 2 – PREPARATION for MASS

Here's a question for us to ponder: is Mass fun? If not, should it be fun? There are a lot of things we do in life and things we spend our time on not because it is fun, but because it is meaningful. Establishing and maintaining relationships with other people is not always fun, but it satisfies our need for community. Working on our health is not always fun, but it allows us to feel better in the long run and to be around for those whom we love. Going to work or school is not always fun, but it lets us work for something greater in our lives. In fact, when it comes to the things that matter in life, whether it is fun or not is one of the least important things we consider before choosing to do them. We do these things for two reasons: it is the right thing to do, and it is good for us. Whether we have realized it or not, there is nothing that matters more in life than the Mass. All those other things that matter to us - our relationships, our health, our jobs - are only possible and only matter because of what happens during the Mass.

If you consider yourself a Catholic but do not consider the Mass as the most meaningful aspect of life, don't worry - it probably isn't your fault. In fact, very few of us probably understand exactly what the Mass is, so it takes some explaining. We are using these brief reflections to walk through the Mass and to understand why we do what we do.

The reason why Mass is the most important part of our lives is because it is where we can have a personal and physical encounter with Jesus Christ himself in the Eucharist. Think of your relationships with those you love - how successful are those relationships going to be if it's a one-way street? How can we expect to foster relationships with others if we give and do not receive, or receive and do not give?

The Mass can be considered as the time we spend with God in our relationship with Him. Calling someone or texting them or thinking about them is great, but we can't expect this to lead to meaningful growth in our relationship with them. We need to spend time in their presence to do that. We can pray to God and think about Him often, but if we do not spend personal time with Him in the Eucharist and in the Mass, our relationship will grow stagnant. The sad part is that God is offering His time and presence to us, but sometimes we either don't accept it or don't appreciate it.

Like all our relationships, you will get out what you put in from the Mass. If you approach Mass with dread because it's not technically "fun," you will resent being in the presence of God. Instead, try to approach Mass in a different way - you're not coming here to have fun, you're coming here to find meaning. Because you are undertaking a significant moment in your relationship with God every time you come to Mass, it requires some preparation.

Preparing for Mass does not begin when we walk into the church; it carries over from our last time attending when we are instructed to "Go forth," to "Go in peace," and to "Glorify the Lord by your life." As the expression of our relationship with God, Mass is an active thing that should be reflected outside of the walls of a church. All the preparation we do before the Mass, from fasting an hour before to genuflecting, blessing ourselves with holy water, and kneeling in prayer, is done because of the Eucharist.

If Mass was merely a community gathering, there would be no need for those things. So, as we continue to learn why we do what we do for Mass, remember - our behavior in Mass is how we are behaving in front of God. And there is nothing more meaningful in our life than being in His presence.