

10 Reasons Often Given for Not Going to Mass Regularly, and Brief Responses:

1. I don't believe in organized religious institutions anymore.

The Church is not merely a human initiative. We believe that the Church was intentionally organized and instituted by Christ on the foundation of his Apostles. It follows that to reject the Church is to reject the plan and initiative of our Lord, who promised that “*the gates of hell will not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18).

2. I don't feel like I need to go to church to be a spiritual person.

The Christian faith is not simply an individual and private pursuit of God. It's not just a matter of Jesus and I. He has incorporated us into one body through baptism. We have received the same Holy Spirit. We have all become the adopted children of our Heavenly Father. Christian spirituality is ultimately a family affair. At the Last Supper, Jesus instructed his followers to “*do this in memory of me.*” Each Sunday the Church gathers as the family of God to fulfill this command of the Lord.

3. I don't get anything out of it. It's been so long since I've been a regular church-goer and I just don't feel like going anymore.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is principally the worship of the Divine Majesty. It is first and foremost something that we give of ourselves to, before we expect to get anything out of it. Once the habit of going is in place, it becomes a fulfilling part of the rhythm of our lives. Receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation is the ordinary way that our Lord has provided for us to make a fresh beginning when we have fallen away. Registering in a Parish is also strongly suggested, and helps give one a concrete sense of membership.

4. I often work on Sundays, and I've just been so busy lately.

Sometimes we need to be a little creative to keep the Lord's Day holy. This may mean finding a Saturday or Sunday evening Mass, or adjusting our work schedule to allow for Mass. God will bless you for making whatever sacrifice is necessary to permanently build this into your plan of life. “*Draw near to God and he will draw near to you*” (James 4:8).

5. I am not allowed to come to Mass because I am divorced.

Being divorced does not ostracize someone from the Church. In the eyes of God, the marriage still exists, and the couple is simply separated. There could be just reason for this, in which case one has not committed a grave sin, and one is therefore able to worthily receive Holy Communion. However, those who remarry place themselves in a state of serious sin, since their vows hold them bound to the previous marriage. This would make one unable to receive Holy Communion. In either case the Church encourages a person to come to Mass. Receiving Communion is not the only reason we come to Mass. We are also nourished by the Word of God, and we offer prayer and worship with the family of God. Divorced and separated people ought to meet with their priest to discuss the possibility of applying for an annulment.

6. My spouse won't go.

This can be a cause of great suffering for many people. It would be ideal if your spouse attended Mass with you, but ultimately it still remains your own personal responsibility to be a faithful witness to this commitment.

7. They're just after my money.

The Parish is not subsidized by its Diocese. The funds for the operation and upkeep of the facility, employee wages, all the various programs, and the assistance of the poor come from the donations of parishioners. The practice of taking up a collection is traceable to the earliest days of the Church (cf. Catechism, 2043, 1351; Canon Law, 222; Mark 12:43; 1 Corinthians 16:1ff).

8. The Mass changed so much after the Second Vatican Council. When I grew up the Mass was in Latin. There is so little beauty and reverence anymore. I don't like the music nowadays.

The Mass we celebrate now is essentially the same as it was before the last Council, as well as in the early days of the Church. While it is understandable that someone might lament the changes in structure, style and the manner in which the Mass is celebrated, the substance has ever remained the same.

9. I feel hurt by the Church. I am upset at a priest. I'm disgusted with the scandals. No one from my Church visited me when I was in the hospital. They aren't very welcoming at my parish. The Church seems like it's full of hypocrites.

These hurts can run very deep. However, we cannot afford to allow these injuries or frustrations to become an obstacle to our availing ourselves of the spiritual riches that our Lord has chosen to give to us through the instrumentality of his Church. He himself has been hurt time and again by his Church, but he continues his loving fidelity to her, and she still remains his chosen instrument of salvation.

10. I thought it wasn't an obligation anymore after the Second Vatican Council.

Many people feel allergic to the word 'obligation.' It is ultimately better to conceive of our regular Mass attendance as a loving response to our Lord. However, we all know it can be difficult to always respond lovingly to the Lord's invitation to come to Mass. Therefore, the Church in her wisdom does still hold us bound to the foundational obligation of regular Mass attendance on Sundays and certain holy days, and to willfully neglect this obligation is still considered a serious sin (see the Catechism, paragraphs 2180-83).