

Attending Sunday Mass is a moral and spiritual duty or obligation for Catholics. The suspicion that this limits our freedom to choose is unfounded because our true freedom is always to choose that which is good and life giving. By going to Mass, we choose the ultimate good of being in God's presence and we receive that which is truly life giving, the graces of Holy Communion that prepare us for eternal life. But Sunday Mass is more than a duty, it is a privilege as we unite with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and bear witness to His saving love in our world.

All of us now have an opportunity to reflect honestly on the practice of our faith and to take the decision to make the journey home to the celebration of Sunday Mass. The welcome will be assured and warm because it is there that Christ waits for us and invites us into His life.







**For more information about Sunday Mass,
please go to the parish website for up to date information
or contact your parish priest.**

**Please visit the new Thresholds of Hope website at
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Returning to Sunday Mass and the practice of our Faith

Why is Sunday so important for Christians?

Sunday is a day of life and of glory. On that day, Christ, the life of the faithful, rose from the dead. We remember and celebrate this saving event in a special way on a Sunday. But more than that, the Crucified and Risen Christ comes to us in the celebration of the Mass. He speaks to us through the living word of the Sacred Scriptures. He feeds us, body and soul, with His own divine life in Holy Communion. He calls us out of our individual activities and isolation and gathers us together as His Church, a people set apart to give thanks and praise to Him.

Sunday is the Day of the Lord. It is on this day that we meet the Risen Christ and we are formed into a community of faith, hope and love by the power of His Holy Spirit.



Sunday for our Christian ancestors

From the earliest times, Sunday was the day set apart for the community to gather and celebrate the Easter mysteries of Christ's death and resurrection. It became the spiritual hinge of the Christians' week. St Paul refers to "the first day of the week" (1 Cor 16: 1-2) as the moment for taking a collection to support the poorest communities. The Acts of the Apostles describes the community celebrating the Eucharist in Troas "on the first day of the week." (20: 7-8)

The Didache composed in the first century addresses believers, saying: "gather yourselves together on Sunday, and break bread, and give thanks after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who is at odds with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: "In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations.""

The Sunday Eucharist became so important for our ancestors that they were willing to risk their lives and even to suffer martyrdom. For example, in the year 112, Pliny the Younger wrote to the Emperor Trajan boasting that he had arrested Christians who had gathered together on a Sunday to sing hymns to Christ. Of course, such persecution is still present in many parts of the world today. These men and women are martyrs for the day of the Sunday celebration.

The importance of attending Sunday Mass was emphasised in a third century instruction known as the Didaskalia: "teach the faithful and exhort them to be present at Sunday mass, lest they decrease the Church by their absence and deprive the mystical body of Christ of one of its members; they should hear the words of Christ as directed to each one of them in particular: "he who does not gather with me scatter" (Luke 11:23). Because you are members of Christ your only meeting place is the Church. Because Christ makes himself present as promised and communicates with us, you cannot belittle yourselves nor deprive the Saviour of his members, you cannot separate or divide his body"

The Journey Home

Due to the extraordinary circumstances of this past year, we have not always been able to be present at Sunday Mass and to gather as a community in our churches. Such separation has diminished us and, perhaps, even weakened our relationship with Christ. We have felt each other's absence and the loss of not being able to assemble together in the presence of the Risen Lord. Valuable though livestreaming may be, it is not a meaningful substitute for being physically present at the tables of God's Word and Eucharist.

However, things are changing and we can begin to practice our faith with much more confidence. The Lord invites us to make the journey home and to gather as a "flesh and blood" community for the celebration of Mass because this is the most complete realization of the Easter mysteries. St John Chrysostom expresses this beautifully when he writes:

"It is to a banquet that the Lord calls you ... you are invited to rest... In the Church joy triumphs over grief and heals the wounds in your heart. Oh, heavenly call! Let's hurry! But at the same time let's honour this Sunday meeting by what we are and by what we do." ("In Osiam hom. 1,1)