

Before lifting the Dispensation from the Obligation to Personally Participate in Sunday Mass Part II

“The people devoted themselves **to the teaching of the Apostles**, to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers (of the Apostles).”
(Acts 2:42)

Why is it so important that we come together in large numbers in a Church with the capacity to contain large numbers of the faithful? Let us first look at “devoting ourselves to the teachings of the Apostles.” As early as the second century we have the witness of St. Justin the Martyr for the basic outline of the order of the celebration of the Holy Mass that is the same until this day. He writes in a letter to the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161, 155a.d.)

“On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or countryside gather in the same place. The memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things (the homily).”

Included in these Old and New Testament Readings are the saving actions of Exodus and the freeing of the Jewish people in exile in Babylon by the pagan ruler Cyrus. Also, are included the words and the deeds of Jesus of Nazareth. Hence, the teachings of Christ calling us to concern for the poor and the needy, the calling to embrace Christ’s teaching and make them our own; especially singled out is the constant reminder to love one another as Jesus loved us, and continues to love each of us.

“You just cannot pray at home as at CHURCH, where there is a great multitude, where exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priest.” (St. John Chrysostom)

It is only in the Church that these teachings of the Prophets, the Apostles and Jesus are constantly presented, faithfully encouraged and actually manifested by believers! These communal gatherings teach Christ’s saving doctrine; but also fosters the Charity of the Lord in good works and manifests the love we have for all our brothers and sisters.

What is especially beautiful and useful is this: When one attends Sunday Mass weekly for three years, one actually hears, via the Biblical Readings, practically the entire Bible.

It has been a long time since we have experienced a normal existence here on our beloved planet. However slowly, but surely, we are returning to a more normal way of life. Many parishioners may not have been able to personally attend and participate in the celebration of Holy Mass because of the pandemic. Surely many have longed with a deep desire to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion. We priests have longed for the day when the Churches will again be filled with the faithful. Now the time has come.

Please know that each of you will be welcomed with open arms as you return to your other home, your parish Church...your spiritual home!

Welcome back home!