When Catholics don’t go to Mass

The Breathing Prayer

Breathe in God’s Love…
Breathe out…

When did Catholics stop coming to Mass every Sunday?

1965: 55% at Mass every Sunday

Today: 24% at Mass every Sunday

Source: CARA
How many come to Mass occasionally?

- 21% come at least once a month, but not weekly.
- 24% come a few times a year.
- 32% come rarely or never.

Source: CARA

Who Comes to Mass?

45% Pre-Vatican II (born before 1946)
24% Baby Boomers (born 1946-1960)
15% Post Vatican II (born 1961-1980)
17% Millennial Generation (born after 1981)

Source: CARA

Who’s in the Pews?

- Cradle Catholics: 74 percent
- Returned Catholics: 11 percent
- Catholic converts: 11 percent
- Inactive Catholics: 2 percent
Think about the people you know who don’t go to Mass…

Why don’t they come?

Busy people
Drifters
Angry people
Hurt people
Spiritual Seekers
People on the Edge
People who just don’t care
What is the problem?

What does it mean to live in a Post Modern culture?

Three Umpires

“I call them as they are!”

“I call them as I see them!”

“They ain’t nothing until I call them!”
Living in a Post-Modern World

- Declining trust in institutional religion
- Consumer-oriented mentality
- Entertainment mentality
- Breakdown of family and community
- Many alternatives to church

All of this has an impact on Mass attendance

- One-third say they can be a good Catholic without going to Mass.
- 57% say missing Mass is not a sin

A lot of parishes aren’t doing anything.

A lot of parishes have been in a “maintenance mode” for a long time.
“We Must Reach Out…”

“I like to use the image of the field hospital: some people are very much injured and are waiting for us to heal their wounds; they are injured for a thousand reasons. We must reach out to them and heal their wounds.” Pope Francis

Before we look at how we’re going to do that,

there is an important question that you have to answer...

Do you really want more people to come to Mass?
It’s time for your questions, comments, concerns…

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What draws them back?
Crisis in life
Influence of family or friends
Sense of God’s presence
Good liturgy & preaching
Friendly community
Sense of Vision in the parish
Adult education and special events
Ministry to children & teens
What people want when they come
• They want someone to care.
• They want to find meaning.
• They want to feel a sense of belonging.
• They want to feel a sense of hope.

How will you reach them?
• Prepare the parish
• Teach parishioners to invite
• Give parishioners the words to say
• Make all parish activities welcoming

Six Signs Someone is open to coming back to Mass...
1. Asking Questions
2. Remembering
3. Reading
4. Comments on events
5. Dealing with Life events
6. Feeling God’s presence
“Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch...” (Lk. 5:4)

It’s time for more questions, comments, concerns...
Making Hospitality a Parish Priority

Hospitality is an essential part of vibrant parish life. Here are some things you can do to make your parish more welcoming:

**Make sure your liturgical ministers know the importance of welcoming people:**

- Station someone at every door before Mass to greet people with a smile.
- Train ushers and greeters to strike up a conversation with people who are new to the parish or people who come to Mass alone.
- Remind lectors to be friendly to everyone because the people in the pews feel as if they already know them because the lectors are so visible at Mass.
- Encourage Eucharistic ministers to seek out after Mass the people who are crying when they come to Communion. All they have to say is, “Are you all right?”

**Help your social committee members understand what it means to be hospitable:**

- Use name tags at every social event.
- Assign volunteers to be on the lookout for people who are standing alone.
- Teach volunteers how to introduce themselves and strike up a conversation with people they don’t know.
- Make sure parish events take place in rooms that are handicap accessible.
- Offer fruits or cut-up vegetables for people who cannot eat cookies or donuts.
- Encourage committee members to invite newcomers to become part of the committee.

**Teach your parishioners how to be welcoming:**

- Encourage people to move into the pews so others don’t have to crawl over them.
- Ask people to be especially gracious at holiday times when newcomers sit in their favorite pew.
- Give people permission to talk to people they don’t know. Teach themselves how to introduce themselves: “Hi, my name is Joe, and I’ve been a parishioner here for 20 years. Have I met you before?”
- Make sure members of organizations and ministries welcome newcomers into their groups.
- Teach parishioners how to seek out people who have been away from the church and invite them back.

**Make sure your parish staff members offer hospitality:**

- Make sure your parish secretary is friendly and helpful to people who call or come to the door.
- Set up a procedure that makes people feel welcome when they register for the parish.
- Give new parishioners information about how they can get involved in parish organizations and ministries. Make sure that organizations understand how important it is to make room for newcomers.
- Train staff members -- from the cook and the custodian to the pastoral associate and the faith formation director – how to welcome everyone as if he or she were Jesus.

Jesus assures us that when we welcome a stranger, we are welcoming Him. St. Paul tells us that people who are hospitable sometimes entertain angels. Parish hospitality is not an option. It is our way of modeling the Kingdom of God right here on earth.
Why do I have to go to Mass?

Whether you’re trying to answer this question for yourself or for other members of your family, how you answer will have a lasting impact.

You may be tempted to say, “Because that’s what this family does!” Or worse, “Because that’s what the Church says we have to do!”

But what does that say about why we go to Mass? Does it make anyone – including you – more interested in going to Mass?

Here are eight good reasons to go to Mass:

1. **We receive support from the faith community.** We come before God as part of a community of believers. We join in communal prayers and responses. We raise our voices in songs of praise and thanksgiving. We realize that we are not alone on our spiritual journey.
2. **We receive forgiveness.** During the Mass we admit to God and to each other that we have made mistakes, and we receive God’s healing forgiveness.
3. **We receive guidance.** The readings and the homily offer us spiritual direction on how to live our lives as Catholic Christians.
4. **We pray.** During the Mass we have the opportunity to pray for ourselves and for others. We also have the opportunity to listen to what God is trying to say to us.
5. **We forgive.** When we join in the Lord’s Prayer, we promise God that we will forgive those who trespass against us.
6. **We witness a miracle.** We watch as bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. When we receive Communion, we receive the heart, mind, soul and divinity of Christ. We are strengthened in body and in spirit.
7. **We share in the peace of Christ.** At the sign of peace we reach out to others and experience the kind of peace that the world cannot give.
8. **We receive a special blessing.** The priest blesses us and commissions us to bring the love and peace of the Lord into the world.

But there’s more! Going to Mass is good for you. Studies show that going to Mass every week:

- Increases life expectancy.
- Improves your odds for a "very happy" life.
- Grounds us with a solid sense of right and wrong.
- Reduce the tendency toward rebelliousness.
- Make us less likely to suffer from depression.
- Improve attitudes and reduces stress.

If you’re already going to Mass every week, congratulations! If not, maybe you should think about coming back to Mass. You won’t be sorry!