

WITNESS FROM A PARISHIONER

I attend Mass nearly every day and have been doing so for some time. About the best way I can describe what has happened to me since I started is that attendance at daily Mass has "softened" me, rounded the hard, sharp edges of my personality. This is not popular in 2018 culture, one that glamorizes ambition, a "me-first" attitude and aggressive self-expression. In today's America being soft equates to being weak and timid. I can live with that.

Some background. In earlier years, I attended daily Mass on a not-so-regular basis, finding local churches close to my job that I could visit before work or at lunchtime. I found this rewarding. Then, with the best of intentions and a lot of thought, I decided to take an early retirement package and start my own business. It was a disaster. I couldn't generate any business and ended up wiping out my entire retirement savings just to pay bills. Dwindling funds, loss of hope and guilt about the decision I had made to leave my job sent me into a deep depression.

I started going to daily Mass—on a regular basis now. For the longest time, nothing happened—no work for my business, and no response to jobs I applied for. Then one day, out of the blue, I was awarded a large contract that kept our family going for several years until that, too, dried up. Since then, I have had several jobs and have had to deal with several layoffs. A real roller coaster. Throughout these years, I was sustained by a mantra my spouse and I have shared from our early days of marriage: "*God will provide...He always has...He always will.*" I remember a time when there was less than \$20 in our account at the end of the month. But the bills all got paid. And the good news was that there was almost \$20 in the bank at the start of the next month. A miracle? Yes. God provided...He always had.

Matthew 6:25-34

Attending daily Mass sustains me, gives me great hope, keeps me going. It has made me more aware of small daily gifts in my life and nurtured a desire to be thankful for them. And, most importantly, it has helped me grow in love for others and has lessened concern for myself and personal wants. A fancy house, fancy car, fancy clothes, vacations away—are not important anymore. Attending daily Mass has fostered a longing to do things for other people. This has brought a great deal of joy into my life. And it has softened me and made me more aware of others' everyday struggles. A good part of this is due to the daily homilies provided by Fr. Antonio, Deacon John and Fr. John Andrew. A common theme of nearly all of these homilies is love of neighbor, caring for others and the ever-present encouragement from our pastor to "Trust in Jesus."

Central to all of this is the Eucharist. I have always believed that Jesus is present in the Eucharist under both species, but a recent gift made this all the more real for me. A few months ago, my brother gave me a DVD entitled *Science Tests Faith—Following the Trail of the Blood of Christ* (it's available at amazon.com). It tells several stories about the Eucharist examined from a scientific perspective, one of which I will mention here. In the 1990's, a priest in Argentina picked up a consecrated host from the floor of the church, put it in a bowl with plain water and placed it in the tabernacle. A week later, he noticed what appeared to be flesh and blood in the bowl. With the permission of the local Cardinal, and without revealing the source of the material, the contents of the bowl were sent to several independent labs around the world for testing. Analysis showed that the material was in fact human tissue and blood—of a type that would be present specifically in a *heart that had been traumatized or wounded by blows*. Further tests revealed the material contained human DNA, but strangely its DNA structure could not be charted. It did not yield a genetic profile (which comes from a mother and father). Goose bumps.

If you are able, I invite you to join fellow parishioners at daily Mass and Holy Communion in the chapel (or at a church near where you work)—as often as you can. You will not be sorry. I am convinced it will change you. It has relieved my fears about what the future holds and given me a desire to concentrate on the mission I believe all Christians are called to: building the Kingdom of God on earth. Jesus said it simply: *For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.* What more could we ask than to have Jesus abide in us and we in Him?