

“When we leave the holy banquet of Communion, we are as happy as the wise men would have been if they could have carried away the Infant Jesus.” –St. Jean Vianney

If you are reading this on Sunday, May 24th and you haven't been to a Mass since Sunday, March 8th, you have been without communion for 77 days. Yes, the number seven twice. The number that signifies being complete and finished. God rested on the 7th day, the Lord's prayer has 7 elements, Jesus spoke of himself with seven metaphors, and Jesus completed seven “duties” while awaiting death on the cross. So, in the sense of complete and finished, we have finally finished the fast of communion with the holy number of 7.

However, Jesus also healed seven people on the Sabbath—the 7th day. So, in this sense, perhaps 77 days was for healing. Furthermore, the number seven shows us the fulfillment of God's word. The symbol we were given to remind us of God's promise to never destroy the earth by flood again, a rainbow—seven colors (ROYGBIV). Let' also not forget that we are promised seven churches in the Book of Revelation where we are promised a reward when we repent and live according to God's Word. Then in this sense, perhaps God has fulfilled a mystery we have not come to fully understand yet.

I know many parishioners shared the same anguish as me during these 77 days. Mass online is simply not the same as Mass when surrounded by your parish community. And it certainly isn't the same when you can't receive Christ sacramentally through communion. I recall watching the first couple weekends of the shut down Masses from the AOD. While beautiful, it wasn't the same as the closeness that is felt when sitting in a pew near your parish friends. When we decided as a staff to start streaming Masses, I was eager to provide my parish family the opportunity to feel unity when we all seemed so far apart.

I was there, every Mass—learning all kinds of new technology in order to make this new way of evangelizing happen. I was literally just feet away from Christ every weekend. How truly blessed was I! Although I missed receiving communion, it was not the sacrament I was missing most during the streamed Masses. It was all of you. The community that has grown with me and my family. The glory of what was happening at the altar table was shadowed by the darkness and the emptiness of the church behind me.

Clearly, this was not the Lent and Easter season we thought we would have been celebrating. So much has changed in such a short amount of time. These 77 days have taught me so much about Christ and I hope you have also learned much about him during this time. We are truly blessed to have the opportunity to attend Mass and receive communion! Eucharist is such a profound gift—it truly separates us as a Church. We must never forget that while the Eucharist is a sacrament—it is a **privilege**. And it is a privilege that is denied to millions. Communion is more than just a way to join with Christ physically and forgive our venial sins. The Eucharist creates a community across the world and unites us with heaven itself!

Yes, Mass guidelines are different. Yes, we can't hug, hold hands, or sit right next to our friends. And yes, we have to wear masks even if we aren't thrilled about it. But thank God for the opportunity to be physically part of the community He created again! I am so pleased to be with you all again. Thanks be to God.

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