



Heaven Kisses The Earth by Joe Sixpack

King Louis IX of France is also known as King St. Louis, the saint for whom the Midwestern city is named. Once while he was holding court, someone ran in and shouted a Eucharistic miracle was taking place in the chapel as the priest celebrated Holy Mass. Almost everyone ran out of the room from the presence of the king to the chapel to witness the miracle. Someone asked King Louis why he wasn't going to the chapel. His Highness responded that if Jesus appeared to him in the flesh right there in his royal court room he would not believe in the Real Presence more than he does already when at the Mass. He said, "Let those who need convincing go. I already believe it with my heart."

King St. Louis was one of the most benevolent monarchs in the history of the world, yet he was humble enough to believe in the Real Presence of Christ with all of his heart... like a child. If you are a practicing Catholic you no doubt believe in the Real Presence of Christ as the Church teaches It: that He is really and truly present in His body, blood, soul, and divinity; He physically lives in each particle of the Host and each drop of the Consecrated Wine.

It has been said that in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass heaven comes down and kisses the earth. This is how God most shows His love for us; by making Himself a captive prisoner for us to receive in Communion. Our creator condescends to love us in spite of ourselves. Because of this we owe him great homage, respect, and an outward showing of our love. With that in mind, I intend to spend this issue of *What We Believe...Why We Believe It* explaining some things we need to be reminded of and keep in mind when it comes to the Holy Mass and Communion. Not all of these things are strictly obliging but some are simply common sense as a matter of respect. Those things to which we are obliged will begin with an asterisk(*).

1. *We are obliged under pain of mortal sin to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation year round. Only those excused for a good reason (i.e., illness and those who care for them, etc.) are not imputed with mortal sin. Most Catholics know this, but what they apparently do not know is that they have to attend the *entire* Mass. If you arrive late (after the sign of the cross) or leave early (before the final blessing), you have not fulfilled your Mass obligation and commit mortal sin. Obviously, having to go to the bathroom, or if you were sick, or some other such an inconvenience, you are not committing mortal sin.
2. *In order to receive communion, we have to perform the Eucharistic fast. What that means is that we cannot eat or drink anything for at least one hour prior to Communion. This means no snacking, no drinking of coffee or soft drinks or milk, no chewing gum, no breath mints, or anything else. The only exception is for prescription medication. That doesn't mean you can take Tylenol, an antacid, or anything that was not prescribed by doctor.
3. In 1917, Our Lady of Fatima told the children that more people went to hell because of immodesty than any other sin. In those days, women wore dresses that went almost to the ground. Imagine how many more go to hell over immodest today! It's bad enough that today's styles are immodest and that we feel compelled to indulge in them, but the Holy Sacrifice the Mass is no place for immodest dress. Not only are we showing grave disrespect

to Jesus in the Eucharist, but we are tempting other participants in the Mass to mortal sin against the sixth and ninth commandments. This is called scandal, and scandal is sinful.

4. Related to this topic is the way we dress in general. If the Pope invited you to a private audience, you would wear the best thing that you have, because if anything less would be disrespectful. Yet we dress for Mass like we're going to a picnic. Since Jesus, the One we are worshiping in the Holy Eucharist, is the Pope's ONLY boss, why would you go to Mass dressed in less than your best?
5. Under the Old Covenant, we read in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) that God told the Israelites *exactly* how he wanted to be worshiped—right down to the clothes to be worn, the actions of the people, and the words to recite. The New Covenant (the New Testament and the era beginning with Jesus' foundation of the Church) is nothing more than a fulfillment of the Old Covenant. Jesus Himself said that nothing at all was changed from the Old Covenant under the New Covenant. Jesus gave the Catholic Church the authority to speak for Him. Today, just as in the Old Testament where God told his people how to worship Him, the Catholic Church tells us how God wants to be worshiped. In the Old Testament there were severe consequences for any violation of the way God wanted to be worshiped. Therefore, we as Catholics are obligated to follow every single rubric of a Mass. The Little Flower said she would give her life for the smallest of rubrics. Are we in the less obligated?
6. At the Sign of Peace is where I see the most abuses during Mass. This is a part of the Mass that is optional for the priest, and many of them don't use it. The reason they don't use it is because they see so much disrespect toward the Holy Eucharist at this time. The Sign of Peace is not meant for a community fun time. We will violate the rubrics when we go to people around the church—waving to everybody, kissing, et cetera. The proper way to do the sign of peace is to shake the hand of the person on each side of you while saying the words, "Peace be with you." Anything else detracts from the Holy Eucharist and the worship given to God in the Holy Sacrifice the Mass.
7. When we recite the Our Father, this is not a time for handholding. Nor is it a time for holding our arms outstretched, palms facing upward. The rubrics of the Mass are silent on the proper posture at the Our Father. This means that the laity are to simply stand still. So far as outstretched arms with palms facing upward are concerned, this is a posture that is reserved strictly to a priest. It symbolizes the prayers of the people going through the priest up to God. This is not a posture the laity may perform.
8. Parents, control your children! The Mass is not a time or place for the children to eat finger food, color in coloring books, flip through children's books, or do other things that can distract parishioners from their worship of God. These children can and should be learning about the Mass. As parents, it is your responsibility to educate your children on what the Mass is and how we should participate at the Mass. There are many fine resources available to help you teach your children about the Holy Sacrifice the Mass. All that is needed here is simple discipline and control. Mothers, nurture your children without spoiling them. Fathers, take your rightful role as the head of your household and instill discipline in all of your family members.

This is just a primer, so to speak, of how we should behave in Mass and show respect to the Eucharist. I could write much, much more, but space does not allow for me to cover everything that needs to be covered. We'll be tackling this issue more in future installments of *What We Believe...Why We Believe It*.

Do you have a questions about this and other related issues? Go to JoeSixpackAnswers.com to get your answers.