

By  
**Joe Sixpack**



*The Every Catholic Guy*

## Ol' Jim

Jim had been a slave prior to the Civil War. After the war he worked as a servant at Mt. St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Every day he used to spend at least an hour before the Blessed Sacrament in the seminary chapel. He did this because he wanted to prepare himself well for his Holy Communion the following morning. There before the tabernacle he made fervent acts of faith, hope, love and contrition.

Since Jim couldn't read, the seminarians wondered how he spent his time. One day one of the seminarians said to him, "Jim, what do you do in the chapel? What prayers do you say?"

Jim replied, "Why, I just goes into the chapel and says to Jesus: 'Lord, here's ol' Jim.' Then I keep quiet and listen to the Lord. Then after awhile I says to Him again: 'Lord, here's ol' Jim, just dropped in to see You, that's all.'"

Jim's death was very edifying. Just after he had received the last sacraments, and while Christ was still with him as Holy Viaticum, he lifted himself in his bed, and with his hands folded, and a smile on his lips as he gazed toward heaven, he uttered feebly but distinctly these words, "Lord, here's ol' Jim, just dropped in to see You."

Then Jim fell back on his bed. He dropped in for a visit that would never end.

Jim's preparation for Holy Communion must have been very pleasing to Jesus because it came from the heart. Many long prayers aren't necessary. Jesus especially wants your love. If you make your Communion well, which includes a good preparation, Jesus will reward you as He apparently rewarded Jim—the sight of Him for all eternity.

Apathy is perhaps the greatest enemy to the spiritual life we face today. Scripture calls this apathy lukewarmness. Jesus detests lukewarmness. In fact, in Revelation 3:15 He said, "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, *I will spew you out of my mouth.*"

That's a pretty heavy indictment from Jesus... especially since He's our creator. After all, He not only took our lowly human form, but He also redeemed us through His death and resurrection. For us to be lukewarm, then, is exceptionally grievous.

We all can understand getting lukewarm about some aspects of the faith. After all, we can't stay pumped up all the time. Besides, what pumps you may not excite me. I get all excited about the finer points of sacramental theology and how they relate to moral theological concepts. I'd be willing to bet that's not exactly your cup of tea.

So being lukewarm about some things really can't be helped. However, the Holy Eucharist is the very heart and core of our Catholic faith. Frankly, Christianity doesn't make a lick of sense without the Eucharist. Therefore, the Eucharist is the one thing we may never be apathetic about. Yet we witness this apathy every single time we go to Mass.

Our first clue of Eucharistic apathy is the realization that there're some faces at Mass that aren't there regularly. If people weren't apathetic about the Eucharist they'd be at Mass every week, instead of when they just want to be. Even if it weren't a mortal sin to miss Sunday Mass without a good cause, Catholics should actually have a burning desire to be present for the holy sacrifice and the Eucharist.

Another sign of Eucharistic apathy is what happens before Mass. From my personal observations, I'd say that at least 75% of people coming in for Mass either don't bother genuflecting to Jesus in the tabernacle at all, or they make a slight dip they think passes for a genuflection. Folks, by genuflecting toward the tabernacle you're acknowledging the majesty of Jesus. If you're physically unable to genuflect, as I am, you need only to profoundly bow. Other wise, genuflect.

Another sign of Eucharistic apathy is the way time is spent prior to Mass. Nearly everybody kneels down on the kneeler in the pew, and that's proper. In case you didn't know it, though, the reason we do this is because that time spent kneeling is supposed to be to prepare ourselves for Mass. That time isn't supposed to be spent looking around to see who's there, looking around to see if there's something new hanging on the wall, whispering to your neighbor, or fooling around with your cell phone. Like ol' Jim, you're supposed to be making fervent acts of faith, hope, love and contrition.

A major time of showing disrespect for the Eucharist is actually during Mass. It's that part of the Mass called the "Sign of Peace". Jesus is already on the altar at this point in the Mass. He deserves all our attention and reverence, which is why the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) clearly indicates that we should only embrace the hand (no kissing) of the person to each side of us, then *quietly* say, "Peace be with you." We're not supposed to be turning to everyone around, waving to friends across the room, or leaving our pew. Embrace the hand of the person to your right and say, "Peace be with you"; embrace the hand of the person to your left and say, "Peace be with you." That's it. Period. As I said, Jesus is on the altar already, so it's a matter of showing Him simple respect. Besides, when we disobey the GIRM we reject Jesus (Luke 10:16).

Finally, another sign of Eucharistic apathy is what happens after Mass. To be perfectly honest, there's so much chatter and visiting inside the church after Mass that it's actually noisier than people exiting from a theater after a movie. Big no-no, folks! There shouldn't be a verbal sound as we exit the church after Mass. Again, it's a matter of Eucharistic respect. If you want to visit with your friends after Mass, God has graciously provided you with another venue for that. I think they call it outside or the outdoors.

Ol' Jim certainly had no problem with Eucharistic apathy. He shows us the absolutely best way to prepare for Mass and Communion. Jesus gives us all so very, very much in this land and era of great prosperity. The very least we owe Him for that is a little simpler respect.