



CHRIS MCGRATH/GETTY IMAGES

How (and Why) to Return to Sunday Mass

The Register's clip out, photocopy and pass-on guides for Advent

Invite Someone

Catholics are very aware of the problems in the world — the financial crisis, terrorism, the attacks on life and the family. We are also very aware of the one source of peace: Christ.

This Advent, the Register challenges each reader to do one thing: Invite someone back to Mass. Sunday Mass commitment transforms.

Souls can begin to be transformed when someone shows the courage to reach out and extend an invitation to the sacraments.



- 1 It's your way to relive the Last Supper.
- 2 When was the last time you prayed too much?
- 3 If you want to spend eternity with Christ, you need to get to know him now.



Quick Tip 1 Be early. Would you come late to your wedding?

- 4 It's the central, necessary activity of Christian worship (Luke 22:14-23; John 6:53; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

- 5 It's your best way to identify yourself with Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

- 6 Some of the greatest people in history were Mass-goers (St. Francis, Blessed Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II ...).

- 7 Wise people invest money for the future. How much



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Quick Tip 2 Communion is open to all who are not conscious of committing a serious sin (anything from missing Sunday Mass to infidelity) since their last confession. Fast for one hour before Communion.

more should we invest in eternal life?

- 8 It has to be better for you than TV.

- 9 If you've been to confession, you get to receive Jesus Christ.

- 10 If you knew Jesus would be somewhere, wouldn't you go see him?

- 11 Guaranteed Bible readings. Countless lives have been changed by Scripture. Might yours?

- 12 Statistics say that people who go to church are less stressed.

- 13 It's the best way to pray for your family and friends — and to cope with troubled times.

- 14 One out of Ten Com-

Quick Tip 3 Forgotten what to do at Mass? You'll remember. It's like riding a bicycle! Follow the Mass closely with a helper: missalette, missal or *Magnificat*.



Quick Tip 4 Bow your head as a sign of reverence before receiving Communion.

mandments asks us to go to Mass every Sunday.

- 15 You'll become a better person at Mass. The more you are a part of God's life, the better you'll be.

- 16 Life is complicated. Get directions that work — from the One who created life.

Quick Tip 5 In prayer after Communion, make one resolution about how you'll live your life differently. (Think back on the homily for ideas.)

- 17 It's your way to go most directly through Jesus Christ to God the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit in prayer.

- 18 Is one hour too much to give to God? How many hours do you spend on other priorities?

Quick Tip 6 Be well dressed. Would you come dressed for jogging if you were invited to the White House?

Common 'Good Excuses'

What's in it for me? Everything! God desires only and always your good. He became a man in large part to give us himself in the Mass. Why should you deny yourself such a gift?

I don't need to go to Mass to get close to God. At Mass, you receive God himself — Jesus Christ truly present in the sacrament. Even a beautiful mountain vista can't compare to that.

I had a bad experience with the Church. This is always sad. But many of us also had bad teachers — and we know the whole education system isn't bad. Jesus wants to bring you healing at Mass.

I don't get anything out of Mass. Don't expect it to be entertainment. Learn about what it does: joins us to Christ, separates us from sin, wipes away venial sins, commits us to the poor and prepares us for heaven.

I don't have the time. There are 24 hours a day, 168 hours a week. Mass takes one hour. That's less than 1% of your week. You have the time; find it.

I'm a sinner. I don't deserve to be at Mass. Welcome to the club! We are a Church of saved sinners. None of us deserves to be here. See you at the confessional ...



Quick Tip 7 Feel alone or unsure at church? Bring a friend!

Additional copies: NCRegister.com; click "Resources."

How (and Why) to Return to Confession

The Register's clip out, photocopy and pass-on guides for Advent



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Peace Of Mind

"Peace on earth!" announce the angels at Christmas. But how and where do we find that peace? Simple: confession. People sometimes wrongly think of confession as a place of judgment and guilt. We have good news: It's a place of healing and peace.

The Register challenges each reader this Advent to go to confession and recommend it to at least one other person. The guide provided here can help.

After all, as Pope Benedict XVI said: "The renewal of the Church in America and throughout the world depends on the renewal of the sacrament of penance."



- 1 The presence of sin can easily lead to depression and anxiety.

- 2 You shower to show respect for those around you. Cleansing your soul makes you better to be around, too!

Step 1 Examine your conscience ... using the Ten Commandments or an available guide.

- 3 Mortal sin, unconfessed, "causes exclusion from Christ's Kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices forever, with no turning back" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1861).

Step 2 You have the choice of facing the priest (if he offers the option) or speaking through a screen.

- 4 As they leave the confessional, people smile a smile of freedom.

Step 3 There are no special words you need to say. Greet the priest, and tell him how long it has been since your last confession. If it's been awhile, he'll help you.

- 5 Because love means having to say you are sorry to the one you love.

Step 4 Be concise, clear, complete and contrite. You have to confess mortal sins and give a sense of how often. Don't be embarrassed. You're not going to tell the priest anything he hasn't already heard.

- 6 You will grow in humility, sincerity and self-knowledge.

- 7 Blessed Mother Teresa went. Frequently.



- 8 Hoping to convert on your deathbed? That's not very likely. Most likely, you will die as you lived.

Step 5 The priest won't scold you. In fact, if you've had a tough confession, he'll show you extra care. Your penance won't be harsh.

- 9 It is itself a serious sin to go to Communion if you have serious sin on your soul and have not asked for forgiveness in confession.

- 10 Don't be scared to death of confession. Be scared of death without confession.

- 11 Be strong. Face your sins; deal

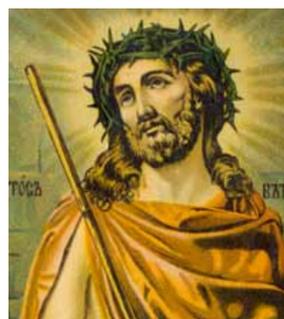
Step 6 Then you'll make an act of contrition. Look in a prayer book for a longer one, or simply say: "Jesus, I am truly sorry for my sins and, with your grace, I will try to sin no more."

with them and move on.

- 12 Make sure there are no unpleasant surprises at your particular judgment or at the Final Judgment.

- 13 The priest will listen to your sins and will never tell a soul on pain of losing his soul. Priests even learn to forget what they hear.

Step 7 Do your penance right away, before leaving the church, if possible.



Step 8 Christ has forgiven and forgotten your sins, and the angels and saints are having a party to celebrate.

Confession Definition

"For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must together be met: 'Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent'" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1857).

Grave Matter

What constitutes "grave matter"? Some common sins, according to the bishops: missing Sunday Mass, sex outside marriage (including pornography and masturbation), serious theft, abortion, defamation of character and purposely getting drunk.

Concerns & Answers

Can't I talk to God directly, not a priest, to get forgiveness?

Not according to the Bible. Read John 20:21-23; 2 Corinthians 2:10; and 2 Corinthians 5:18.

If God knows everything we do, then how come we have to go to confession?

You may know your friend broke your iPod, but wouldn't it be aggravating if he knew you knew but still didn't say, "I'm sorry"?

Doesn't God forgive no matter what?

If we think of sin as merely breaking rules, it is hard to understand why God can't just "look the other way." But sin is real; it hurts us and makes us distant from him — and unable to enter heaven. We can only be restored if we confess.

Confession just gives people the idea that it's all right to sin as long as you're sorry later.

If a man is confessing drunkenness while he has plans with his buddies to go barhopping and get drunk again the coming weekend, he can't be forgiven. He has to have decided to stop. Confession stops sins; it doesn't start them.

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