



*From the Pastor
29th Sunday in
Ordinary Time - A
October 22, 2023*

EXCUSES FOR NOT GOING TO MASS.

This is the last of my 5-part miniseries on the excuses used by some people for not fulfilling their

obligation to attend weekly **Mass**. I gleaned these from the www.catholiclink.org website, which offers timely insight into the challenges faced by the **Catholic Church** these days.

Reason #13: Only old folks go to Mass. An old joke asks: *"Why do so many old people go to Mass?" - "To prepare for the Final Exam!"* As **Job** said: *"... with old age is wisdom, and with length of days understanding."* [Job 12:12] The younger **Elihu**, who challenged **Job's** insistence that his woes were not a result of his sins, admitted: *"I am young and you are very old; therefore I held back and was afraid to declare to you my knowledge. I thought, days should speak, and many years teach wisdom!"* [32:6-7] So, the 'wisdom of the ages' should not be readily dismissed, nor their example failed to be followed.

It is also a misnomer that 'only old people go to church!' College campus chapels are crowded - perhaps not at the early morning **Mass**, but young people DO practice their **Faith!** Have you seen an international **World Youth Day**, like the one that took place last summer in Lisbon? While young **Vocations** to the **Priesthood** and **Religious Life** are down in the USA and Europe, they are up in Africa, Asia and elsewhere. It is also so refreshing to see the young and the not-so-young interact at church; the kids enliven the elderly, and those blessed with years look so kindly upon those who could remind them of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Reason #14: Sit. Kneel. Stand. I have no idea what I am doing. I have 'been there, done that' as the expression goes. We can become so self-conscious when we feel that we are standing out in the crowd or are clueless to what's going on around us. The few times I have concelebrated at a **Byzantine Divine Liturgy** or took part in a **non-Catholic Rite**, like a **Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service** or **'Mixed Marriage,'** unnerved me. And we all stumbled over

ourselves as we adapted to the revised responses which began in 2011 on the **1st Sunday of Advent**. [That was the best time to return to **Mass**: no one knew what to say!]

If we are out of sync, or a bit rusty on when to stand, sit, kneel, bow, etc., perhaps it is best NOT to sit up front at first - you could throw off the whole church! In all honesty: you probably don't 'stand out' as much as you think you do. And if you do ... as our mothers would say, "... And whose fault is that?" Just get over yourself and come back to the regular practice of your Faith! For as they say: practice makes perfect!

Reason #15: I can't stand being serious for so long! We are truly victims of ourselves! I say that because we have allowed ourselves to believe that everything should happen instantaneously, without any suffering or pain, and be totally understandable immediately. Fast food; instant coffee; 'one click' away answers; the luxury of being able to afford to toss anything that gets worn out or boring; a lack of commitment and of being true to one's word from **Presidents** to **Peasants**, even **Priests** and **People**. In the midst of this 'throw away' society - in which even the unborn and terminally ill are discarded - when anything can be mocked or insulted, made fun of or ridiculed - the **Church** and her **Rites** offer a timeless oasis that can redirect us to the eternal, to the **God** of all goodness, to **"the peace which this world cannot give."** [Cf. John 14:27]

We are also victims of the 'sit-com' - 'soap opera' and 'modern day movie' schema: the scene or venue changes every 2 to 3 minutes to keep us titillated, on the edge of our seat, in constant motion. Cliffhangers and those 'freeze frame' stares at the end of a scene draw us in ... usually, only to disappoint us. How can the **Gospel** and **Rites** that have, for the most part, not changed in two millennia compete with all this? It cannot. But if we are wise enough to see that one is merely entertaining us with a fable or story, and one is revealing to us and helping us enter into **Divine Revelation** and the very **Presence of Christ**, we would never miss the next exciting episode of **God's Love** made present to us in the **Holy Sacrifice of the Mass!**

In His holy Name,

Very Rev. Thomas J. Serafin, VF, KCHS