

## Sunday: The Day of Obligation

Christianity, since its nascent beginnings has held the notion of weekly attendance at worship as the center of Christian life. What started for many as an opportunity to express their faith in community became the beautiful practice of willful obligation to give glory to God for graces and favors of the week and to petition God for the needs of the community as well as the individual. As time has marched on, the notion of the Sunday Obligation and its place in the fabric of the Christian life has become jaded and at best misinterpreted as the Church's opportunity to 'hold onto its members in a mindless organized display' – this attitude could not be farther from the true intention of the Church.

The Sunday Obligation is a duty to draw near to our God, to experience the love of Christ, and to worship Him in a most beautiful way (The Mass, pg. 59). We are called as God's faithful people to give due honor to Him – the Sunday Mass is the primary way in which this honor can be bestowed as the Mass is the highest form of honor and worship that can not only be given to God but can also be attributed to Him. The Sunday Obligation fulfills the moral command of the Old Covenant, taking up its rhythm and spirit in the weekly celebration of the Creator and Redeemer of us all – God. (CCC 2176)

Given all of this, many still ask: "Father.....why do we have to go to Church on Sunday?" Sunday is traditionally known as the first day of the week. The Gospels recall that Jesus rose from the dead on the "first day of the week" (cf. Matthew 28:1). Therefore, because Sunday is deemed the 'first day', the Resurrection is linked to Sunday and each Sunday is characterized as a "little Easter" with Easter Sunday itself being the principal feast of the Liturgical Calendar. Secondly, as the Catechism states, "The celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation unless excused for a serious reason (either illness or dispensed by their own pastor). (CCC 2181)

Therefore, the Sunday Obligation is our fulfillment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment, a development of our oneness in the faith of Christ and our outward participation in the Paschal Mystery – the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord. We are called to a deeper comprehension of this amazing gift that we are given. We are called to come together on this day to hear the Word of God, to have it broken open to us by the priest or deacon and to share our faith around the table of the Lord as we receive Him in the Eucharist and receive the grace to go forth into the world as his disciples in faith and mission. So when you're sluggish to attend Mass this or any Sunday remember the words of the Psalm 'This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!' (Psalm 118:24)

In the next installment, we will talk about all the gestures at mass and how our attention, participation and intent prayer through the entire mass fulfills what the Second Vatican Council calls "full, active participation in the Celebration of the Eucharist". (SC, 11)