

Welcome to the community of the Catholic Parish of St John 23rd Glenwood-Stanhope Gardens where the love of Christ is shining in so many ways.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands in which the Catholic Parish of St John XXIII and the Diocese of Parramatta sits, the land of the Darug and Gundungurra people. We would like to pay our respects to the Aboriginal Elders past, present and future for they hold the traditions, memories and wisdom of Mother Earth on which we place our feet upon today.

Gospel Reflection

The story of Naaman the Syrian, a gentile, in 2 Kings 5 is a delightful story of contrariness. Today's first reading picks up from when Naaman washed himself in the Jordan as directed by Elisha. Before this Naaman and his retinue had arrived at the prophet's house expecting this underling of the king of Israel to bestow on him due attention and a deed of some consequence. Elisha did not go out to him; he merely sent a message with what to do: go wash seven times in the Jordan, a river considered by the Syrian to be no more than a muddy creek. It seems in all things he expected some degree of grandness, of pomp and circumstance. He concedes to the direction only at the goading of his own servant, who points out that if he would happily do a great thing then he should also be able to do a little thing. After this bathing Naaman returned to Elisha, but this time he is changed in spirit as well as in body; he goes in to stand before the prophet, and to beg a favour. His offer of a reward is rejected, but his plea to be gifted with Israel's soil on which to worship God from his own place is granted. This is one of only two accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures of people being healed of leprosy, Miriam, the sister of Moses, in Numbers 12 being the other. Her account is, however, of a different sort, while Naaman's being a gentile gives it a certain importance in its use for criticism against Jews in the gospels.

The healing from leprosy is the connection to today's gospel reading (Luke 17:11-19). Luke is very careful to give a geographical context to this story, and more attention should be paid to it: Jesus is travelling between the lands of Galilee and Samaria, thus between two peoples with a mutual animosity, the Jews and the Samaritans. They actually also share the same faith in the one God, and share the Law (the five "Books of

Moses"), but the Samaritans' heritage as an admixture with gentiles made them repugnant to the sensibility for purity among Jewish leaders returning from their Babylonian exile. In Luke's narration no mention is made of the ethnicity of any of the lepers until one turns back to thank Jesus. This action seems to have caught the attention of later readers, perhaps through their not understanding the depth of the animosity between Jews and Samaritans, so that the story is often used in children's liturgies or catechesis as if its purpose is to promote the importance of saying thank you.

Look instead how Luke tells the story. This is his third mention of Samaritans. In the first a Samaritan village would not accept Jesus because he was going to Jerusalem. In the second, a Samaritan was portrayed as the true neighbour of the brigands' victim, who was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. This time, as Jesus is to enter a village (we are not told if it is Jewish or Samaritan) he is approached by ten lepers who, in accordance with the Law, keep their distance even as they speak with him. They are told to present themselves to the priests, a step necessary to be declared free from leprosy and fit to return to their normal lives. What the declaration that one at least was a Samaritan (and somehow easily identified as such) draws out is that this single group is of a Jewish and Samaritan mix. Here in the quasi no-man's land between the two territories those in adversity from both groups appear to form a community. This appears to be the more salient point: here in adversity former enemies live in unity. In their own way these lepers already embody the message of the Gospel.

Our Parish Mission

The Parish of St John XXIII is a faithful community with the Eucharist as its heart. Inspired by John XXIII's prophetic opening of the windows of the Church, we welcome the fresh air of the Holy Spirit, inviting every person to share in the responsibility of enriching the life and faith of our community by sharing their gifts and talents."

Mass Times

Mon	8:30am
Tues-Fri	9:15am
Sat	9:00am, 6pm Vigil
Sun	7:30am 9am 10:30am 6pm
Holy Cross Primary School	
Wed	9:15am during school days
2nd Sat	7:30pm Indonesian Mass

Masses of Devotion

1st Tues	7:30pm Novena Mass <i>Our Lady of Perpetual Help</i>
1st Fri	7:30pm Novena Mass <i>Sacred Heart of Jesus</i>

Exposition + Benediction

1st Fri	after 9.15am, 7.30pm
Wed	8:00pm Holy Hour

Reconciliation

After the weekday masses	
Sat	after the 9am mass <i>until 10.30am</i> 5:15 - 5:45pm <i>before the Vigil Mass or upon request</i>

Sacraments

Sun	12pm Baptism <i>by appointment</i>
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Prayers

Tue	7:00pm Rosary and novena prayers (<i>Church Tabernacle</i>)
Fri	6.30pm Christ Catholic Community Prayer Group (<i>office</i>) Pauline Camilleri 0407 417039

Special Blessings

Blessing during masses	
1st Sun	Birthday celebrants
3rd Sun	Wedding anniversaries

Join & be part of our community.
scan the QR code



If you want to be part of our mailing list please email

✉ Communications@john23rd.org.au

OUR PARISH SCHOOLS

Ambrose Early Learning

160 Perfection Ave Stanhope Gardens
(02) 9852 0585
✉ celstanhope@parra.catholic.edu.au
www.celstanhope.catholic.edu.au

Holy Cross Primary

49 Meurants Lane, Glenwood
Principal: Attila Lendvai
(02) 8664 7100
✉ holycross@parra.catholic.edu.au
www.hcglenwood.catholic.edu.au

St John XXIII Catholic College

160 Perfection Ave Stanhope Gardens
A/Principal: Frank Chiment
(02) 9852 0500
✉ stjohn23stanhope@parra.catholic.edu.au
www.stjohn23stanhope.catholic.edu.au

Entrance Antiphon

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But with you is found forgiveness, O God of Israel.

First Reading

2 Kings 5:14-17

Naaman returned to Elisha, the prophet, and acknowledged the Lord.

Naaman the leper went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, as Elisha had told him to do. And his flesh became clean once more like the flesh of a little child.

Returning to Elisha with his whole escort, he went in and stood before him. 'Now I know' he said 'that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel. Now, please, accept a present from your servant.' But Elisha replied, 'As the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing.' Naaman pressed him to accept, but he refused. Then Naaman said, 'Since your answer is "No," allow your servant to be given as much earth as two mules may carry, because your servant will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice to any god except the Lord.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 97:1-4

R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

Sing a new song to the Lord for he has worked wonders. His right hand and his holy arm have brought salvation. **R.**

The Lord has made known his salvation; has shown his justice to the nations. He has remembered his truth and love for the house of Israel. **R.**

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout to the Lord all the earth, ring out your joy. **R.**



Second Reading

2 Timothy 2:8-13

If we hold firm, we shall reign with Christ.

Remember the Good News that I carry, 'Jesus Christ risen from the dead, sprung from the race of David'; it is on account of this that I have my own hardships to bear, even to being chained like a criminal - but they cannot chain up God's news. So I bear it all for the sake of those who are chosen, so that in the end they may have the salvation that is in Christ Jesus and the eternal glory that comes with it.

Here is a saying that you can rely on:

If we have died with him, then we shall live with him. If we hold firm, then we shall reign with him. If we disown him, then he will disown us. We may be unfaithful, but he is always faithful, for he cannot disown his own self.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Gospel Acclamation

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Alleluia, alleluia!

For all things give thanks to God, because this is what he expects of you in Christ Jesus. Alleluia!

Gospel

Luke 17:11-19

It seems that no one has returned to give thanks to God except this foreigner.

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered one of the villages, ten lepers came to meet him. They stood some way off and called to him, 'Jesus! Master! Take pity on us.' When he saw them he said, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' Now as they were going away they were cleansed. Finding himself cured, one of them turned back praising God at the top of his voice and threw himself at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. The man was a Samaritan. This made Jesus say, 'Were not all ten made clean? The other nine, where are they? It seems that no one has come back to give praise to God, except this foreigner.' And he said to the man, 'Stand up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.'

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Communion Antiphon

The rich suffer want and go hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no blessing.



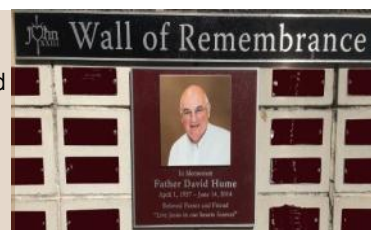
COLUMBARIUM

For our parishioners who are planning to buy a Niche, do so without delay, because we always want to prioritise members of our parish who wish to buy the Niches. For further information please contact the Parish Office.

MEMORIAL WALL

The wall in front of the church is devoted to the memory of our deceased family and friends, especially if they are buried overseas.

For any enquiries please email columbarium@john23rd.org.au
The plaques cost \$600.00



Join and be
part of the
Cake Angels
contact Madeline Huang
cakcangels.stjohn23@gmail.com



**PRAISE AND
WORSHIP**
**3rd Saturdays at
7:30pm**
SJ23rd Prayer Group



**Young at Hearts
Seniors Group contacts**
Contact either of the following:
Frank Coleiro - 0459 504625
Trevor Coutinho - 0407 150399



Vinnies
join the good works
Message Rose Franco 0401 387427

CONTACTS

PARISH OFFICE

Office Hours

Tue - Fri 8.30 - 4.00pm

Office Contacts

☎ (02) 8883 5981

(AH Emergency)

📞 0434 033 326

160 Perfection Avenue,
Stanhope Gardens NSW 2768

MAILING

PO Box 23, Stanhope Gardens,
NSW 2768

CLERGY

Parish Priest:

Fr Jolly Chacko

✉ jolly@john23rd.org.au

📞 0417 541 637 (emergency only)

Assistant Priest:

Fr Bartholomew Chukwu

✉ chukwu@john23rd.org.au

STAFF

Secretary:

Tanya Gatt

✉ secretary@john23rd.org.au

Finance:

Renuka Soosaipillai

✉ accounts@john23rd.org.au

Sacramental Coordinator:

Helen Zammit

✉ sacramental@john23rd.org.au

OTHER CONTACTS

Parish Council:

John McCabe

✉ johnmccabe5@gmail.com

Maintenance issues:

David Gorkic

✉ maintenance@john23rd.org.au

Columbarium queries:

✉ columbarium@john23rd.org.au

Never miss our Bulletin

If you would like to be included in
our mailing list

✉ communications@john23rd.org.au

NEW TO OUR PARISH?

Welcome to our parish community!

Please take a welcome pack from
the church foyer

Visit our website

<http://john23rd.com/>

Like our Facebook page

www.facebook.com/john23rdparish

COELIACS

Those who are gluten intolerant
may receive communion with a
gluten low host. Please inform the
acolyte before Mass.

HOMEBOUND

Homebound and would like to
receive Holy Communion please
contact the parish office or send
text message to Rose Franco on
0401 387427



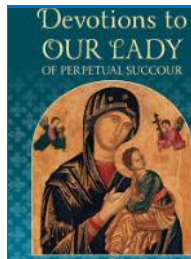
Office for Safeguarding Parramatta Way is to:

◆ Act with Justice, and state that
we have a zero tolerance for any
form of abuse or harm to
children or any person

◆ Act with justice and ensure that
laws and obligations are upheld,
and safety is paramount
<https://safeguarding.org.au/>

Praying together

Praying together provides a lot of benefits like strengthening our faith and uniting hearts in our community. Join us and enrich your faith and let the Holy Spirit come to you.



Rosary | novena prayers

Tuesday at 7:00PM and

Novena mass

First Tuesdays 7:30pm

Rosary statue roster

contacts Techie Sarlabus

techie.sarlabus@gmail.com or

Melva Paguinto

emcipi85@yahoo.com.au

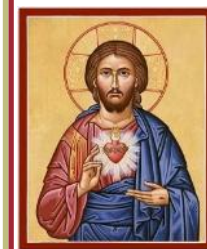
HOLY HOUR

Eucharistic

Adoration

Wednesdays

8:00PM



Novena Mass

Our Sacred

Heart of Jesus

First Fridays

7:30PM with

exposition and

adoration

Sacrament.

Rosary Statue Family Roster

	7	14	21	28	
Oct	Valdez	Richards	Jacob	Nobleza	
Nov	4	11	18	25	
	Deang	Sebastian	Hala	Festejo	
Dec	2	9	16	23	30
	Cruz CG	Barnouti	Sebastian	Paguinto	Paguinto
Jan	6	13	20	27	
	Ruggiero	Ring M	Barnouti	Tangunan	
Feb	3	10	17	24	
	Available	Available	Available	Available	

"A family that prays together, stays together - Fr Patrick Peyton"

PRAYING in the SILENCE of the HEART with Brother

Roger of Taizé

Merciful God, in the
footsteps of the apostles
and of the Virgin Mary,
you are preparing us to
abandon ourselves in you,
in trust and in love.

Diocesan News



For more events please go to <https://parracatholic.org/connect/events/> or <https://catholicoutlook.org/>

26 October - WEDDING ANNIVERSARY MASS

You are warmly invited to attend the annual
Wedding Anniversary Mass to be held Sunday 26th
October. Please join us for 2pm Mass at St Patrick's
Cathedral Parramatta celebrated by Bishop Vincent
followed by afternoon tea at the Cathedral Hall. All
couples celebrating a significant wedding
anniversary will receive a certificate from Bishop
Vincent.

Please register your name, years of marriage and
numbers attending to marriage@parracatholic.org by
15th October. Family and friends are welcome.

Volunteers needed at Catholic Care Emerton!

Catholic Care is looking for volunteers to help at
their Walk-In Centre in Emerton on Tuesdays to
Thursdays. Volunteers would assist welcoming
people into the drop-in centre, greeting clients for
counselling appointments, assisting the local
Aunties' yarning and art gatherings, reception of the
OzHarvest food delivery and overall assistance with
Catholic Care projects and programs. For more
information, please contact Catholic Care on (02)
8843 2500.

Volunteers needed at Catholic Care's Mamre Creche

Are you great with young kids? Catholic Care is
looking for friendly, caring volunteers to support
staff during crèche sessions on Tuesdays and
Wednesdays from 10am to 2pm at Mamre House,
Orchard Hills. If you enjoy spending time with
young children (aged 0-5) and have a few hours to
spare, we'd love to hear from you. Volunteers will
need to obtain a Working with Children Check and
Police Check.

To help make a difference in the lives of local
families, call Catholic Care on (02) 8843 2500.

Grab your FREE copy of the Catholic Outlook Magazine!

Also available online via catholicoutlook.org/magazine

Caring for our parish together

We are very grateful to all our parishioners who always generously support our Parish.

FIRST COLLECTION supports the priests and deacons of the Diocese.

SECOND COLLECTION provides for the running costs of our church, ministry expenses.

We have a Planned Giving Program. We encourage parishioners to register for direct debit or
credit card deductions as alternative to an envelope system. Support can be provided via the
registration forms are available at the church foyer or from the website or scan the QR Code.

scan this



TapnGo machines available by the entrances.

Community Events



As a community of St John 23rd, we invite our different cultural community to host a Saturday Vigil or Sunday mornings mini event after our mass celebrations for a full community involvement and encourage our parish community to support these mini endeavour.

Any other suggestions for church fanfare, fundraising activities or just availability of support are most welcome and greatly appreciated.

Please contact either Nanette - 0404 465600 or Techie - 0438 201436.

Community

St John XXIII

Join the Parish celebration of the Communion of Saints!

**HOLYWEEN
SAINTS & HEROES NIGHT!**

Friday 31st October 2025 | 6:00 PM
St John XXIII Catholic Church

Come dressed as your favourite saint or biblical character!

Prizes for the best outfit!
Enjoy games treats and fellowship...
All ages welcome.

Please register VIA this QR Code!




Topic: Faith on the Field

Franciscan Men

**SUNDAY 12TH
OCTOBER**

6:15PM Adoration
Followed by Dinner and Presentation
All Men 18+ Welcome

With Neville Reynolds

Franciscan Shrine of the Holy Innocents
8 Greyfriar Place, Kellyville NSW
franciscan.men@gmail.com




Cake Angel's Kitchen

Product details: Buttery Rusks (Filipino Iloilo Biscocho)
Weight: 250 grams per bag
Price \$5
Quantity available: 10 bags for \$50



If each individual can gather up orders for 10 bags to be shared amongst friends and family, we will have the opportunity to donate \$50 (or 100% of sales) towards the church hall project. We can also deliver upon request.

Contact: Send a text to 0423 777 430 (Madeline)

If you would like to assist in this endeavour please contact the Cake Angels
Proceeds from the **Cake Angels' Kitchen** will go towards the Hall/Office Project

October Calendar

Mon	13	8:30am - Mass
Tues	14	9:15am - Mass 7:00pm - Novena Prayer Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Wed	15	<i>Saint Teresa of Jesus (M)</i> 9:15am - Mass 8:00pm - Holy Hour
Thurs	16	9:15am - Mass
Fri	17	<i>Saint Ignatius of Antioch (M)</i> 9:15am - Mass
Sat	18	<i>Saint Luke (F)</i> 9:00am - Mass 6:00pm - Mass
Sun	19	7:30, 9:00, 10:30am - Mass 6:00pm - Mass

HALL PROJECT UPDATE

We are the stewards of our parish, and we are not just building a hall, we are building the heart of our thriving parish Community. Ideally, if we can find 350 people with a gift of \$3000 each, we can achieve this. In saying this we also invite gifts of any amount, according to your giving ability and most importantly to give with a happy heart. Let us all dream together as Father jolly always says.

Ways to donate

Bank transfer

Account name : Blessed John XXIII Parish

BSB : 067 950 A/C : 00000313

Reference: BD (your name)

BPOINT

For credit card donation visit
<https://www.bpoint.com.au/pay/StJohnXXIIIPGS> or scan the QR code

Total contributions to date



Pastoral Ministries

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. Mahatma Gandhi
We are in need of volunteers to assist in the different pastoral ministries in our Parish.



John McCabe	Mei Velasco
Karen Green	Ajith Lobo
Julian Martin	Helen Festejo
Suni Fernando	Rebecca Reynolds

⇒ SRE Teachers

If you could spare an hour during weekdays to spread God's word teaching the scriptures to children, **WE NEED YOU**. We currently have 4 public primary schools and a high school in our parish where we hold scripture classes during school hours for 30 minutes during Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. For more information please call Asoki 0430 020265 or Renuka 0414 795814. Training and resources will be provided.

⇒ GARDENERS AND CLEANERS

Now that the church is open for celebrations, its floors need to be swept of dust, cobwebs brushed off, candle stands cleaned and garden kept green. We would like to request all our volunteer cleaners and gardeners to come back and continue their ministry. For more information contact maintenance@john23rd.org.au or the parish office.

FLOWERS FOR THE CHURCH

For donation, please contact James David on 0413 787596



We would like to extend our gratitude to those who continually support and donate flowers for the altar.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

St Jerome urges us to "search the scriptures" and say that "ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ." The scriptures reveal to us who God is, and provide a light to illuminate our path through life. The scripture give us life.

We will shortly be starting a scripture reflection group in the parish, run by seminarian, Jeff Hood. We will use a process called lectio divina ("divine reading") to reflect on the meaning of bible passages for our faith and our life. These sessions will not be lectures on scripture, but will focus on our personal reflections on passages from the bible, often the reading for the coming Sunday.

We will meet at 7.00pm on Thursday night, in the Church Kitchen, commencing 16th October.

For further information, contact the Parish Office on 8883 5981.

Special Intentions

Born to eternal life:

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

Maria Carnido, Hilton Lowe, Manolo Chavez Queenie Walshe

Remembrances:

Cynthia Gomes, Corazon Vinluan, Pilar Felix

Anniversary:

Sick: Names published with permission.

Lord Jesus, heal me. Heal in me whatever You see needs healing. Heal me of whatever might separate me from You. Heal my memory, heal my heart, heal my emotions, heal my spirit, heal my body, heal my soul. Lay Your hands now gently upon me and heal me through Your love for me. Amen.

Brian McCunnie, Valeria Laureta, Lucas Colleta, Dr Bronwyn Andrews, Rosanna John Pellissery, Cindy Dadvias, Christina Properzi, John Tipton, Margaret Harrison, Emma Matoza, Bev Osborn Florentina Elisura, Peter McArdle, Melissa Nava Lathie Christie, Elizabeth Langley, Ryan Dixon, Virginia Santos, Charlie Busuttil Imelda Vinluan Elizabeth Candame, Obet Dionisio, Zena Samar Jerwin McCarron, Lily Camilleri, Natasha Leitao Peter Dawson, Lenka Olivier Talija, Troy James, Perla Magculang, Marilyn Nalapo, Mary Phillips, Carrie Conolly, Fausto Bayot, Joshua McCarroll, Maria Romeo, Myrna Manalili, Jonathan Gemin, Carlo Bueno, Raymond Lanzona, Louise Smith, Gerald Simbulan, Dudley Francis, Jude Newnes, Jakov & Marija Franich, Victor Pons, Zoey Illic, Marcelino Matteazi, Emma Q. Fernando, Alvin, Brendan Prideaux, Bev Lewis, Isagani Ocampo, Barbara Thompson, Elsie Knapp, Dexter Aguas Manuel Sarris, Rosie Carbonel, Ksenija Bosnic, Hilary Regan, Babies with Blister disease, Helen West

Thanksgiving

If you or a family member is homebound and would want to receive communion in your home please contact the parish office.

PRAYER FOR THE OUR NEW HALL PROJECT

Almighty God, we thank you for your many blessings to our parish and to each of us. We pray for your guidance and wisdom as we prepare ourselves to begin the construction. May your Holy spirit be with all our Engineers, architects, builders and all involved in this project. Protect them from harm and grant them skill and diligence. May this hall be a place of unity, fellowship and faith formation for our community, a space where we can grow in faith and serve others. Bless all our sponsors, donors and each of us who contribute in our own humble ways and means.

Whatever we do, may we do it for your glory.

St. Joseph, the patron of families and workers,	Pray for us
St. John XXIII, Patron of our parish,	Pray for us
ST. Vincent Ferrer, Patron of all builders,	Pray for us

Youth Ministry

BLAZE YOUTH

WHO: Year 7 to 12
WHEN: 7:00 - 9:00pm
WHERE: St John XXIII College
(C Block Bell space)

For any queries, please email blaze@john23rd.org.au or DM @blazeyouthsj23 on Insta | FB



IGNITE YOUNG ADULTS

WHO: 18 - 35 years of age
WHEN: First Sundays each month
TIME: 7:00 - 9:30pm
WHERE: St John XXIII Staffroom

For any queries please either email gnite.stjohn23@gmail.com or DM on @ignite_sj23



MORE YOUTH GROUPS

CRL (Community of the Risen Lord)
Rojith de Silva 0405 9563210
Nimeshi Fernando 0417 101009

YFC (Youth for Christ)

Dominic Lim 0468 826253 Australia
Ronan Limguangco 0478 629629 International

Why Sunday Mass Is an Obligation

Catholics are instructed to attend Mass and enjoy adequate rest on Sundays (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2180-2188). This is not optional. However, in our modern society filled with packed schedules and stacks of bills, many Christians treat Sunday like just another day.

Many Christian communities even eschew the thought of obligatory worship on Sunday and Holy Days. For example, more than a few churches have been giving their congregations “the week off” for Christmas (even if it falls on a Sunday) affording everyone the opportunity to “prioritize your family”. Sadly, this has trickled down to even Catholic and Orthodox Christians, and it’s something that deserves a response.

As a catechist at my home parish, it has pained me to learn that many of the children that I am instructing in the faith do not attend Mass regularly with their families. Those who are involved with religious education in their diocese know that this is a systemic problem throughout North America. In discussion with one director of religious education in a large diocese, I was told that a mom had said they want to enroll their child in religious education classes, but will not be attending Sunday Mass because when they do decide to go to church on Sunday, they want to go to the megachurch down the street because they are “fed” there.

What Really Matters?

The problem, then, is two-fold. The first is not understanding the necessity the Christian has in participating in the Eucharistic celebration each Sunday and Holy Day. The second problem is that many baptized Catholics do not fully understand what graces we receive from the celebration of Holy Mass. If we did understand it, our churches would be full each day, Monday through Sunday, with no problem!

Enter social media where memes are posted on a variety of topics; many of them garner instant likes, but rarely is there any room for much discourse. Recently I came across one such meme shared by a friend from Marcus Stanley, a non-Catholic Christian missionary and musician. The comment was very brief, but there’s quite a bit to unpack:

“It doesn’t matter how many Sundays you sit in church or if you think you are saved. God sees what you do and how you treat people. That’s what really matters.”

The Eucharist

This is exactly the mentality of many Christians today, and it’s a shame as this sentiment gets many things wrong about our faith in Jesus. We’ll leave aside the issue about being saved for now, as this appears to be a dig to those who subscribe to the “once saved, always saved” mantra. We can safely agree it doesn’t matter if one thinks they are saved. God is the judge of our souls (see 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Philippians 2:12). That being said, let’s jump into the implications being made from these comments, and answer why this view of “church” is un-biblical, and quite frankly, un-Christian.

Let’s first look at the opening statement. We are told that “it doesn’t matter how many Sundays you sit in church”. Well, let’s agree on one aspect of this. If all we’re doing when we go to church is just sitting there, totally unengaged, then we really are profiting nothing, and doing Sunday worship completely wrong. When we are in Church hearing Mass, we must be participating with our prayers, uniting our hearts with the priest at the altar. But if we seriously think that all we are doing on Sunday is “sitting” in Church, then we probably need to back things up and get to the heart of the matter: the Eucharist is Jesus.

Faith and Love Need a Source

If Catholics lived like we truly believed the Eucharist is Jesus, we would not see so many parish closures and mergers as we do today. We would not have such a dearth of priestly vocations as we currently see. We would be beating down the doors to get into Mass during the week, or at least every Sunday, instead of trying to figure out ways to weasel out of participating in Mass, such as was seen this past Christmas when it fell on a Monday. People were asking, “Do I really have to go to Mass two days in a row?!” And what’s sad is that our fellow Catholic brothers and sisters were asking like it was a chore, or like it was unreasonable. This shows how dim of an understanding of the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament many Catholics, particularly in North America, have today.

We must remember that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life”. Not the source and summit for just Catholics, or for Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christians. This great gift that our Lord Jesus has given us is for all Christians. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

“The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch (CCC 1324).”

The World Needs the Mass

In *Lumen Gentium*, promulgated by Pope St. Paul VI during the Second Vatican Council, we are able to grasp in even more detail how necessary the Eucharist and the Mass are to the Christian life:

“Incorporated in the Church through baptism, the faithful are destined by the baptismal character for the worship of the Christian religion; reborn as sons of God they must confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church... Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It. Thus both by reason of the offering and through Holy Communion all take part in this liturgical service... Strengthened in Holy Communion by the Body of Christ, they then manifest in a concrete way that unity of the people of God which is suitably signified and wondrously brought about by this most august sacrament” (LG 11).

That really does not sound like merely sitting around at all. We must encourage all of our Christian brothers and sisters to enter into full communion with the one Church our Lord Jesus founded, in order that they may experience that “fount and apex” of the faith in Jesus Christ they say they profess. All Sunday “services” are not equal, and this meme implies that they are. As Catholic Christians, we must make this distinction. It’s imperative to differentiate between attending a mere “service” and participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, or the Divine Liturgy as it is called in the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

The meme mentioned above attempts to make all Christian modes of worship identical. This is simply not the case. As St. (Padre) Pio of Pietrelcina said:

“It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without Holy Mass.”

The Covenant Fulfilled

We must be clear (and charitable) in letting our lukewarm and fallen away Catholic brothers and sisters know that praying at home on Sunday, or attending worship services at Protestant churches do not give us as many graces as attending a single Mass does. How do we know this? Let’s look again to the *Catechism* and to Scripture.

Throughout the Old Testament, we see how the Israelites had a rich liturgical life, including a priesthood and a divine mandate to keep holy the Sabbath day. The *Catechism* states:

“The celebration of Sunday observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in the human heart to render to God an outward, visible, public, and regular worship ‘as a sign of his universal beneficence to all.’ Sunday worship fulfills the moral command of the Old Covenant, taking up its rhythm and spirit in the weekly celebration of the Creator and Redeemer of his people” (CCC 2176).

We Encounter Christ at Mass

While the ceremonial and judicial aspects of the Old Covenant are no longer binding on the Christian, the moral laws have not been abrogated. Furthermore, since our Lord Jesus came “not to abolish” the law, “but to fulfill” it (Matthew 5:17-18), we see the fulfillment of the command given in the Old Covenant today with the precept to attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass each Sunday and Holy Day. We have something much greater than what those under the Old Law had. Why would we want to miss it? The answer can only be ignorance of what is actually taking place at the Eucharistic celebration and the continuity it possesses with the Old Covenant.

We also must give a response to the second part of the meme that was posted above. Stanley also says that “God sees ... how you treat people. That’s what really matters.” Let’s look at this from a different angle. If we treat other people kindly and the way we would want to be treated, we must also keep in mind that God is a Person; indeed he is one God in three Persons. How are we treating the three Persons of the Holy Trinity? Are we spending time with Jesus at Mass in the Holy Eucharist? How can we say that going to Mass on Sunday doesn’t matter knowing that we personally encounter our Lord Jesus there?

More Virtue, Please

Of course it matters that we treat people with charity, but we have a duty to both our fellow man and to God. One of the four cardinal virtues is justice, in which we give our due to others, and as the Catechism shows, as the Church has always taught “Justice toward God is called the ‘virtue of religion’” (CCC 1807). Here’s what St. Thomas Aquinas says regarding this duty we as Christians have to God:

“The precepts pertaining to religion are given precedence (Exodus 20) as being of greatest importance. Now the order of precepts is proportionate to the order of virtues, since the precepts of the Law prescribe acts of virtue. Therefore religion is the chief of the moral virtues” (Summa Theologiae, II-II, Q. 81, A. 6).”

As we can see, justice is not just a virtue, but the principal virtue. We often remember the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity when we speak of virtues, but how often do we remember the virtue of justice? If we as Christians are called to be not simply “nice” (as the world would have it), but virtuous, should we not be working on all the virtues? Especially, as St. Thomas says, the “chief” of all virtues?

Intentionally Participating in the Mass

We as Christians can practice this virtue of justice to our Lord and God by participating in the sacramental life. Pope Pius XII made this very clear in his encyclical, *Mediator Dei*:

“It is, therefore, desirable, Venerable Brethren, that all the faithful should be aware that to participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice is their chief duty and supreme dignity... with such earnestness and concentration that they may be united as closely as possible with the High Priest, according to the Apostle, ‘Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus’” (MD 80).

We, the laity, participate at Holy Mass with the priest in a real and actual way when we unite our hearts to Jesus, our High Priest, with praise and thanksgiving, “pay God the honor and reverence that are due to Him” (MD 93).

This is forgotten by many of our brothers and sisters. But if we have a firm grasp on the reasons we go to Mass, we can witness in a way that will hopefully cause our neighbors to reconsider their impression of the Holy Sacrifice at our altars.

It’s about Faithfulness

The Catechism further explains:

“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... Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church” (CCC 2181, 2182).

We Need God’s Grace

In a 2017 audience, Pope Francis made it very clear that this meme is way off base in light of two thousand years of Christian living. He basically says that one can’t skip Mass and then think they’re in an all right state as Christians. It’s almost as if he were replying directly to this meme we’ve looked at! Let’s close with the vicar of Christ’s wise words:

“It is the Mass that makes Sunday Christian. The Christian Sunday revolves around the Mass. For a Christian, what is a Sunday in which the encounter with the Lord is lacking?

“How can we respond to those who say that it is of no use going to Mass, even on Sunday, because the important thing is to live well, to love our neighbor? It is true that the quality of Christian life is measured by the capacity to love ... but how can we practice the Gospel without drawing the energy necessary to do so, one Sunday after another, from the inexhaustible source of the Eucharist? We do not go to Mass in order to give something to God, but to receive what we truly need from him. We are reminded of this by the Church’s prayer, which is addressed to God in this way: ‘although you have no need of our praise, yet our thanksgiving is itself your gift, since our praises add nothing to your greatness but profit us for salvation’ (Roman Missal, Common Preface IV).

“; why do we go to Mass on Sundays? It is not enough to respond that it is a precept of the Church; this helps to preserve its value, but alone does not suffice. We Christians need to participate in Sunday Mass because only with Jesus’ grace, with his living presence within us and among us, can we put his commandment into practice, and thus be his credible witnesses.”

Christ Sustains Us

Don’t let anyone tell you that we as Christians don’t need to go to church on Sunday. It does matter. It matters because we owe our Lord our gratitude and because he sustains us with his very Body and Blood in the Eucharist at Mass. I wouldn’t miss it for the world, and I sincerely hope the same goes for you.

<https://ascensionpress.com/blogs/articles/why-sunday-mass-is-an-obligation?srsltid=AfmBOorkHnO2DrgIEpR95PFkzIUJ8IPxzdS65aTXUns6aSVApdxdlqso>



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