

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.

Our PARISH MISSION

The Parish of St John XXIII is a faith 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."

Gospel Reflection

We continue the Sermon on the Mount this Sunday, with these two sayings about the salt of the earth and the light of the world. As Australians we learn early in life that whenever you go around to a friend's place for a barbecue you never talk about religion or politics. I guess it is because these are topics that can get people hot under the collar. For many in our society religion is a private matter. In an online forum discussing this very question of whether or not religion is or should be private, seventy-three per cent of those who posted a comment said it should be private. For some it is a way of showing respect for other people's different beliefs, for others it is a way of not shoving one's opinions down other people's throats. Perhaps this is part of the reason why some people in the West are uncomfortable with Muslim women who wear an item of clothing like the hijab, the burqa, and the niqab, because it advertises their religious affiliation. In Western culture we have tended to go off the idea of parading our religion in front of others by the clothes we wear. We may be a little turned off by someone who seems to take it all a little bit too seriously. Yet, we have had a long tradition of Christian men and women who have taken vows wearing a religious habit, including a veil for religious women.

Today's gospel tells us that religion for the Christian is not a private affair. It is meant to improve the lives of others. We are much more conscious today that too much salt in our diet can raise blood pressure, harden arteries, and lead to strokes and heart attacks. Yet, even dietitians and scientists agree that we need some salt intake. As anyone who listens to George and Gary on 'MasterChef' knows, good food needs seasoning. Of course, a little bit goes a long way. It is all about the right balance. As even a tiny amount of salt makes a world of difference, and as even a small lamp brings light to a dark room, so a small amount of Christianity in action brings benefit to our world.

Faith is to benefit others. True, it is not to be shoved down someone else's throat, but we must demonstrate the power of the Spirit. How do we bring the light into the darkness of our world? Third Isaiah (an anonymous prophet who was active in the years after Israel's exile) tells us: whenever we share our bread with the hungry, then we are a light in the darkness; whenever we shelter the homeless poor, then we are the salt of the earth; whenever we clothe the naked poor, then we are (again) a light in the darkness; and whenever we bring hope to the oppressed, then we are (again) the salt of the earth. Our faith is not to be hidden away, it is to be used for the benefit of those in need.

Yet, it is all about balance. Elsewhere in the gospels Jesus warns us not to parade our good deeds before others. St Augustine of Hippo explains the difference between parading our good deeds before others and doing good deeds for others. It is all about giving the praise to our Father in heaven. Augustine says (Sermo 54), 'So when a person is seen by all to do good, his conscience should be prompted by the intention to do good, but not by any intention of getting well known for it, except for the praise of God and the advantage of those who get to know about it'.

So today let us thank our God for those people who share their faith with others, for those people whose love of God helps them make a difference for the better in our world. Let us thank God for those who are the salt of the earth and for those who are the light of the world. Let us thank God for those whose public faith does not oppress others but helps them, for those whose public faith is not for their own glory but for the benefit of their neighbour and for the glory of God.

Geoffrey D. Dunn

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 <i>during school days</i>
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>)
Thurs	7:00pm Lectio Divina (<i>church</i>)
Fri	6.30pm Christ Catholic Community Prayer Group (<i>office</i>) <i>Pauline Camilleri 0407 417039</i>

Special Blessings

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

Homebound?

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

COELIACS

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

Join & be part of our community.
Welcome pack at the church foyer or scan the QR code



If you want to be part of our mailing list please email
✉ Communications@john23rd.org.au



ASH WEDNESDAY 18TH FEBRUARY MASS TIMES

6.00am, 9.15am and 7pm—SJXXIII Church
9.15am School Mass Holy Cross
11.00am School Mass John XXII

Could you please bring your Palms from last year, there is a box in the back foyer.

Thank you

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 available at the church foyer or from the website or scan the QR Code



TapnGo machines available by the entrances.

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.



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/>

Entrance Antiphon

O come, let us worship God and bow low before the God who made us, for he is the Lord our God.

First Reading

Isaiah 58:7-10

Your light will shine like the dawn.

Thus says the Lord:

Share your bread with the hungry, and shelter the homeless poor, clothe the man you see to be naked and turn not from your own kin. Then will your light shine like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over. Your integrity will go before you and the glory of the Lord behind you. Cry, and the Lord will answer; call, and he will say, 'I am here.' If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist, the wicked word, if you give your bread to the hungry, and relief to the oppressed, your light will rise in the darkness, and your shadows become like noon.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 111:4-9

R. A light rises in the darkness for the upright.

He is a light in the darkness for the upright: he is generous, merciful and just. The good man takes pity and lends, he conducts his affairs with honour. **R.**

The just man will never waver: he will be remembered for ever. He has no fear of evil news; with a firm heart he trusts in the Lord. **R.**

With a steadfast heart he will not fear; open-handed, he gives to the poor; his justice stands firm for ever. His head will be raised in glory. **R.**

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

I came to you to proclaim Christ crucified.

When I came to you, brothers, it was not with any show of oratory or philosophy, but simply to tell you what God had guaranteed. During my stay with you, the only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus, and only about him as the crucified Christ. Far from relying on any power of my own, I came among you in great 'fear and trembling' and in my speeches and the sermons that I gave, there were none of the arguments that belong to philosophy; only a demonstration of the power of the Spirit. And I did this so that your faith should not depend on human philosophy but on the power of God.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Gospel Acclamation

John 8:12

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the light of the world, says the Lord; the man who follows me will have the light of life. Alleluia!

Special Intentions

Names published with permission

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

Born to eternal life

Alfred Degiorgio, Avelino Olan, Peter Touma

Remembrances:

Jovencio Benesa, Odah Langamin, Gloria Langamin, Anita Uy

Death Anniversary

Enrigueta Benesa, Emanuel Cremona

Sick

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, John Tipton, Valeria Laureta, Bev Osborn, Lucas Colleta, Dr Bronwyn Andrews Dudley Francis, Marilyn Nalapo, Christina Properzi, Raymond Lanzona, Elizabeth Langley, Gerald Simbulan, Brendan Prideaux Marcelino Matteazi, Carlo Bueno, Helen West, Victor Pons, Ksenija Bosnic, Isagani Ocampo, Myrna Manalili, Lenka Olivier Talija, Florentina Elisura, Peter McArdle Emma Matoza, Rosanna John Pellissery, Zena Samar, Charlie Busuttill, Elsie Knapp, Perla Magulang, Fausto Bayot, Margaret Harrison, Elizabeth Candame, Joshua McCarroll, Cathie Christie, Lily Camilleri, Melissa Nava, Imelda Vinluan, Cindy Dadvivas, Louise Smith, Hilary Regan, Mary Phillips, Jude Newnes, Manuel Sarris, Jerwin McCarron, Rosie Carbonel, Maria Romeo, Zoey Illic, Mary Bormate, Bev Lewis, Noah, Carrie Conolly, Jonathan Gemin, Babies with Blister disease, Renado Naldo Ryan Dixon, Barbara Thompson, Natasha Leitao, Troy James, Mr Thomas, Nicollo Benesa, Carlo Dominic

Thanksgiving

Ricardo Ramirez

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

Gospel

Matthew 5:13-16

You are the light of the world.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men.

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.'

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Communion Antiphon

Let them thank the Lord for his mercy, his wonders for the children of men, for he satisfies the thirsty soul, and the hungry he fills with good things.

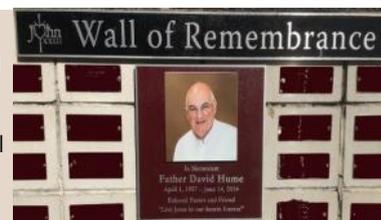


COLUMBARIUM

If you are considering purchasing a niche, we still have spaces available. These are open to parishioners, families, friends and our neighbouring parishes. For more 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



CONTACTS

PARISH OFFICE

Office Hours

Tue - Fri 8.30 - 4.00pm

Office Contacts

☎ (02) 8883 5981

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

John McCabe

Mei Velasco

Julian Martin

Suni Fernando

Helen Festejo

Ajith Lobo

Rebecca Reynolds



OUR PARISH SCHOOLS

Ambrose Early Learning

160 Perfection Ave Stanhope Gardens

☎ (02) 9852 0585

✉ celcstanhope@parra.catholic.edu.au

🌐 www.celcstanhope.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

Principal: Frank Chiment

☎ (02) 9852 0500

✉ stjohn23stanhope@parra.catholic.edu.au

🌐 www.stjohn23stanhope.catholic.edu.au

Praying together

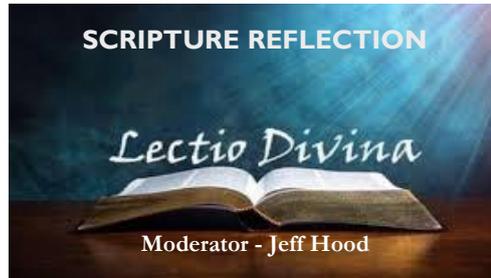
When we pray together, our faith is strengthened and our community is drawn closer. Join us to deepen your faith and open your heart to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Rosary Statue Family Roster

	3	10	17	24	
Feb	Erasmus	Ring	Jacob	Ruggiero	
Mar	3	10	17	24	31
	Paguinto	Hala	Available	Available	Available
Apr	7	14	21	28	
	Available	Available	Available	Available	
May	7	14	21	28	
	Available	Available	Available	Available	

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

Rosary statue contacts Techie Sarlabus techie.sarlabus@gmail.com or Melva Paguinto mcipi85@yahoo.com.au



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.



WE NEED YOU

⇒ 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.

⇒ CLEANERS AND GARDENERS

As we give our heartfelt thanks to the wonderful volunteers who faithfully keep our church clean, our gardens green, and our surroundings welcoming, we also invite others to join this valued ministry. A few more helping hands would make a great difference in caring for our shared spiritual home.

If you are able to assist, please contact Tanya at the parish office.

⇒ CAKE ANGELS

If anyone is interested to be involved and take leadership of this fun loving dynamic group please contact Tanya at the parish office or Techie at 0438 201436.



A Friendly Reminder to Our Parish Community

We kindly ask all parishioners to help care for our church by cleaning up after themselves after masses. Small actions—such as returning items to their place and disposing of rubbish properly. Help keep our church clean, welcoming, and ready for everyone. Thank you for your care and consideration in looking after our shared spiritual home.

February Calendar

Mon	09	8:30am - Mass
Tues	10	<i>Saint Scholastica (M)</i> 9:15am - Mass 7:00pm - Rosary & Novena prayer <i>Our Lady of Perpetual Help</i>
Wed	11	9:15am - Mass 8:00pm - Holy Hour
Thur	12	<i>Saint Agatha (M)</i> 9:15am - Mass
Fri	13	<i>Saints Paul Miki and companions (M)</i> 9:15am - Mass
Sat	14	<i>Saints Cyril & Methodius (M)</i> <i>Valentine's Day</i> 9:00am - Mass 6:00pm - Mass
Sun	15	7.30am, 9:00am, 10:30am - Mass 6:00pm - Mass



Young at Hearts Seniors Group

Contact either of the following:

Frank Coleiro - 0459 504625

Trevor Coutinho - 0407 150399



Vinnies

join the good works

Message Rose Franco 0401 387427

YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT GROUPS

BLAZE YOUTH 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](https://www.instagram.com/blazeyouthsj23) on Insta | FB

Contact Ellena - 0478 685 191

IGNITE YOUNG ADULTS 18 - 35 years of age

WHEN: First Sundays each month 7:00 - 9:30pm

WHERE: St John XXIII Staffroom

For any queries please either email

gnite.stjohn23@gmail.com or DM on [@ignite_sj23](https://www.instagram.com/ignite_sj23)

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*

Diocesan News



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

Parish Hall/Office Project Plan

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TapGo machines available by the entrances.

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/StJohnXXIIIPGSG>

scan the QR code



Building our Community
TOGETHER

Please contact either
 Nanette - 0404 465600
 Techie - 0438 201436

As a vibrant community of St John XXIII Parish, we invite our various cultural groups and ministries to take part in our parish life by hosting a Saturday Vigil or Sunday morning mini-event after our Mass celebrations. These gatherings are a wonderful way to share your culture, connect and strengthen our sense of family and belonging within the parish.

We encourage everyone to come along, participate and support these community-led activities. We also welcome suggestions for future events, fundraising ideas, or any offers of help — your creativity and support are always appreciated and play an important part in making our parish life joyful and thriving!

HALL PROJECT

Prayer

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.

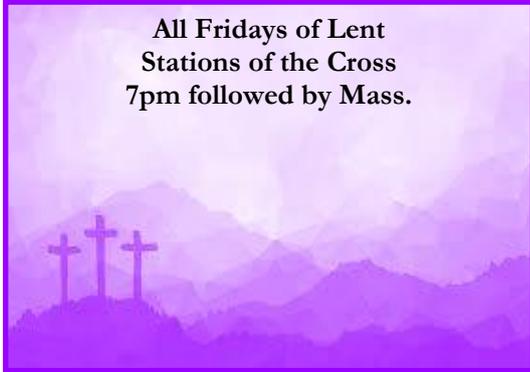
- St. Joseph, the patron of families and workers, **Pray for us**
- St. John XXIII, Patron of our parish, **Pray for us**
- St. Vincent Ferrer, Patron of all builders, **Pray for us**

Total contributions to date



UPCOMING Community EVENTS

**All Fridays of Lent
Stations of the Cross
7pm followed by Mass.**




INTERNATIONAL EUCHARIST CONGRESS
1st March as we officially begin the preparations for the **International Eucharist Congress**.
All churches in Australia will have a special hour of Adoration on that day.
In our parish the Adoration time will be from 5.00pm to 5.50pm followed by the Sunday evening mass. The details to follow.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Blaze Term 1 Dates



6 February	20 February	6 March
20 March		

IF ANYONE WOULD LIKE A FREE FRIDGE PLEASE CONTACT THE PARISH OFFICE 8883 5981

YAHS CALENDAR OF EVENTS	
23 rd February, Monday, 6:30pm	Pizza & Pasta Night - The Fitzroy Lane Restaurant, 7 Hills RSL. RSVP 18th February
11 th March, Wednesday, after the 9:15am Mass	Psychology and spirituality of getting older, from the wisdom and insights by Jeff Hood RSVP 9 th March
22 nd April, Wednesday	Picnic in the Park, TBC
15 th May, Friday, 11:30am	Mother's Day lunch - The Fiddler RSVP 8 th May
10 th July, Friday, after morning mass	Morning tea
For all inquiries/confirmation/RSVPs please call or text Frank 0459 504 625 or Trevor 0407 150 399	



SUNDAY MASS OBLIGATION

Do you understand the Sunday Mass obligation? Do you know a Catholic who doesn't like to go to Mass? Do you understand why it is a Mortal sin to miss Sunday Mass without grave reason? In our modern society, faithfully attending Mass seems to have become an act many Catholics view as optional. The teaching of the Church has never changed. To get directly to the point, it is not optional. Faithful Catholics are obligated to attend Mass each and every Sunday.

But we should not view the word 'obligation' as a bad thing. Going to Mass is not a punishment, it's not a chore to get out of the way so you can go to the movies or out to brunch. The Mass is celebrated at Christ's instruction, "Do this in memory of Me." If we all take a moment to understand why participating in Mass is so important, why skipping Mass is a mortal sin, maybe 'obligation' will no longer seem like such an imposing word. Understanding why the Mass is so important is the first step to loving the Mass. And when you come to love the Mass, going to church on Sunday no longer feels like an "I have to," but instead becomes an "I need, I want to."

The Precepts of the Church

Before going further, it is important to note what the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us about Catholic Mass attendance.

The first precept ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor") requires the faithful to sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord as well as the principal liturgical feasts honoring the Mysteries of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints; in the first place, by participating in the Eucharistic celebration, in which the Christian community is gathered, and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days.

The second precept ("You shall confess your sins at least once a year") ensures preparation for the Eucharist by the reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, which continues Baptism's work of conversion and forgiveness.

The third precept ("You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season") guarantees as a minimum the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood in connection with the Paschal feasts, the origin and center of the Christian liturgy. (CCC 2042)

The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass." "The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day."

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 (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin. (CCC. 2180 and 2181)

The Code of Canon Law, the legal code of Christ's Church, states:

On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to assist at Mass. They are also to abstain from such work or business that would inhibit the worship to be given to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, or the due relaxation of mind and body.

The obligation of assisting at Mass is satisfied wherever Mass is celebrated in a Catholic rite either on a holy day itself or on the evening of the previous day. (Can 1247, 1248)

Both the code of Canon Law and the Catechism clearly state the obligation. There was some general teaching prior to Vatican II that one had to be present for the offertory through reception of Holy Communion to fulfill the obligation. However this is not a part of the canon and the faithful are to participate in the complete Mass in order to fulfill the Sunday obligation.

Some consider the formal language of the Catechism and Canon Law to be somewhat inaccessible, or others may read the Catechism and rebuke what is said simply because they think there are "too many rules." Of course, rules are in place for a reason – even when it comes to driving, where the seemingly mundane rule of staying inside the painted lines has an enormous effect. So we can easily acknowledge that the rules about something so much more important – our faith – were not thrown together randomly, but have great meaning. Beyond the precept itself, we can also look at why it is so critical, and better understand the importance of participating in Mass every Sunday.

The Third Commandment: Remember to Keep Holy the Lord's Day

When asked why Catholics go to Mass on Sunday, the third commandment is quite often given as an answer. This commandment is definitely not where the reason we are obligated to participate in Mass ends, but it is a good place to start. In the earliest days of Christianity, Sunday replaced the Sabbath as the Lord's Day because it was on Sunday that Jesus rose from the dead, Sunday on which He appeared to two of His disciples and broke bread with them:

"When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?" And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them, who said, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Lk 24:30-35)

It was from that first day onwards that the faithful began to celebrate the memorial of Christ's sacrifice and rising, and still today, it is in the breaking of the bread that we recognize Jesus. The Second Vatican Council also recognizes that Sunday as the foremost day to celebrate the Eucharist was handed down from the day of the resurrection:

"Apostolic tradition of the Church is, from the very day of the resurrection of Christ, to celebrate the Pasch every eight days, on the day which is called the day of the Lord" ("Sacrosanctum Concilium", 106)

The First Commandment: You Shall Not Have Strange Gods Before Me

The third commandment is often mentioned as explanation for the importance of attending Mass on Sunday, but the first commandment is just as crucial. In fact if the first commandment is followed, abiding to the third will come naturally.

There are those who choose to willfully skip Mass, or those who 'drag' themselves to Mass but do not want to be there. The question is, "why?" Why don't they want to be there, sharing in Christ's passion, sharing in His resurrection? Quite often, it is because they feel they have something better or more interesting to do. Watch a sports game, go shopping, paint the shed, read a book, watch a movie, take a nap, get a head start on work related tasks for the week. The focus is put on these things, and not on God.

It's not worshiping a golden statue, but the result is the same. When these things take precedence over Christ, the false gods of the material world are being put before Our Lord. It is not to say that ambition in career, shopping, entertainment, and keeping up the house are evil in themselves. The problem is when one allows them to become more important than God, when one willfully chooses these in place of God, including in place of participation in the Mass, the core of our faith. If you find yourself asking if you really have to go to Mass, change the question and ask yourself why you aren't excited to go to Mass? In the early days of the church – and in some countries still – faithful people could be jailed or even killed for celebrating Mass. So why do we allow worldly entertainments to compete with our love for God and the Eucharist?

The Words of the Saints

The perfect answer to the "do what you feel like doing" mentality of modern society is to seek inspiration in the words of the saints, who understood the importance of holy Mass. For the most part, they too lived in societies where materialism was a distraction to those around them. Yet these saints had a love for God that helped them to overcome temptations, and even their own past actions, to be more fully devoted to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The writings of the saints would be a good place to begin to find instructional and inspirational words of those holy people who lived before us.

The Intention of the Faithful

It is important to note that one's will is also factor here. The church acknowledges a difference between missing Mass for a grave reason or for something over which you had no control, and the act of willfully choosing not to go to Mass. The former is not a mortal sin, the latter is. In the Apostolic letter *Dies Domini*, Pope John Paul II instructed those who are prevented from participating in the Mass in the following way:

Finally, the faithful who, because of sickness, disability or some other serious cause, are prevented from taking part, should as best they can unite themselves with the celebration of Sunday Mass from afar, preferably by means of the readings and prayers for that day from the Missal, as well as through their desire for the Eucharist. (*Dies Domini*, Pope John Paul II)

There are several books available to help one understand the Mass more fully and deepen their love for the celebration. Loving the Holy Mass is a great place to start and *If Your Mind Wanders at Mass and Heart of the Mass* are great resources for any Catholic. For more on the Mass, check out our extensive Liturgy and Mass section.

<http://www.aquinasandmore.com/catholic-articles>

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