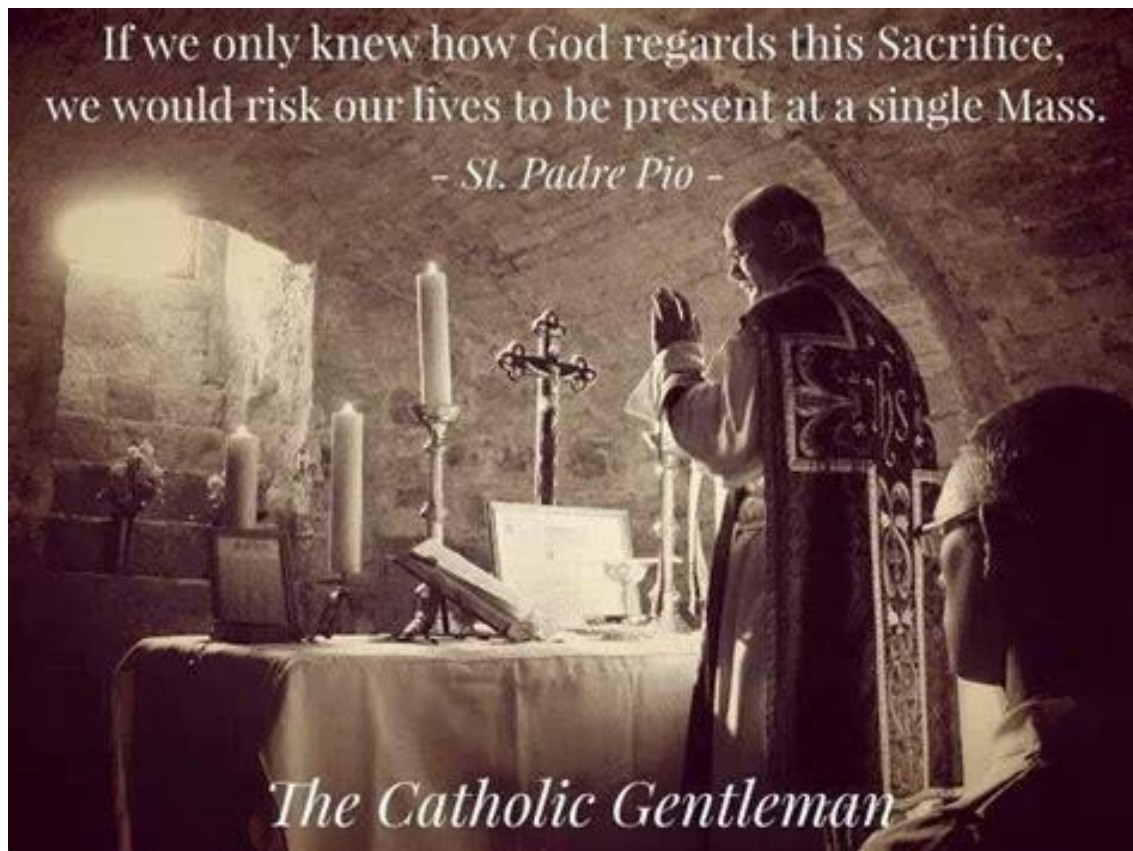


FROM FATHER JOHN: *"All the good works in the world are not equal to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass because they are the works of men; but the Mass is the work of God. Martyrdom is nothing in comparison for it is but the sacrifice of man to God; but the Mass is the sacrifice of God for man."* ~ St. John Vianney

Listen to my prayer, O LORD, hear my cry!!!



I've won wrestling matches, football games, baseball games, amateur golf tournaments, high school debates, etc. But, the one thing I have tried to win, but have never won, is the lottery. Every now and then I buy a lottery ticket for fun and, when I do, I say a prayer, "Lord, let me win this jackpot. Lord, think of all the good I could do on your behalf if I won this money. Think what I could do for St. Ann Parish, I could help needy families, I could do so much good in building up your kingdom with this money, please let me win the lottery."

I think this is a pretty good prayer. But, every single time I've said this prayer (or words to this affect) the Lord has answered me with a resounding **NO!** Every single time the answer has been **NO!**

The Church correctly teaches that missing Sunday mass is a mortal sin. One of the questions that people sometimes ask me is, “why do I have to go to mass?” Another question is “why can’t I just pray on my own?”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “*Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God’s law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him.*” (CCC 1855)

The operative phrase that we need to consider is the fact that mortal sin turns us away from God; that, in essence, by committing a mortal sin we sever our relationship with our Lord and God. Whenever we decide to skip Sunday mass, without being dispensed by our proper pastor or by the law itself, we are severing our relationship with the Lord our God.

The Lord does not always answer our prayers with the answer we want. I still haven’t won the lottery! If we go off by ourselves to pray without participating in the mass, the Lord might very well answer our prayer with a resounding **NO!**

But, the Lord says to us in Matthew’s gospel, “*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*” (Mt: 18:20)

When we gather as a community at mass, we know that the Lord is truly with us because he promised to be with us when we gather together in his name. We don’t have to wonder about whether the Lord is present to us in our prayer – we **know** that he is. We don’t have to worry about receiving a resounding **NO!**

At mass, we encounter our Risen Lord in a real, concrete and tangible way in his body and blood, in the sacred scriptures as they are proclaimed, and in his priest who acts *in persona Christi capitis* (in the person of Christ, head and shepherd of the Church). We have, as disciples, an obligation, a calling, to never turn away from the Lord our God.

So, “why do we have go to mass? And, why can’t I just pray on my own?” Because, we always turn toward the Lord whenever we attend mass. Our Lord is truly present among us at mass and we do not abandon him, we do not turn away. We are given life during the mass when we eat his flesh and drink his blood.

He enters into us and becomes one with us when we eat his flesh and drink his blood.

Our encounter with the Lord during mass is so awesome, so real and so tangible that we **know** He is present among us and that the Lord has answered all our prayers. After all, he does say to us, *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”* (Mt: 7:7-8)

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

