

Why do we have an obligation to attend Mass?

“Does it *really* matter if you miss Mass just once?” a non-Catholic might ask.

Yes, it does matter.

Through His Church, God commands us to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. It is a mortal sin to miss Mass without a grave reason (such as illness, being housebound, a first responder rushing to a call, etc).

You may wonder why the Church *commands* weekly Mass attendance under pain of sin, rather than simply *suggesting* it. It’s important to know why—not only to strengthen our own faith, but also in case any curious non-Catholics ask about it.



The reason for the Sunday obligation is that we owe God worship as His creatures. It’s not just a nice spiritual ritual or an outward show of being Catholic. God is our Creator. He made us out of *nothing* and keeps us in existence through His own power and will. We owe everything to Him, and our regular worship of Him is how we express our innate desire—and our natural obligation—to offer our Creator homage and gratitude.

Furthermore, without His grace and presence in our lives, our souls and therefore our salvation are in danger. He doesn’t *need* our worship—but we *do* need Him.

If we ignore God’s command to worship on Sundays, we are putting other things before God, as though He were of secondary importance. And we are destroying our relationship with Him and walking away from the spiritual graces our soul needs to stay alive. As one priest said, skipping Sunday Mass

is somewhat analogous to a deep-sea diver’s putting a crimp in his air line so that no air can come through to keep him alive. By a decision to miss Sunday Mass or a holy day of obligation we suspend the operation of sanctifying grace in our lives.

—Fr. Ray Ryland, “Why Is It a Mortal Sin to Miss Mass?” at Catholic Answers

God knows that, due to our fallen nature, we struggle to do what we should, feel confused about it, and are *even tempted not to*. That’s why He gives us clear commandments. The Third Commandment prescribes weekly worship of God: “Thou shalt keep holy the Lord’s day.” And Jesus commanded: “Do this in memory of me” (Luke 22:19).

If Mass on Sunday were just an option—and skipping it were not a sin—can any of us honestly say we would never, *ever* miss a Sunday Mass?

We—and the Church—know the answer.

The Mass is the pinnacle of our faith here on earth. However, despite its beauty, we understand that can be sometimes be difficult to remain attentive and prayerful. One of the best ways to receive the gift of the Mass is by prayerfully preparing for it before it starts. The powerful book by Monseigneur Romano Guardini, *Meditations Before Mass*, is a timeless collection of prayers and meditations to help collect yourself before the powerful sacrament. Practical, straightforward, yet full of wisdom, *Meditations Before Mass* will help you to quiet your soul, concentrate your mind, and grow more receptive to grace. [Available today from The Catholic Company!](https://www.catholiccompany.com/getfed/why-do-we-have-an-obligation-to-attend-mass/)