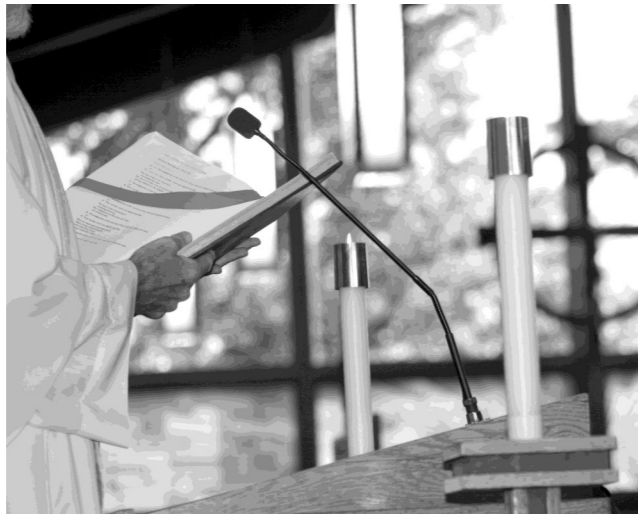


JOHN LANEY

Well, God must really want me to speak to you about my motivation for attending Mass, because I tried every conceivable way under the sun to avoid doing this. When Pam approached me about this topic, she wanted me to answer the question of what Mass means to me. Why do I attend Mass? Why is it a priority in my life? Furthermore, why should you attend on a regular basis?

The answer struck me as so simple, and so straightforward, that I was sure I must have gotten it wrong somehow. Why do I go to Mass? In a word: love. I love God. And when you love someone, you want to be with that person. For those of you who are married, or for anyone who's ever been in a love relationship, think about what it was like early on. Remember how you looked forward to seeing that person? Remember how you clung to that person's every word, whether spoken or written? Remember how you took time your beloved what was special or endearing about him or her? Remember how when you were finally together you never wanted the day to end? And that's just love between human beings!

If we truly love God, then we should look forward to being with Him. That's what Mass is all about: being with God. In fact, all the things I mentioned about human love relationships are just as easily transferable to our love relationship with God. We should look forward to spending time with Him. We should want to hear what He's saying to us, either in the words of His priests, or in the words of Sacred Scripture. We should have the desire to sing God's praises: extolling Him for all his goodness and beauty. Last, but by no means least, we should look forward to communing with Him in the Eucharist. Going to Mass gives us the opportunity to do all of these things. It's the time we take out of our busy weeks to enjoy some relaxation, spend some time with God, and recall that He is the center of our lives.



ST. PATRICK OF HEATHERDOWNS

TOLEDO OHIO

“REDISCOVERING SUNDAY”



I

***“DO NOT BE AFRAID TO GIVE YOUR TIME
TO CHRIST!”***

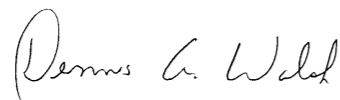
FROM FR. DENNIS G. WALSH, PASTOR

During the blizzard of 1978, everything was closed. It was an early Sunday morning and many of the roads in Lima were still being cleared of snow. You would think that it would be a day where we might be able to miss Sunday Mass. But such a thought was unthinkable in our family. My father instructed me and my brother to load the trunk of the car with firewood so the car won't slide all over the road as we go to Mass. We arrive at Church a little later than usual (15 minutes early rather than the customary ½ hour). As one would expect there were only a handful of people at Mass that Sunday. I remember thinking as a young boy that our family was either pretty crazy or pretty Catholic. It is not always easy to tell the difference. However, it was communicated to me at a very young age that the duty to attend Mass is a serious responsibility.

There is a casualness that is creeping into our Catholic sensibility regarding the importance of Sunday Mass. It is an attitude that runs contrary not only to our Catholic obligation to attend Sunday Mass, but also contrary to two thousand years of Christian practice. In the bread of life discourse of John's Gospel (John 6), Jesus himself commands us that unless we eat his body and drink his blood we do not have his life within us. Then as he gathers his disciples around him for the Last Supper, he commands them to continue this Eucharistic meal with the mandate "do this in memory of me." St. Paul reminds us every time we eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim his death until he comes again. The Acts of the Apostles describes the life and worship of the early Christian community. It tells us that the early Christians committed themselves to the "breaking of the bread."

Why is the Mass so important? We gather faithfully every Sunday to give thanks to God. The very word Eucharist even means gratitude. It is a day that has been carved out of our week from the very foundation of the world so that we might give thanks to God. It is a day for us to remember all that God has done for us. Our "obligation" is not based on an arbitrary rule of the Church, but an "obligation" to express our gratitude to God. We give thanks to God for being our source of life; we give thanks to Christ who gave us eternal life through his death on the cross.

Every time we come to Mass our expression of our thanks to God brings us into an intimacy and communion with God. Not only does it bring us into a closer relationship with God, but it also brings us into a closer communion with one another. That is why I simply cannot stay in bed on Sunday morning say thank you to God and roll over for a couple more hours of sleep. Every Sunday Mass not only brings us into communion with God but also with each other.



THE WITNESS OF EARLY CHRISTIANS

St. Justin proudly described the Christian practice of the Sunday assembly, which gathered in one place Christians from both the city and the countryside. When, during the persecution of Diocletian, their assemblies were banned with the greatest severity, many were courageous enough to defy the imperial decree and accepted death rather than miss the Sunday Eucharist. This was the case of the martyrs of Abitina...who replied to their accusers: "Without fear of any kind we have celebrated the Lord's Supper, because it cannot be missed; that is our law"; "We cannot live without the Lord's Supper". As she confessed her faith, one of the martyrs said: "Yes, I went to the assembly and I celebrated the Lord's Supper with my brothers and sisters, because I am a Christian."

John Paul II, *Dies Domini*

MARY JO BRUCKNER

Hello. My name is Mary Jo Bruckner and I am here to share with the parishioners of St. Pat's what Mass means to me and my family. When asked to do this, my first reaction was "No way! I am not getting up to speak in front of so many people." After thinking about it a few moments I felt I could gather the courage because of my Catholic faith, and in particular the Mass, is such an important part of my life and my family.

I was born and raised a Catholic and received all of my sacraments at our neighboring church, Our Lady of Perpetual Help. As a child, my family attended Mass each week on Sunday and each Holy Day of Obligation. My mother and father were great examples of the faith and made it very clear that attending Mass each week was important to living out the gift of our Catholic faith. When we traveled, we would arrive at our destination and immediately find the closest Catholic church to get their Mass schedule in order to plan when we would be attending Mass. Vacations, sports and being "too busy" were not excuses for missing Mass. My fondest and most vivid childhood memories of my grandmother were her homemade chicken soup and her singing Mass hymns in the small country church across from her home. My grandmother attended Mass every day. I realized that the importance of attending Mass was passed on from my grandmother to my mother and on to me. The Mass has been an integral part of my family for generations.

I met my husband, Dave, in college and we dated for four years before we became engaged. I can remember the day that I had the conversation with him about whether or not he would go to Mass with me on Sundays when we were married. It was very important to me in living out my faith that my husband would attend Mass, especially if we had a family of our own. I am happy to say his answer was yes, and here we are 21 years later with two wonderful teenage children. When my son made his First Reconciliation here at St. Pat's, the priest who heard his confession was the same priest that baptized me 32 years earlier. When I pointed this out to Father after the ceremony, he laughed and said "Well I guess the baptism worked!". Yes, the baptism "worked" because I made the commitment at my Confirmation that I would live out the faith life of a Catholic Christian.

In raising my own children, my husband and I have made attending Mass a priority for our family. When we travel on vacation or for sporting events, we locate a church on the internet in the town we are visiting to determine when we will attend Mass. Some of our weekends consist of running from one sporting event to another, but with the number of churches and Mass times in our area; we have always found a church and time that will work for us. How many of us will "do whatever is necessary" to arrange our schedule to accommodate children's sporting practices and social activities and yet find it so easy to say we could not work Mass into our busy weekend schedule. Attending Mass for me is a time to re-energize for the week to come. It is a time to reflect on struggles and ask for guidance and also a time for praising and thanking Him for all of his blessings. The Mass is a guiding tool to help us through the scripture readings in living our own lives and remembering the sacrifice he made for each one of us.

I was struck when asked to speak about the importance of the Mass in my life, that my most wonderful and meaningful memories revolve around the Mass. The memory as a child of making my First Communion, as a young adult celebrating Mass in a cave on a Hocking Hills on retreat, my marriage, the baptism and sacraments of my children, and most recently the extraordinary outdoor Mass at eXclaim! With more than 3,000 people this past summer at the CYO fields. The Mass also has provided comfort as my family has had to say goodbye to many wonderful friends and family members, especially most recently with the sudden loss of my brother, Ron. We found consolation through the Mass of resurrection that he was rejoicing in the heavens with all the relatives that had gone before him.

In closing, I remember the words of my daughter, Hannah, as a child when we were talking after Mass one day. She said to me " I do not understand how some people think spending one hour with God each week is too much. He gives us everything, and one hour seems like very little to give back to Him".