

# FULL, CONSCIOUS, ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

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People come to Mass for different reasons. Some come because of a deep devotion to the Eucharist. Some come because they know the true value of the Mass. Some come to be able to say their own prayers or for some other devotions. Some come just to be able to say that they have been to Mass. Most come in compliance to the third commandment: “Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day.” Or more specifically, some come to follow the church law: “to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation”.

What does it mean to attend Mass, be it on a Sunday or any other day?

Miriam-Webster’s Dictionary gives the following definitions for “attend”:

*1: to pay attention, 2: to look after; take charge of, 3: to go or stay with, 4: to wait for, 5: to be present with, 6: to be present at, 7: to apply oneself, 8: to apply the mind or pay attention, 9: to be ready for service, 10: to direct one’s attention.*

And if you go to the word “attention”, the following is the definition given:

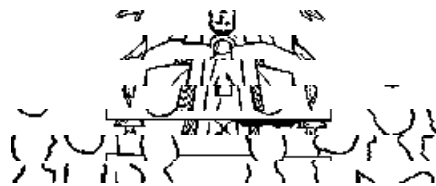
- a: *the act or state of attending especially through applying the mind to an object of sense or thought*
- b: *a condition of readiness for such attention involving especially a selective narrowing or focusing of consciousness and receptivity*

Clearly, the definition of “attend” is also what the *General Instructions on the Roman Missal* and the *Constitution on Sacred Liturgy* states about attending Mass. It states that one should attend Mass with “full, conscious and active participation” of the Body of Christ. So if one is fulfill their obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, then it means a “full, conscious and active participation” at Mass.

So what does it mean to fully, consciously and actively participate at Mass? First of all you have to be physically and consciously present at Mass. That means being in church (not the church building) with the rest of the Body of Christ. We make up the church. It is not the church building or the place of worship.

We are the church. God created us as social beings. God made us to worship with the rest of the community – the church community. This is the reason why we go to Mass, to come together as one family under one roof. We gather together, listen to the Word and break bread together. So if we come to worship together, then we should all be gathered together and not spread out or out of the place of worship itself. When you go to a party or a dinner, you go inside the house or the restaurant to join the rest in celebrating. One does not stand outside and just listen to what is happening inside. There are times when the church is full and overflowing. Though you are physically outside the place of worship, you are still part of the worshipping community as it just happens to be a big crowd that has expanding out the building or place of worship. One is still with the worshipping church community.

But it is different when one chooses to just stay alone outside and not stay with the rest of the community.



And to be present means to be present from beginning to the end. The Mass starts with the Entrance Procession. This is the first part of the Mass – the Gathering. It brings together God’s people. It prepares us for the main parts of the Mass – the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The priest greets us and we greet him back. We ask God for forgiveness for the sins we may have committed to prepare us to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Most of the time this is followed by the Gloria with the exception of Advent and Lent. Then starts the Liturgy of the Word. At the Liturgy of the Word, we listen to God’s words. These are stories about God’s people, from Abraham and the prophets, to Jesus and the apostles. This is followed by the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Here we share bread. We partake of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist to nourish our spiritual life. The last part is the commissioning. Now that we have been nourished by God’s word and by His Body and Blood, we are again strengthened to face our burdens again. The Mass ends with a blessing and a sending forth. And finally finishes with the Recessional Procession.

If one was praying the Our Father or the Hail Mary, one does not start in the middle. One starts from the beginning. Likewise, one does not stop in the middle of the prayer and just end it. One finishes the prayer from beginning to end. So if we say that the Mass is a prayer, then we have to be present from beginning to end. We do not come after the Readings or the Homily, nor do we leave right after Communion or the Final Blessing. The priest's entrance and exit are the beginning and the end of the prayer – the Mass.

Now that we are in church with the rest of the community, the second part is to participate actively at Mass. This does not mean just sitting, standing and kneeling with everybody. This is just part of it. If we are to participate actively we sing at the entrance procession, at the Kyrie, the Gloria and so on. We listen attentively to the Readings and the homily, the institution narrative and so on. We pray and respond at appropriate places vocally, not silently with the rest of the church, with full conviction, conscious of what we are saying. At the great Amen, we profess our belief in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Together with the priest, we offer ourselves with Jesus during the Institution Narrative (Consecration). Finally we participate and eat at the table of the Lord. It is a foretaste of the Eternal Banquet promised us by Jesus.

The Mass is the highest form of prayer. But it only becomes a prayer if we fully, actively and consciously participate in it. Some people, especially young people find the Mass boring. Well, they will

find it boring if they just come to sit and watch. I guess if that is what you do at Mass, then it definitely will be boring. Every Mass, any where in the world is just the same. So at least 52 times a year times the number of years you have been attending Mass, that could be boring. But if you place your heart into it, making it a real prayer, offering Jesus "through Him, with Him and in Him" then the Mass will be more meaningful. It will be a real prayer said in communion with the saints. The Mass is very powerful in that our prayers are joined with that of the priest, Jesus, the whole church, living and dead. It joins us to all our brothers and sisters all over the world no matter what language it is celebrated in. It is the same Mass wherever you go.

Pope St. Pius X said:

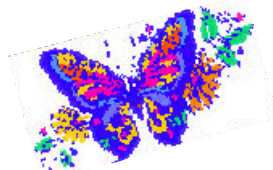
"The Holy Mass is a prayer itself, even the highest prayer that exists. It is the sacrifice dedicated by our Redeemer at the cross, and repeated every day on the altar. If you wish to hear the Mass as it should be heard, you must **follow with eye, heart, and mouth all that happens at the altar.**

Further, you must **pray with the priest the holy words said by him in the name of Christ and which Christ says by him** You have to **associate your heart with the holy feelings which are contained in these words** and in this manner you ought to follow all that happens on the altar. When acting in this way, you have prayed Holy Mass."



## 笑看人生

飄雪



記得曾有人對我說：「妳笑得好真、好甜」，笑臉展現於人前，對別人的讚美，就當它是真的吧。

心情開朗，無憂無慮，自然多點機會去笑。日子一天一天過去，病痛多了，笑減少了，漸漸好像不會識笑。笑原來對健康也有益，時常感到滿足、開心這種性格就會常現笑容，甚至哈哈大笑。

窗外的兩株繡球，一株開了十多朵藍色花，在旁的另一株，卻只在最下的部份開了一朵紅色的，為何一是燦爛的怒放，另一則是物

以罕為貴，獨一無二，在享受著自己的孤獨，還是笑著堅持生命，延續希望。

看見蝴蝶，自由自在地獨自飛舞，牠不怕孤單寂寞，對自己脆弱的生命，仍似笑著地去為傳播花粉而努力。

看見這些有生命的動植物，人的生命，不論在順逆境中，都要笑著去面對，將一切苦與樂交托在主手中，祂就會使你笑著度過每一天，他日能含笑而逝，在天鄉之家，不再怕不懂笑。笑代表快樂，在主的祝福中，有滿足的喜樂，笑著去看自己的人生吧！