



## GUARDIAN ANGELS CHURCH EUCHARIST INITIATIVE LOCAL PASTOR'S TALK

During these recent weeks, our Diocese of San Diego went through what is known as Eucharist Initiative. It was an organized attempt to draw importance to the Mass.

“Why should I go to Mass?” has been the central question of the efforts of our current local ordinary, Bishop McElroy.

Why should I go to Mass?

Some if not too many of us may have asked that question in secret. Or we might have asked that question defensively when someone had earlier asked us, “Why aren’t you going to church? It’s Sunday.” A little girl starts going to CCD classes, learns about the obligation to attend Masses on Sundays and then observes her daddy not going to church. It’s Sunday, daddy. Let’s all go to church. And deep in his thoughts, he murmurs, “Why should I go to church?”

Sometime last year, churches were closed down because of the pandemic. Governor Newsome and our county told us to shelter in place. To stem outbreaks. Our parish church too was locked down. Some of us or quite a number among us may have secretly said, “Praise the Lord!” when during those weeks of our parish church locked down, our Bishop, Vicar of Christ in our local diocese suspended the precept of going to church to attend Mass.

We had previously been looking at Sunday Mass as an obligation. We, Catholics who were able, had to go to church under pain of sin. We had always been brought up to believe that failing to attend Sunday Mass was a mortal sin. During the church closure last year, during the suspension of Masses, with the bishop’s instructions, we did not have to come to church. It was not unreasonable to imagine many of us felt relieved from the obligation. It was a burden, taken away off our shoulders, at least for a month or so anyway.

All these recent past weekends, all the parishes of our diocese made us to listen three homilies, one each from Fr Matt Spahr of the Immaculata parish, Fr Peter McGuine from Our Lady of Grace nearby, and Fr Peter Escalante from Mission San Diego. They helped us learn more deeply what the Eucharist is, how it is to be understood, leading us therefore to the answer to “Why do we go to Mass?”

Simply answered, we must come to Mass because we must communicate, that is, we must receive or make avail of the Eucharist. Our Lord said, "This is my body; take and eat it... This is the cup of my blood. Take and drink from it." When he added, "Do this in memory of me," he commanded us to celebrate the Last Supper time and time again. He gave himself for us. Every time we celebrate Mass, he gives himself still to us. Then, Our Lord said, "This is the bread come down from heaven. Whoever eats it has eternal life. Whoever partakes of it will live forever." Why do we have to come to church on Sundays? We do so for the Eucharist.

In addition to those among us who were elated when the duty to attend Masses last year was suspended, there were many who were upset that the Eucharist was taken away from us. We felt we were deprived of the Mass. Some of us suspected that all the Covid-19 pandemic was false, a hoax, a conspiracy to put in place in our society a regime of secularism. It was a conspiracy to remove religion from our towns and cities, states and counties.

Pope Francis in the aftermath of the first lockdowns in Italy sternly told the diocese of Rome to open the churches open to people to pray.



Remember that hot sunny day during the second quarter of 2020? When Jay and Darlene, Tammy and her son David, drove around Santee following a strategic route, carrying the Blessed Sacrament, carrying a monstrance to bring Jesus to you? If you couldn't come to your parish church here where are right now, we let him come to where you were. If you couldn't adore him inside the church in the tabernacle, in the ministry of the Church, he came.

I vividly remember seeing many of you lifting a crucifix, a religious image, a rosary as we passed by. You knelt, genuflected or bowed in worship. I saw tears flowing from eyes overjoyed by the sight of the Blessed Sacrament. I was an awesome of sight. It was for us an awesome ministry.

Some of you expressed pity on us who did that because of the heat but the five hours plus of taking the Blessed Sacrament was a joy and it was a breeze to do so. Maybe our Lord was happy to be taken to his people who were waiting in front or near their homes. He blessed our Pilgrimage of the Blessed Sacrament team in a way we did not feel the exhaustion and the heat while we were taking him around.

For me that was a memorable day. For me, it vividly captured what the Eucharist was about. It affirmed the value we need to put on and give this Sacrament.

Why must we come to Mass? It is simply because of the Eucharist.

Here during this Mass, we meet, not virtually but in-person, Jesus the Risen One! Here on this altar Christ comes to us in the form of Bread and Wine, but Real-ly Himself. Here during this Mass, we receive him who says to us, “I am the Bread of Life. If you eat of this Bread, you have—you possess—eternal life.”

If we want to experience joy that no thief can steal, no fire can burn, no moth can destroy, our eyes and hearts and longings should be on this Sacrament which comes to us in the liturgy of the Mass. This bread is tiny and, for the skeptic, appears inconsequential. But is the pearl of great price. Tiny but most valuable! As we live our faith and walk on this earth following Jesus the Eucharist is our strength.



The clamor to reopen our church and resume our eucharistic celebrations was a great faith attitude. The Mass which brings us God’s Word and the Eucharist is truly essential to our spiritual wellbeing.

Come to Mass; here God comes to us!