

Fr. Martin's Reflection – July 16, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Many of us were taught that if we intentionally miss Mass on a Sunday for no other reason than our laziness, then it is a mortal sin. A mortal sin is a pretty serious offence, it could mean the difference between heaven or hell. With that being said, even though we were taught it, it really doesn't impact us. We haven't experienced either heaven or hell, so we don't really know what we are actually losing or what it is we are inflicting on ourselves, so the threat of a mortal sin is really lost on most of us.

I have to say that I personally have struggled with the concept that missing mass on Sunday is a mortal sin. To me Mass is an invitation from Jesus to us to feed of His Body and drink of His Blood. He clearly stated that we must eat His Body and drink His Blood if we are to have life in us (Jn 6:35-58). In John 6:53 Jesus said, **"In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you,"** and in John 6:56 he says, **"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in them."**

We now know why Jesus invited us to come and eat of His body and drink His blood, to give life to us, but where did He place this meal-like experience but in the Passover. A meal that was then and still is, extremely important to the Jewish people. Passover was the meal that was to sustain the people as they made the arduous journey from slavery to freedom. They sacrificed the unblemished lamb, not an offering to God but of God's offering to His people, the sacrificial lamb that would sustain them, strengthen them, and preserve them until they reached the promised land. Christ is our sacrificial lamb, the food of His body given to sustain us and strengthen us, and preserve us on our journey to the promised land, the land where Jesus has promised that He is going to prepare a room for us, and when prepared, He will come to bring us to the promised land.

So why the Mass? Because Mass is the Christian Passover, it's where we gather as family, as Christian children of God. As Jesus instructed His disciples on how they were to practice their mission as disciples, we are instructed by the scriptures on how we are to live our discipleship and have that discipleship strengthened by the Body and Blood of Christ.

So, my friends, not going to Mass on a Sunday may or may not be a mortal sin, but it can clearly be perceived as telling Jesus **I Don't Need your Body and I Don't Need your Blood, I Don't Need your Life within me.** It's an active rejection of Jesus, and it is also an active rejection of our fellow Christian brothers and sisters, that we don't need them either.

You know, maybe Mother Church is right, missing Mass on a Sunday is a sin. Not so much a sin against God but a sin against ourselves. Denying ourselves the Body and Blood of Christ, denying Christ the right to dwell within us. If we do not have Christ within us, then what *does* dwell within us?

"This is the bread which has come down from heaven; it is not like the bread our ancestors ate; they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live forever." Jn 6:58

May you allow Christ to dwell within you. Have a blessed week.

Fr. Martin