

Leaving Mass Early

Have you ever felt the need to leave Mass early for whatever reason? Maybe you are running late for a brunch with friends or you have a ballgame to attend – or NFL Sunday is about to begin. Have you ever thought that if the situation were different, you might not be so inclined to step out before the final blessing? What if it was dinner at your CEO's house or you were on a date with somebody you cared for very deeply? Would you walk out early on those people?

Leaving before the final blessing or last hymn is largely a Catholic phenomenon. This early exodus is rarely seen in Protestant services or even those in Mormon Tabernacles and Jehovah's Witness halls. Why many Catholics so eager to make a beeline for the door before the Mass and the hymns are completed? We rush out of the Church and practically run each other over in the parking lot in an effort to be the first ones off the property. Is this behavior indicative of *faithful* Christians or of those of us who simply feel that there are more important things we can be doing with our time? God must be *first* in our lives – *everything* else is secondary.

Part of the problem may be that since attending Mass on Sunday is an obligation, some feel that they can leave as soon as the obligation is met. One should never see Mass simply an obligation - but as an opportunity. At every Mass, we are brought to Calvary as the eternal sacrifice of Jesus is re-presented before us. It is truly an honor and a blessing that we are witnesses to this sacrifice. It is, after all, this sacrifice that redeemed the world and allows us to obtain eternal salvation and be with God in heaven. We should see Mass as something we *get* to do – not something we *have* to do.

If we are in a situation where we have to be somewhere else while Mass is taking place – perhaps it would be better to attend Mass at a different time. On any given Sunday, there is a Mass being celebrated every half-hour within driving distance. Many parishes also offer Saturday night vigil Masses or on Sunday evenings. Is our post-Mass appointment so urgent that it is necessary for us to leave the physical presence of our Lord with such haste? Are we like the sleeping Apostles who abandoned Jesus in his hour of need in the Garden of Gethsemane in **Matt. 26:36-46**? Jesus said to them, *“So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

As faithful Catholics, it is our obligation to attend Sunday Mass. When we finally realize that it is our supreme honor to be present – perhaps we will stop being like the Apostles in **Matt. 26:36-46** and instead, give our Lord the attentive worship he deserves.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.catholic.net/index.php?size=mas&id=763&option=dedestaca>

<http://www.baltimore-catechism.com/lesson24.htm>