

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

From time to time it is necessary to remind ourselves of best practice regarding Mass attendance.

As Catholics we are obliged to attend Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation. The obligation is lifted, however, if we are sick or looking after a sick loved one. It is only a sin to skip Mass—not to miss Mass. Skipping Mass is when we don't bother to go to Mass or we put something else before our obligation. Missing Mass is when we miss Mass through no fault of our own—a snowstorm, a traffic or travel delay or an accident or unforeseen circumstance of some kind. You may request a dispensation from your obligation from your parish priest if you foresee an insurmountable obstacle to your attendance—for example: you are traveling to a remote part of the world where attendance at Mass is impossible. Travel alone, however, does not lift your obligation because with a little bit of research using an app like [Masstimes.com](https://www.masstimes.com) you should be able to find a Mass time that fits your location and schedule.

Your attendance at Mass should also be thoughtful and planned. You should plan to be punctual. We are noticing an increasing number of people rushing into Mass at the last minute. Plan to arrive at least fifteen minutes BEFORE Mass starts. This gives you time to park, find a seat and have a few moments of recollection and prayer before Mass begins. When you are late you not only impede your own worship experience, you inconvenience others and impede their worship also.

Please also observe the church's disciplines regarding reception of Holy Communion. If you are aware of unconfessed mortal sin you should *not* receive communion. To receive communion while you are manifestly not in a state of grace imperils your own soul, causes scandal to others and further imperils your spiritual condition before God. Do not treat the sacrament lightly!

Now that we have an altar rail, we are finding that reverence in the reception of communion is improving at OLR. Please remember a few details to help with this. You may receive communion on the hand, but recently we have had some disturbing occurrences in which individuals have taken a host with them away from the communion rail. The clergy and servers try to be alert to this happening and we will follow such persons to make sure the Body of Christ is not profaned. However, the way to avoid this if for communicants to receive the sacred host on the tongue. I encourage you to do so. This needn't be embarrassing or awkward. Simply place the tip of your tongue behind your lower teeth and open your mouth. The priest or deacon will place the host on your tongue neatly with no problem.

Finally, standing at the back of church before Mass begins, I also notice how many of you neglected to bless yourself with holy water as you enter. Many also neglect to genuflect before entering the pew. These signs of reverence are usually neglected by those who are late for Mass. (see paragraph 2 above)

The church teaches that blessing oneself with holy water with the intention of confessing venial sins is one of the ways to receive forgiveness for venial sins and thus prepare our hearts to meet the Lord.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker