

Top 10 Reasons Why We Celebrate Mass and Eucharist

Lenten Witness Talk by Jim & Judy Giesen
Tuesday, February 20, 2018

For 73 years, Jim and I have been faithful Catholics and have tried to follow Jesus' request at the Last Supper to "do this in memory of me." Collectively we have celebrated Mass and Eucharist together during our 55 years of marriage. Hopefully, we can share with our congregation our love of and growth into the mystery and the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Jim: We have bit of competition in our house on many matters. One example, if we find ourselves at Resurrection at a Mass or a church meeting with both cars in the parking lot, Judy always beats me home. I get home and she is already out of the car and into the house. She must find trick alleys and streets.

And the competition contest continues: who can walk the fastest. In the past, we were opponents in tennis. But I have the bragging rights regarding Eucharist. I beat her by a year. My First Communion was in the first grade. I was taught by the Sinsinawa Dominicans at Annunciation parish in Minneapolis. They allowed First Communion in first grade.

Judy attended S.t Augustin Church in Des Moines where First Communion for kids happened in the 2nd grade. **Therefore, I probably am one year holier than Judy.**

Judy:

My story is that I wasn't allowed to serve Mass as a kid, because I was a girl and only altar BOYS were allowed, even though I memorized all the Latin Mass responses. In those days of the 40 and 50s, girls weren't allowed to step beyond the communion rail and into the sanctuary, ever! So, how fondly I remember those wonderful days in 7th and 8th grades, when I was finally "allowed" into the sanctuary on Holy Thursday to worship "up close" as Jesus was present in the monstrance in the Blessed Sacrament. After those two hours of adoration (where incidentally my face was hidden by a veil), I was not allowed to enter the sanctuary again until our wedding day.

Jim: Now, we look back and collect our thoughts about why we still love going to Mass on weekends, sometimes during the week (especially during Lent), and why we both are lectors to read Scripture and I am a Eucharistic Minister.

Jim: In sync with David Letterman's comedy routine in his Late Night Show when he listed the "top ten reason why . . .," we would like to take a serious look at our participation and celebration at Mass. Even though Catholics have sometimes considered weekly Mass an obligation, we simply **want** to be there with our community of faith to adore, thank, ask for forgiveness and offer our petitions and intercessions.

Jim:

Number 10.

The Communion of Saints. I believe that we join with these holy people who have gone before: a true and spiritual gathering of humans on earth and the saints with God in mutual support for all.

Number 9.

Practically speaking, I need to be continually reminded of our faith, the sacraments and the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Number 8.

When we are involved together in the Eucharist we realize more deeply who we are and support each other as Christians. We welcome each other, pray for each other in our ups and down in life and celebrate with our community of faith.

Number 7.

We receive direction on how to follow Jesus by the liturgy of the WORD. Judy and I are honored to be readers of Scripture at Mass. This means preparation, where we go over and over the readings study “the helps” to understand, and hope (for God’s sake) we can proclaim the Scripture with conviction.

Number 6.

We can become models or teachers regarding Catholicism. By being regular participants in Eucharist, we demonstrate a good habit to the community, to our family and friends as we encourage this reception of Eucharist to others.

Judy:

Number 5.

I realize that the celebration of the Mass is universal, as we pray in the Creed. Very wonderful for me is the universality of the Mass. We know that across Dubuque, the state, the nation and the world, everyone is attending and praying and worshipping the God of us all with the same liturgy.

Number 4.

At the beginning Mass, I ask God to forgive my faults and I personally acknowledge that God’s mercy means that God loves me for who I am, not where I’ve gone wrong. Very good for a traditionally guilt-ridden woman.

Number 3.

As Communion time approaches, my heart and mind joins priest as he says: through him, with him and in him, then as a member of the congregation, I find joy in acclaiming the Great Amen in joyful song.

Number 2.

The Eucharist is a holy and spiritual reminder to spread the mission of Jesus, not just at liturgy, but all through the week ahead. I believe that the Eucharist is the sacrament of peace and social justice. In the readings and the words of liturgy, we learn how Jesus loved the poor, the sick and sad, and those struggling in life. God's presence in Eucharist gives me the reminder and the energy to carry the on the peace and justice of Jesus to others throughout the week.

Number 1.

At Resurrection's celebration of liturgy, we often sing a special song we are the visible presence of the Lord. This encouraging song reminds us of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, his message, and his gift of Eucharist, and we are all together in faith, hope and love.

So, in the spirit of God's presence, here are some final thoughts. This presence in Eucharist helps increase our faith and helps eliminate doubt. We realize through the Mass that that we don't have to figure it all out, but simply stay on the journey in faith. To quote Richard Rohr, Franciscan priest and retreat director: "This absolute touchstone, this body and blood of Christ is a place we must come to again and again to find our identity in God. It takes years to sink in. It is too big a truth for any one moment, too grand and wonderful for our small hearts and minds to understand it. All we can do is be present, and be patient as we grow in holiness as long as we remain faithful."

Jim:

Bishop Robert Barron says this about the Mass: "In Greek, 'sacrifice' means 'holy,' so at Mass, "God makes us holy so we all can reach out to others in holiness."

We will continue trusting the process, appreciating almost 4050 Masses we have attended, and hope for another decade or two of celebrating the life, death, resurrection and communion at the liturgical celebration of the Mass.

Feb. 20, 2018