

— Lesson 2 —

Step by Step

BELIEVE: WHY BE CATHOLIC

MOTIVATION TO GO TO MASS

The following lesson plans illustrate how this guide can be adapted to various schedules and settings. All times listed are approximate.

30 Minutes

Handout, welcome, and Opening Prayer – 5 mins.
Video presentation – 9:26 mins.
Talk It Out (*choose two questions*) – 10 mins.
Food for Thought (*take home*)
Closing Prayer – 3 mins.

45 Minutes

Handout, welcome, and Opening Prayer – 5 mins.
Context – 3 mins.
Video presentation – 9:26 mins.
Talk It Out (*choose four questions*) – 15 mins.
Hands On – 10 mins.
Food for Thought (*take home*)
Closing Prayer – 3 mins.

60 Minutes

Handout, welcome, and Opening Prayer – 5 mins.
Context – 3 mins.
Video Presentation – 9:26 mins.
Talk It Out – 25 mins.
Hands On – 10 mins.
Food for Thought (*take home*)
Closing Prayer – 3 mins.



Student Worksheet

Lesson 2: MOTIVATION TO GO TO MASS

Opening Prayer

LEADER

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Heavenly Father, you made us for worship, and you call us into the self-emptying love that is forever the inner life of the Trinity. While our sinfulness causes us to grab and grasp, your grace gives us the capacity to enter into your love. At Mass, we receive the very gift of Christ himself. Open our eyes to the great gift of the Mass so that our participation may be our way of life. Fill our hearts with gratitude, awe, wonder, and sacrificial love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Fr. Mike's Thought Train

THE BIG QUESTION

Why should I go to Mass if I don't get anything out of it?

THE SHORT ANSWER

The point of Mass is not to get something out of it. Mass is about worship, a total gift of self. We do not worship an experience; we worship a reality. Mass is about worshipping God.

THE BREAKDOWN

- Going to Mass is a serious obligation. Choosing to miss Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation is objectively a mortal sin.
- Moving beyond obligation, the Mass is God's greatest gift to us: He speaks to us in his word, and Jesus gives himself to us in the Eucharist.
- The entire point of the Mass is worship, which is the very heart of faith.
 - * *Worship is sacrifice.*
 - ✦ *We offer up the sacrifice of the Son to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit.*
 - ✦ *We are offered along with Christ on the altar.*
 - * *Worship is about God and offering to him; it is not about what we want or what pleases us.*
 - * *God deserves our very best.*
- We do not worship an experience; we worship a reality. If I am not interested in worshipping God, then maybe I am worshipping myself.

Talk It Out

1. What attitudes and comments about attending Mass does Fr. Mike address?
2. Why is it a big deal to miss Mass intentionally? What are the three conditions for a mortal sin?
3. According to Fr. Mike, what does God give us in Mass?
4. What is worship? Why should we worship God?
5. Mass is about worship, not about “getting something out of it.” How might this understanding actually help us “get more” out of Mass?
6. The word *Eucharist* means “thanksgiving.” How is gratitude for God’s gifts connected to an attitude of real worship?
7. What are some practical things we can do to worship more wholeheartedly?

Hands On

PERSONAL MASS PLAN

1. Come up with three specific, realistic things you can do before, during, and after Mass that might move your participation away from being a spectator toward wholehearted worship. For example, reading through the Mass readings in advance, remaining after Mass for five minutes to offer a thanksgiving prayer, etc.

Before: _____

During: _____

After: _____

2. Review your plan with an accountability partner and review your partner’s plan as well.
3. Make sure that your plan is concrete, workable, and sustainable—that is, choose things that you can do every week.
4. Pick a time to discuss your experience with your accountability partner.

Food for Thought

1. If you find yourself at a parish with boring preaching, bad music, ugly artwork, and a sleepy congregation, how can you still fruitfully worship God during the Mass?
2. Think about the idea of worship that is central to Fr. Mike's comments. Why do you think that idea is so foreign to our modern world? What about to you?

Closing Prayer

READER (ROMANS 12:1-2)

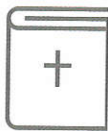
"I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

LEADER

When asked how to pray, Jesus responds with a concrete prayer, which we now speak at the very heart of our worship. We join our day now to the holy sacrifice of the Mass offered throughout the world as we pray with confidence:

Our Father ...

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Leader's Guide

Lesson 2: MOTIVATION TO GO TO MASS

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Understand worship as the central goal and purpose of the Mass
- Recognize that Jesus gives us his word and his Body and Blood in the Mass
- Understand that the focus of the Mass is not what we “get out of it” but the One we are worshipping
- Learn how to enter into Mass better as full, conscious, and active participants

Opening Prayer

LEADER

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Heavenly Father, you made us for worship, and you call us into the self-emptying love that is forever the inner life of the Trinity. While our sinfulness causes us to grab and grasp, your grace gives us the capacity to enter into your love. At Mass, we receive the very gift of Christ himself. Open our eyes to the great gift of the Mass so that our participation may be our way of life. Fill our hearts with gratitude, awe, wonder, and sacrificial love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Context

While the Mass is the very heart of the Church's life—and Sunday Mass attendance is a serious obligation—only about twenty-three percent of Catholics in the United States attend every week. In this video, Fr. Mike addresses some of the common misunderstandings about the Mass that contribute to this nonparticipation by a majority of Catholics. One of the main culprits is the expectation that Mass is only worthwhile if we get something out of it. Fr. Mike points out that worship is the goal of Mass—its focus is on God, not us.

As you discuss the video presentation, point out that what Fr. Mike proposes is a difficult concept for many to accept. Help students move toward an entirely new way to understand and enter into Mass.

Video Presentation

Watch Video 2: "Motivation to Go to Mass"

Fr. Mike's Thought Train

THE BIG QUESTION

Why should I go to Mass if I don't get anything out of it?

THE SHORT ANSWER

The point of Mass is not to get something out of it. Mass is about worship, a total gift of self. We do not worship an experience; we worship a reality. Mass is about worshipping God.

THE BREAKDOWN

- **Going to Mass is a serious obligation. Choosing to miss Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation is objectively a mortal sin.**
 - * *Mortal sin requires a serious (or grave) matter, sufficient reflection, and full consent of the will. One cannot commit a mortal sin "by accident."*
 - * *Fr. Mike understands struggling with going to Mass because he, too, struggled in his younger days.*
- **Moving beyond obligation, the Mass is God's greatest gift to us: He speaks to us in his word, and Jesus gives himself to us in the Eucharist.**
 - * *The Eucharist is the "source and summit" of our Faith; nothing is more important.*
 - * *If we approach Mass looking for entertainment—or even simply to learn something—we miss the point.*
- **The entire point of the Mass is worship, which is the very heart of faith.**
 - * *Worship is sacrifice.*
 - ✦ *We offer up the sacrifice of the Son to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit.*
 - ✦ *We are offered along with Christ on the altar.*
 - * *Worship is about God and offering to him; it is not about what we want or what pleases us.*
 - ✦ *Worship is a gift. We give gifts to others, not to ourselves. (Fr. Mike offers the example of giving his mother the birthday present he wanted to give, not the present she wanted to receive, and he points out how that gift was half-hearted.)*
 - * *God deserves our very best.*
 - ✦ *The very best is Jesus himself, in the Eucharist.*
 - ✦ *We are also offering our very selves.*
- **We do not worship an experience; we worship a reality. If I am not interested in worshipping God, then maybe I am worshipping myself.**

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

CCC 1148 – on the importance of our actions for worship

CCC 2177 – for a list of holy days

CCC 2180-2182 – on our obligation to attend Mass

Romans 12:1-2 – on the importance of worship

Talk It Out

Objective comprehension and discussion questions

1. What attitudes and comments about attending Mass does Fr. Mike address?

Fr. Mike responds to those who say, "I don't like going to Mass" or "I don't get anything out of it." He admits to having the same sentiments as a kid, but he talks about how he grew beyond this attitude. He points out that these sentiments miss the reality of what Mass is.

2. Why is it a big deal to miss Mass intentionally? What are the three conditions for a mortal sin?

Missing Mass intentionally is a "big deal" because it violates the third commandment and therefore constitutes serious (or grave) matter. Serious matter, having a sufficient understanding that such a sin is serious, and fully consenting to it with one's will makes a sin mortal. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, a mortal sin "destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him" (CCC 1855).

3. According to Fr. Mike, what does God give us in Mass?

God speaks to us directly in the Scriptures and gives us Jesus himself in the Eucharist. As amazing as this is, Fr. Mike points out that our worship of God—what we bring and offer—is the fundamental point of Mass. The Mass is a sacrifice—a "re-presentation" of Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross for our salvation, and our joining of the sacrifice of our very lives to his.

4. What is worship? Why should we worship God?

Worship is the adoration of God. In worship, we offer him full honor and homage, the gift of our very selves. Our worship is in and through Jesus, who gives himself to us— and who, as priest and victim, is offered to God the Father. In union with the sacrifice of Jesus for us, we give God our very selves as living sacrifices. This reality is at the heart of the Mass. The priest and victim is Jesus himself. We offer him and receive him so that we can make an offering of ourselves. Christ's sacrifice and our participation in it is the heart of worship. So worship is about God, not us.

Subjective discussion questions

5. Mass is about worship, not about "getting something out of it." How might this understanding actually help us "get more" out of Mass?

Invite your group into an honest discussion, rather than just a sharing of obvious platitudes. Invite them to admit, even through a show of hands, that they have found themselves bored at church on occasion. This can be a step toward admitting the fundamental issue. While trying to prevent a descent into "parish bashing," it is OK to admit that a parish community may be missing the mark in some areas. Your group may note how many people leave Mass early, regularly check their phones during Mass, or display a disengaged body language. Ask for some concrete suggestions for changing the culture of their parish.

6. The word *Eucharist* means "thanksgiving." How is gratitude for God's gifts connected to an attitude of real worship?

Gratitude is an appropriate reaction to the gift of the Mass. An "attitude of gratitude" puts us in the right frame of mind to give our best in worship because gratitude is other-centered. Giving thanks means taking our minds off ourselves and focusing on God, who gave us the gift.

7. What are some practical things we can do to worship more wholeheartedly?

This is a preparation for the Hands On activity that follows. For your discussion to be transformative, it needs to end with some concrete, actionable suggestions. If you do not have time for this activity, invite students to do it on their own.

*Hands On***PERSONAL MASS PLAN**

1. Come up with three specific, realistic things you can do before, during, and after Mass that might move your participation away from being a spectator toward wholehearted worship. For example, reading through the Mass readings in advance, remaining after Mass for five minutes to offer a thanksgiving prayer, etc.

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Closing Prayer

READER (ROMANS 12:1-2)

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