

Tonight at 6:45 in Sacred Heart Church: The Novena to the Sorrowful Mother.

University of Notre Dame

Religious Bulletin

April 20, 1956

Sunday-Mass Obligation

Flood Donors still needed. See the Prefect of Religion at 117 Dillon Hall.

On St. Patrick's Day, we mentioned the faithful regard for Sunday Mass that is universal in Ireland -- a land where the Faith has never wavered or cooled. It's almost a barometer of spiritual health -- this fidelity to Sunday Mass. In lands where the obligation is ignored, or regarded lightly, the Faith has been reduced to a flicker -- instead of the bright, zealous fire it ought to be.

Take a look at Europe, or South America, today. In many places the Faith is no more than an empty shell. Look closely, and you will discover they are the very spots where Sunday Mass is ignored -- especially by the men under some stupid pretext. In the very countries where the Catholic population is supposedly "95%" you will find Communist strongholds. You'll also find that these people are not going to Sunday Mass. Hence, they are Catholic in name only. The Faith is something they inherited -- not something they wear in their daily lives at all. Since they do not go to Mass, they do not hear sermons explaining Catholic doctrine, and so are not well-informed. Not being well-informed, they are "push-overs" for every phony speech they hear -- even to the extent that they can be Catholics and Communists at the same time.

People who fall away from the Church rarely do so overnight. Nor do they suddenly stop going to Sunday Mass. They begin by coming late; then later. Finally they grow lukewarm and give it up altogether.

The Divine Economy

Faith is a gift. For many of us it comes at birth. But we don't have to keep it. We can nourish our birthright, or we can reject it in time. Sunday Mass is the last visible indication that we retain this gift of God. When we give up this obligation, we're well on our way out.

Then God, Who will not be mocked, takes the graces intended for, but ignored by, one of us, and gives them to one eager to do His Will -- and soon we have a convert cooperating with God, and using His gift. And so, as one of us casts aside the Faith and walks out of the Church, another grasps the heritage, becomes a convert, and walks into Eternal Life to take our place. It's a sad story; but it is true.

The annual "leakage" in the Church is something we don't care to admit. The number of converts annually is, we like to think, very remarkable. If the truth were noised aloud, you might safely surmise that the two groups are virtually equal.

The Reason For This Bulletin

Here at Notre Dame, we have a few men living virtually next door to the Church who miss Sunday Mass. We have others who come late for Sunday Mass. We have still others who leave Mass early. There is no excuse in all the world for their not fulfilling their obligation of a complete Sunday Mass. The violations are sufficiently numerous to approach a public scandal. Hence, this reminder of our serious obligation. Since it is less than Catholic, it cannot be tolerated on this campus.

Don't be surprised if this matter is called to your attention in a way you will not soon forget. There are times when Notre Dame, a bulwark of the Church Militant, calls a spade a spade; and this is one of them. If you're late for one Mass, go to a later one. If you're late for the 11:15, don't come near Sacred Heart -- go to a later Mass in South Bend. Anyone who doesn't think much of Sunday Mass, has no business taking up space here at Notre Dame. In short, he's undesirable. A Catholic is obligated to a full Mass on Sunday; and this is expected of him as a Notre Dame man.