Fulfilling Sunday Mass Obligation

"Not to oppose error is to approve it, and not to defend the truth is to suppress it" – Pope St. Felix III

NOTE: In this report I may occasionally use **bold print**, *italics*, CAPS, or word underlining for emphasis. These will be my personal emphasis and not that of the source that I am quoting. Any footnote preceded by a number in (parenthesis) is my personal library numbering system.

Q:

A priest in his homily said when he was growing up he was taught that if you came in after the gospel, you missed mass. He said, "for those of you who feel entitled to go to communion when arriving after the consecration", I'm not judging you because that's between you and God." He did not say it was a sin. I looked in the catechism and found nothing. I was taught that it was a sin as if we had missed Sunday Mass. I've been to daily mass where the priest denied communion when the person came in after the consecration. I am not criticizing the priest who is very holy. I just want to know what the church says about it. Wisdom tells me that it is an insult to our Dear Lord. Thank you, VLM

A:

Your question involves two separate issues: (1) How much of the Mass we must attend in order to fulfill our Sunday obligation and (2) If we can receive Holy Communion even though we are late for Mass. I will address each part separately.

Fulfilling Your Sunday Obligation

"**The first precept of the Catholic Church: 'You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation'**."[1] This precept or law does not say that you meet your obligation if you do not attend the entire Mass!

"**MASS BEGINS WITH THE ENTRANCE PROCESSION AND ENDS AFTER THE FINAL DISMISSAL** and we should be there from the beginning to the end. Each part of the Mass relates and complements the others in a single act of worship even though some parts, such as the consecration, are essential while others are merely important. **Someone who arrives at the consecration has not attended Mass**."[2]

"**When the people are gathered**, the Priest approaches the altar with the ministers while the Entrance Chant is sung."[3] This is the beginning of Mass where all attending are expected to be present. "The **Concluding** Rites: After the priest says the concluding prayer and blesses the people present, either he or an assisting deacon say: **Go forth, the Mass is ended** or **Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord** or **Go in peace, glorifying the Lord** or **Go in peace**. The people respond: Thanks be to God."[4]

"On Sunday, our primary duty is to worship God at Mass as a Church and to be nourished with

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[1] Book - Catechism of the Catholic Church, ISBN. 978-0-86012-327-9, (2010), Burns & Oates, London, England, Paragraph 2041, P. 442

[2] (917) - Article - Communion for Late Arrivals at Mass?, (11/04/2003), Zenit News Agency, Rev. Fr. Edward McNamara, professor of liturgy at Regina Apostolorum Pontifical Athenaeum, Rome, Italy, P.1

[3] Book – The Roman Missal, ISBN. 978-0-8146-3375-5, (2011), Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN., P. 513

[4] Book – The Roman Missal, ISBN. 978-0-8146-3375-5, (2011), Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN., P.P. 671-673

His grace."[5] "The faithful have the obligation to attend Mass, unless they are seriously impeded."[6] "**On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass**."[7] "The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. **The faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation**."[8] Note that in these quotes the inference is that we are required to assist in the **ENTIRE MASS, not just in part of it**!

"It is their (pastors') duty to ensure that the faithful take part (in the Mass) fully aware of what they are doing, **actively engaged in the rite**, and enriched by its effects."[9] "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations. **Such participation** by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people' **IS THEIR RIGHT AND DUTY** by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else."[10]

Right to Receive Holy Communion

"Laws which establish a penalty or restrict the free exercise of rights or which contain an exception to the law are subject to a strict interpretation."[11]

"The Lord addresses an invitation to us, urging us to receive Him in the sacrament of the Eucharist: 'Truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you'."[12] "Anyone conscious of a **grave sin** must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion."[13] "To prepare for a worthy reception of this sacrament, the faithful should observe the fast required in their Church."[14] "As the Second Vatican Council says: 'That more perfect form of participation in the Mass whereby the faithful, after the priest's communion, receive the Lord's Body from the same sacrifice, **is warmly recommended**."[15]

"The Christian faithful have the right to receive assistance from the sacred pastors out of the spiritual goods of the Church, **especially the word of God and the sacraments**."[16] "The sacred ministers cannot refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, are properly disposed and **ARE NOT PROHIBITED BY LAW FROM RECEIVING THEM**."[17]

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[5] (914) – Article – Missing Mass, ((2012), Arlington Catholic Herald, Arlington, VA., Rev. Fr. William P. Saunders, P.2
[6] (914) – Article – Missing Mass, ((2012), Arlington Catholic Herald, Arlington, VA., Rev. Fr. William P. Saunders, P.2
[7] Book - Code of Canon Law, ISBN: 0-943616-20-4, (1983), Canon Law Society of America, Washington, D.C., Canon 1247, P. 445
[8] Book - Catechism of the Catholic Church, ISBN. 978-0-86012-327-9, (2010), Burns & Oates, London, England, Paragraph 2181, P. 471
[9] Book - The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II – Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, (1967) Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, MA., Paragraph 11., P. 20
[10] Book - The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II – Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, (1967) Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, MA., Paragraph 14, P. 21
[11] Book - Code of Canon Law, ISBN: 0-943616-20-4, (1983), Canon Law Society of America, Washington, D.C., Canon 18, P. 7
[12] Book - Catechism of the Catholic Church, ISBN. 978-0-86012-327-9, (2010), Burns & Oates, London, England, Paragraph 1384, P.P. 312-312
[13] Book - Catechism of the Catholic Church, ISBN. 978-0-86012-327-9, (2010), Burns & Oates, London, England, Paragraph 1385, P. 313
[14] Book - Catechism of the Catholic Church, ISBN. 978-0-86012-327-9, (2010), Burns & Oates, London, England, Paragraph 1387, P. 313
[15] Book - Catechism of the Catholic Church, ISBN. 978-0-86012-327-9, (2010), Burns & Oates, London, England, Paragraph 1388, P. 313
[16] Book - Code of Canon Law, ISBN: 0-943616-20-4, (1983), Canon Law Society of America, Washington, D.C., Canon 213, P.P. 71, 73
[17] 843.1, P. 319 Book - Code of Canon Law, ISBN: 0-943616-20-4, (1983), Canon Law Society of America, Washington, D.C., Canon

Note here that THERE IS NO LAW PROHIBITING ONE FROM RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION IF HE OR SHE IS LATE FOR MASS! "Any baptized person who is not prohibited by law can and **must be admitted to Holy Communion**."[18] So, in the context of Church Canon Laws, **that all are required to obey**, Holy Communion must be given to those properly prepared and disposed whether they are or are not on time for Holy Mass. However, this is only in regards to Holy Communion, not in regards to having satisfied one's Sunday or Holy Day obligation!

Lastly, I want to make a research point of clarification. I quoted Fr. Edward McNamara in footnote number 2. His entire quote said that IF YOU ARE LATE FOR MASS YOU SHOULD NOT RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION. This was an error on Fr. McNamara's part as Holy Church has no such law or directive making this prohibition. I have no criticism of Fr. McNamara as I quote his extensive knowledge on the liturgy frequently in my reports. If something new develops on this issue I will notify readers of my reports.

This report prepared on January 1, 2013 by Ronald Smith, 11701 Maplewood Road, Chardon, Ohio 44024-8482, E-mail: <hfministry@roadrunner.com>. Readers may copy and distribute this report as desired to anyone as long as the content is not altered and it is copied in its entirety. In this little ministry I do free Catholic and occult related research and answer your questions. Questions are answered in this format with detailed footnotes on all quotes. If you have a question(s), please submit it to this land mail or e-mail address. Answers are usually forthcoming within one week. ***PLEASE NOTIFY ME OF ANY ERRORS THAT YOU MAY OBSERVE!***

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† Let us recover by penance what we have lost by sin †

[18] Book - Code of Canon Law, ISBN: 0-943616-20-4, (1983), Canon Law Society of America, Washington, D.C., Canon 912, P. 341