

## REFLECTION

### Would It Fulfill My Mass Obligation?

By Guillermo de Carndonagh

I was putting up a poster in the library announcing a High Mass when I was asked this question by a nice old retired man. "Would it fulfill my Mass obligation?" I was quite touched, having just read that only about forty percent of a surveyed "Catholic" population even recognized that they have a Mass obligation. I assured him that it would fulfill his Sunday Mass obligation and offered him a ride.

The obligation to attend Mass is a precept of the Church. Quoting from the New Catechism:

"2041 The Precepts of thy Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by the liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the indispensable minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor:"

2042 The first precept ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.") requires the faithful to participate in the Eucharistic celebration when the Christian community gathers together on the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord."

When our spiritual life is going well we do not really need the spur of an obligation to attend Mass but the positive law does have the advantage of keeping us focused when dryness and fatigue set in. Unfortunately even this is not always enough to keep us going.

Two recent incidents come to mind. In the first a young man I communicate with regularly in my profession asked about "...this Latin Mass thing." He continued "I haven't gone to mass in some time. I have gone to a few of the churches in the seven places we have lived in the last 4.5 years and been disappointed with most. I can use my schedule as an excuse most of the time, but my conscience only takes so much of \_that! I find that most of the masses I have been to have been done with a lack-luster performance (for lack of a better word). It seems to me that the priest rushes through the mass as if it's a burden on his day and the congregations have no respect for ceremony. If I understand correctly your rites are much more traditional ceremonies? If this is the case, I think that it would be refreshing to visit. " In the second I overheard a mature man at a coffee hour relating that he had been away from Mass and the sacraments for ten years prior to attending a "Latin Mass" a few years ago. "It just didn't seem important to anyone, priest or people so I stopped going" was the way he put it.

So maybe we need an additional precept: "The priest offering the sacrifice and the people assisting at it should do so with such attentiveness and fervor that the most casual observer knows that something important is happening."