

- Having fasted for one hour before Mass.

There are other things, but these are the most common ones that would prevent someone from receiving Communion.

Should I go to Communion at Every Mass?

We have seen that there are many things that can make going to Communion at every Mass an improbable thing. Yet some people even use this as an excuse for not going to Mass, saying, "Well I can't go to Mass, so what's the point? The point is not going to Communion at every Mass, but of fulfilling the obligation you have as a Catholic to attend Mass on every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. Life happens, we sin—sometimes mortally, and sometimes can't get to confession in time to go to Mass. In those cases, the obligation is NOT lifted, but the possibility of going to Communion is shut off. That is why Confession of sins to a priest is so important. To receive Communion in a state of mortal sin is to commit yet another mortal sin, that of sacrilege—an offense against the Eucharist. By confession and absolution, the Lord makes us worthy vessels to receive Him in the Holy Eucharist.

To receive the Holy Eucharist in a state of mortal sin is to thrust the Holy Lord of All into an unworthy vessel, to lie to the Church that you are in a state of grace. It is to deny that what you did is sinful at all—in essence defying the authority of those the Lord put in authority over the sacramental life of the Church. It is an affront to the Lord of the most grievous kind to sin mortally and to add mortal sin on top of that.

What to do if it is impossible to Go to Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day of Obligation

Before receiving Communion after having missed an obligatory Mass you should:

1. *Make an act of contrition*
2. *Confess to a priest that you have missed Mass and why*
3. *Receive either a dispensation or absolution*
4. *Complete your penance, if possible before receiving Communion*



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Serving Catholics of
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The Sunday Obligation and its implications



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Just What is the Sunday Mass Obligation?

The Obligation

The Sunday Mass Obligation has fallen on hard times in our Church since the renewal of Vatican II.

Many faithful heard it in confession or even in Sunday Masses or Catechism classes that the obligation was lifted, or it was reduced to a merely strong recommendation. Some of this argument may arise from the provisions of Canons 1247 and 1248 which are the points on which the Sunday Obligation rests. What exactly do they say?

Can. 1247 On Sundays and other holydays of obligation, the faithful are obliged to assist at Mass. They are also to abstain from such work or business that would inhibit the worship to be given to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, or the due relaxation of mind and body.

Can. 1248 §1 The obligation of assisting at Mass is satisfied wherever Mass is celebrated in a catholic rite either on a holyday itself or on the evening of the previous day.

§2 If it is impossible to assist at a eucharistic celebration, either because no sacred minister is available or for some other grave reason, the faithful are strongly recommended to take part in a liturgy of the Word, if there be such in the parish church or some other sacred place, which is celebrated in accordance with the provisions laid down by the diocesan

Bishop; or to spend an appropriate time in prayer, whether personally or as a family or, as occasion presents, in a group of families.

Simply put, 1247 describes what the Obligations are, 1248.1 delineates where and when one may fulfil the obligation for Mass, and 1248.2 addresses what to do if one is inhibited from fulfilling the obligation, and what are acceptable inhibitions.

It is in this last paragraph that pastors have too easily dispensed people from the Sunday Obligation. The wording is loose here, namely the term "some other grave reason." This has been expanded to such a degree that there seems to be no line between inconvenience and grave reason. Furthermore, the remedies recommended for non-fulfilment when in habited for a grave reason have become alternate choices for satisfaction of the Obligation, rather than "last resorts" as they are clearly intended by this Law.

Many people like to opine that people should want to go to Sunday Mass and if they don't want to, that it is either sinful or hypocritical to do so. The word Obligation is so abhorrent to them that they run away from it and rationalize themselves into thinking they are okay not to fulfil the obligation. True it is a good virtue to have a desire to go to Mass, even preferable. But when desire fades, or is drummed out by the difficulties of life, the obligation restrains our rebellious nature or stressed life style from bringing us into Grave Sin (i.e. Mortal Sin).

Communion and the Obligation

Outside of impossibility because of the absence of a priest, grave reasons are enumerated in the Law that may allow a priest to dispense you from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. The inclusion of the term "grave" in the reasons for not attending Mass means in the Church's Law that if the grave reason is not present, that it is a grave obliga-

tion, grave, from *gravitas* means very serious or weighty. When one does not have a grave reason for disobeying the law in question, one sins gravely or mortally.

The usual prescriptions for reception of communion then come into play when grave or mortal sin is present. One must be properly disposed to receive communion, i.e.

- In the state of grace, (i.e. having no unconfessed and absolved mortal sin such as missing Mass, murder, adultery or fornication, stealing, etc.).
- In good standing with the Church—not under an ecclesial penalty or inhibition such as:
 - being in a civil or non-catholic recognized marriage,
 - using contraception,
 - Practicing the occult.
 - Under the ban of excommunication (e.g. For an abortion, attempted illicit ordination, impersonating a priest).
 - Having left the Church formally

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