

Does TV Mass 'count'?



Question: I am 87 years old, live in a retirement community and can no longer drive. I attend the Mass that is offered here once a month and receive holy Communion when it is distributed each week by extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. I watch Mass on TV. But someone told me that I am not meeting my obligation to go to Mass by watching it on TV. They say it doesn't count. Is this true?

– **Louise Rutherford**, Lansdale, Pennsylvania

Answer: Given your age and mobility issues, the general norms and rules do not apply. However, let's review the general norms and then look to your situation.

To say that a Mass "counts" implies that one meets an obligation by attending it. As a general rule, Catholics are obliged to attend Mass each Sunday. This is in fulfillment of the Second Commandment. Simply watching Mass on TV does not fulfill the obligation. A Catholic who can reasonably do so must attend Mass at a parish church or oratory.

However, these general norms do not always apply. For example, severe weather may lessen or cancel the obligation to attend Mass at church. Likewise, poor health or the care of the sick, or some other acute and serious obligation can excuse one from the requirement to attend Mass.

In your case, given the difficulties that age has brought, it is hard to argue that you have any obligation to attend Mass. Rather, the Church has obligations to you to ensure you receive the sacraments regularly.

As for watching Mass on TV, you are encouraged to do so. You hear the prayers and the readings and likely a short sermon. All this is good even if it is not the same as actually

attending a Mass. It doesn't have to "count" since you don't have an obligation to meet in the first place.

So be encouraged. Thank you for staying united in prayer with the Church through the TV Mass and receiving holy Communion when it is offered in your community.

Jesus and Emmanuel

Question: The Old Testament says that the Messiah would be called "Emmanuel," but the angel told Joseph and Mary to call him Jesus. Is this a problem?

– **John Carter**, Washington, D.C.

Answer: No. The name Emmanuel (meaning "God is with us") is not so different from Jesus, which means "God saves." Thus, the key concept of God being with us to save us is maintained and fulfilled despite the names being different in a literal sense.

Prophecies usually have a general character that do not require the exact precision that many of us in modern literary times demand. And thus Matthew has no problem in connecting the names Jesus and Emmanuel when reporting the words of the angel to Joseph: "'She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,' which means 'God is with us'" (Mt 1:21-23).

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