

The Mass is critical

When is a Mass not a Mass? I've only encountered this a handful of times: when the priest doesn't say the words of the consecration right, or at all – that's my understanding.

I've encountered one priest who embellishes. "Don't do it during the Eucharistic prayer," I want to scream from the steepletop.

After this year and the time without Mass, I am even more sensitive to my need to be present at the consecration. Heaven and earth meet, and the Holy Spirit truly prays in your groans and sighs if you let him.

So on a recent Monday morning, I went to Mass as I was leaving Washington, D.C., for New York after an extended coronavirus stay. It was an early Mass, and I was surprised the homily went on for easily 10 minutes or more. That's not typical for daily Mass. Of course, with people not necessarily going to workplaces, I didn't think that much of it.

I had read the readings of the day and was longing for the consecration. But it never happened. The priest celebrating Mass skipped over the words of the consecration!

I had encountered this once before. It was an older priest, and he was a little shaky throughout Mass. I hoped that my intention to go to Mass that weekday was enough, because it was evening and I was out of options. I went up in line, just in case I was mistaken, but there was no way that was the Body of Christ.

A man went up to the priest afterward to point out what happened, but there was no rectification. I thought maybe he'd come out and distribute consecrated hosts from the tabernacles – there were not too many people there. But no. I got the impression from the man who talked to him that maybe this had

happened before. I assume it was an honest mistake, but, jeepers, it's pretty critical.

God is inviting us to a deeper awareness of his [presence in the Eucharist](#). He wants to draw us into union with him. With the mercies of this pandemic time to remember what is most important, are we missing the message? I know that sometimes I do – on many fronts.

That morning, it was early enough that I could get to another neighboring church's Mass before I had to go. I thanked the relatively recently ordained priest after Mass for his *fiat* to the priesthood, explaining what had happened. "The Mass is so critical," I said to him. "Your faithful attention is so crucial."

And the responsibility for a holy, healthy priesthood is not just on the priests. Every one of us who is not a priest must beg God for faithfulness, holiness and courage.

We must pray for priests. We must support and encourage them. We must love them as we love Christ, while knowing they are human beings capable of sin like we all are. Pray the Rosary. Make sacrifices. Small things done with great love, as we know, can go a long way. They have great power.

We're in this election season that just got even worse with the pandemic of anger over the [politics](#) of [Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death](#). What are we going to do differently as Catholics?

So, [go to Mass more if you can](#) and pray for our priests, families, the Church, the nation, the lonely – you name it. And thank the priest when he really celebrates it. We don't say thank you enough.

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