

Fr. Perozich comments —

When I was an active pastor of parishes, I became aware of the very phenomenon described below. The father, by creation's design, is the head of the family. His guidance and example are essential in the unity of the family and in for formation of the children.

If fathers attend Mass and gather their families to do so, the children will hold to the faith.

If a faithful wife and mother attends Mass, but not the husband and father, the children will fall away.

I preached this, and hope that it was received and practiced by the men of the parish.

*Mormons dedicate a day, often Monday, as “**Family Home Evening**” where nothing else interferes with the family time.*

*Mormon President Thomas S. Monson has said, “**We cannot afford to neglect this heaven-inspired program. It can bring spiritual growth to each member of the family, helping him or her to withstand the temptations which are everywhere. The lessons learned in the home are those that last the longest.**”*

For Catholics Sunday is the day that Jesus rose from the dead, and sent the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, the eighth day, a pluperfect of the 7th day rest. Thus the believers, expelled from the synagogue, gathered on Sunday. This is the day for worship of God as a family, for renewal of unity and the bonds of family among each other and with the Almighty. Worship, family leisure, and bonding are integral to human formation.

*Hebrews 10:24-25, 31, 39 “We must consider how to rouse one another to love and good works. **We should not stay away from our assembly, as is the custom of some, but encourage one another, and this all the more as you see the day drawing near. ... 35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence; it will have great recompense. You need endurance to do the will of God and receive what he has promised. ... We are not among those who draw back and perish, but among those who have faith and will possess life.***

A blog for Catholic men that seeks to encourage virtue, the pursuit of holiness and the art of true masculinity.

CATHOLICS DON'T GO TO MASS BECAUSE DAD DOESN'T

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Americans are not doing a very good job of observing the 3rd Commandment. Over the past 50 years, Sundays have been filled with youth sports, professional sports, shopping, work and just about everything else... except for Mass.

In 1965, 55% of American Catholics attended Sunday Mass each weekend. Recent surveys show that only 23% of American Catholics attend Sunday Mass each weekend today. Even though there are nearly 30 million more Catholics in the United States today, there are still more than 8 million fewer American Catholics at Mass each Sunday.[1]

Gentlemen: We are not doing our job. Why do I single out Catholic men? Because **it is the father who must be the spiritual head of the home. This is not only in the Bible[2], it is Christian tradition and it is a scientific fact. The family takes on the father's faith.** This doesn't mean that if the father is Catholic, the family is Catholic, nor does it mean that if the father reads Chesterton, the rest of the family will enjoy Chesterton. Here is what I'm talking about: A Swiss study[3] found that **the religious practice of the father is the most important factor in the future faith of his children.** The survey found, in families where both parents regularly attend religious services, 33% of children will be regular churchgoers for life, 41% will attend irregularly and 25% will stop practicing their faith. That is not a very impressive result given the faithfulness of both parents is it?

It is even worse when the father rarely or never attends church on Sunday (even if mom attended regularly). In this scenario, only 2% of their children became regular attendees in adulthood, 37% attended irregularly, and over 60% stopped practicing their faith completely.

Much more hopeful is the finding that **44% of the children in the study continued practicing their religion when dad was the one who took the lead in getting the family to church on Sunday.** That is 11% higher than families in which both parents regularly went to church on Sunday.

The study results are a bit counterintuitive until you think about it. One may initially think that children are more likely to remain faithful as adults if they grew up in a home where both

parents were faithful. While this may actually be true, it appears that **it is more likely if the father was the spiritual leader in the home.** If the father is merely attending Mass because mom expects it and encourages it, what kind of example is that for the children? It certainly makes dad seem like a disinterested and passive Christian, which is not inspiring at all. It may even make dad seem weak. If your father is not honoring the 3rd commandment, why should you honor the 4th?



But when our dad is the one who sets the pace on Sunday, kids pay attention. Instead of looking at faith as a feminine interest, the children see it as something a man can practice, something masculine.

Based on the decline in Mass attendance over the past 50 years, it is evident that men are not taking the lead in the spiritual guidance of their family. Meanwhile, **things like sports and entertainment have taken over, which may indicate where American men have been spending their extra time on Sunday morning.**

In the Swiss study, **when fathers were the spiritual leaders in the home, 44% of children grew up to regularly practice their faith.** Just think of the potential we have if we are intentional about our leadership. In that survey, the faithful fathers were just doing what came naturally to them. But knowing what we know, **we can approach our role as**

husbands and fathers with a much more intentional effort to educate and inspire our children.

What if you are already married to a faithful woman? What if you and your wife are already roughly equal in leading the spiritual life of your home? Should your wife stop going to Mass or take a backseat to you on all matters of faith? No. What you should do is work with your wife to make sure your family knows that you are going to Mass because it is your decision. **When it is time to pray as a family (which should be everyday), you should lead the prayers.** When there are occurrences in the life of your family, **it should be you who is first to praise God for the blessings and call to God for His help through the struggles. Your children should see you reading the Bible and spiritual books and they should hear you recommending verses or books to your wife and others.**

It is not a competition between you and your wife, and you do not need to be the leader in everything 100% of the time. But you should be taking the lead much more often than not. What you will probably find is that your wife will appreciate it even more than your children will. **The impact on your children will come to its full fruit years later when they are on their own.** The impact on your marriage will be nearly immediate and it will be a very good impact.

Here is one way you can keep holy the Lord's day and show yourself as the spiritual leader of your family. **Make a family commitment to avoid all unnecessary work and distractions on Sunday. Plan your weekend around the Mass you will attend** and then refrain from participation in youth sports, adult sports, shopping and other activities which either separate your family members from each other or require other people to go to work on Sunday.

This means you cannot set up a tee time with your buddies on Sunday, nor can you go into your office or your shop for a few

hours just to get a few things done before Monday. It means you will have to let your child's coach know that your son or daughter will not be playing or practicing on Sundays, not even for tournaments. It means you have to plan ahead to make sure you have what you need from the grocery store for Sunday as well as Monday morning.

Initially, your wife and kids are going to have a multitude of reasons to go to the store or to a friend's house on Sunday, but hold your ground. You may all have to suffer at times, especially when the milk ran out Saturday night and nobody ran to the store, so you have a breakfast without milk on Sunday morning. Over time, things will change and you will no longer have the urge to allow distractions on Sunday.

When you tell your son's coach that your son will not be showing up on Sundays, you are evangelizing (and likely irritating) him. When your friends want you to go to the baseball game on Sunday and you decline, explaining that Sunday is for faith and family, you are evangelizing them. When your daughter has to turn down an invitation to the lake with her friends on Sunday, you are teaching her about priorities.

This may also give you the incentive to plan your own family trip to the lake on Sunday or to take that family bike ride or walk. **Observing the traditional approach to Sunday will have three obvious impacts. It will quiet your family down for one day each week. It will serve as a very virtuous example to others, and it will allow God to reign as King each Sunday in your family.**

By taking the lead on the 3rd Commandment, you will give your kids a lot of reasons to honor the 4th commandment. When they are adults, they will be more equipped to hand down the faith, thereby rebuilding a culture which has largely abandoned the Lord's day.

[1] <https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>

[2] Ephesians 4 and 5

[3] <https://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=16-05-024-v>

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