

Let's talk about Sundays

As a priest and Bishop, my heart is lifted every Sunday, whichever parish I am in, by the presence at Mass of young families, elderly, teenagers, and young adults. I know that many have made great efforts to be present. I'm sure you feel the same. Gathering together on Sundays to be fed by Jesus' Word and Body is our essential witness. It's where and when we connect with our kaupapa or foundation and purpose of life.

Naturally, then, we notice when people - friends and others - are missing. Pressures tugging us away are strong. That's always been the case. The Book of Hebrews, encouraging early Jewish Christians not to be lured back to old ways, puts it this way: "Hold tight to the hope we profess... Be concerned for each other so that you keep up love and good works... Do not be absent from your own assemblies (parishes) and encourage one another" (cf. Hebrews 10:23-25). So, our obligation to Sunday Mass was not an invention of Bishops or anyone else. Rather it is a reminder to do what is natural to us as God's whānau. Sunday Mass far from curtailing our freedom enhances it, as it shapes the true persons and communities we are called to be.

November is parish statistics month. Why not be a "good news" statistic? For those of us who are a bit irregular coming to Mass, how about setting yourself a challenge? Form a new habit. Change your question from "shall I go to Mass today?" to "which Mass shall I go to today?" If those who come once a month came every second Sunday and those who come every second Sunday came every Sunday, our parish life and mission would be revitalized and reinvigorated hugely.

Thanks to each and every one of you for your sense of belonging, not matter what stage that is at. Feel encouraged. The priests and I are here simply to serve you, and we love doing that.

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