



At St Paul's I sometimes feel like a second class member because I do not come every Sunday. Why are you so rigid about every-week attendance?

Actually, we are not rigid about attendance. As Fr Fraser has written and said on a number of occasions:

In November 1974 after Fr Lundberg had resigned as Rector, Bishop Montgomery asked me to meet with the Vestry and parish leadership of St Paul's. One of the first questions they asked was what I would do about the liturgy if I were appointed Rector. My answer was that I would try to provide the type of liturgy that best met the needs of the majority of people who came to a given Mass on a Sunday-by-Sunday basis as long as it was theologically Catholic, done with intentionality and historic integrity, and was corporate (accessible to the whole congregation).

I went on to say that I would always warmly welcome anyone at any liturgy, and—except for canonical parish officials—I would never ask people who did not attend on a Sunday-by-Sunday basis why they had not been present. However, those who did not come Sunday-by-Sunday could not determine parish policy and culture.

During the past 35 years I have conscientiously worked to maintain this commitment. I have always warmly welcomed everyone to St Paul's on whatever basis they choose to attend and in the way they wish to participate (as long, of course, as their behavior does not interfere with the rights of others). Except for canonical parish officials—who have a special canonical responsibility as their behavior does affect others—I have never asked anyone who is not in weekly attendance for an explanation, much less criticized them.

However, it is a fact that:

- The Old Testament teaches the obligation of the people of God to celebrate unfailingly the weekly Holy Day (in the Old Covenant the Sabbath, Saturday).
- The New Testament teaches the obligation of all Christians to observe unfailingly the weekly Holy Day (in the New Covenant the Day of the Resurrection, Sunday) by celebrating the Sacrament of the Eucharist.
- The Christian Faith is not something that is added to a person's secular life like an avocation or leisure-time interest; it requires what St Benedict calls *conversatio morum*, a conversion of life from self-centered to Christ-centered lifestyle, priorities, and values.
- In the Baptismal Covenant – which is renewed at the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation (as well as by everyone annually at the Easter Vigil) – the candidate vows to remain unfailingly faithful to the Sunday Eucharist ... and thus it is his/her highest single priority - not family events, social events, athletic events, nor any other discretionary priority or personal convenience whatsoever – at least for that one hour each Sunday.
- Canon Law – both of the national Episcopal Church and of the Diocese of Chicago – requires that each Baptised member be present at a valid Eucharist (visiting a Protestant congregation does not fulfill this obligation) each Sunday and weekday Holy Day of Obligation unless the person is ill or physically unable. (In the Diocese of Chicago, a member who fails to fulfill this obligation for a period of two years automatically loses his/her canonical membership in the Episcopal Church.)

- Canon Law requires that any person holding a canonical office must be a Confirmed Communicant in Good Standing, and in addition to weekly Sunday attendance at a valid Eucharist must normally attend Mass in his/her parish church.
- The culture of St Paul's Parish takes this Biblical and Dominical teaching and Canon Law seriously.
- Many programs at St Paul's – especially Christian education and formation programs – are predicated on weekly attendance.

What this means in practice is that at St Paul's every person is completely free (again as long as his/her behavior does not interfere with the rights of others) to participate in the way he/she chooses without judgment from anyone else, including the Rector. However, it is one of the realities of life that none of us can "have it both ways." "With privileges go responsibilities." If we want to have authority in the Church, we must assume the responsibilities that go with it; if we want canonical [official] membership status in the Church we must assume the responsibilities that go with it. Those responsibilities are defined by the Old and New Testaments, the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself, the Baptismal Covenant, and the Canon Law of the Church.

While it is a reality that at St Paul's every-Sunday attendance at a valid Eucharist is necessary in order to be a part of the "core" of the life of the parish, there are people who have happily come to St Paul's for many years on less than a Sunday-by-Sunday basis. Over the decades none of these persons have felt unwelcome or that their spiritual needs were not being met, except for those very few who "wanted to have it both ways."

In a 2001 memorandum sent to the parish family, Fr Fraser wrote:

For a number of historic and demographic reasons St Paul's is not a normal suburban parish. Therefore our life and procedures are sometimes different and in some areas are reflective more of a monastic community than of a conventional parish church.

Our primary interest, though, is always each person's God-given vocation and her/his individual Christian journey. ... At St Paul's we are interested in and committed to assisting *everyone* who is intentional about his/her journey in faith, no matter where he/she may be at this particular point [in his/her life and/or commitment to the Church].

I am always available to assist you in your spiritual journey.... Please do not hesitate to let me know how I can be helpful to you.