

**Glenn Byer's webinar *Mass: Celebrating at a Distance*  
Questions from the Audience**

**What demeanor should one assume when watching Mass online or on TV?**

*What we get from Mass is directly based on what we bring to it. If we watch Mass like any other television program, then I believe we will get about the value of watching a TV show. We need to spend time before Mass in prayer, and during the celebration we don't focus on anything else, we assume the postures that the liturgy asks for, and make it a time apart, a true time of prayer.*

**Have live-stream Masses over the past few months put us back to a more spectator stance than participatory stance that the liturgy calls for?**

*Alas, you have a great point, and while I am not judging anyone in particular, for myself I know that I have to work hard to not fall into the observer role. At the same time, this is natural, as televised Mass should make us long for the time when we will be back in our churches, fully participating as the liturgy demands. Live-stream is not a one-for-one replacement, it is much less.*

**A good number of Catholics have become lazy: following the Sunday or daily liturgy on TV while sipping tea or cooking dinner or ironing clothes. Others have become more attentive and observant, following homilies with greater attention. Will these Christians come back to church after the pandemic? What is the challenge facing the Catholic Church?**

*I really think we can encourage people to be more involved in live-streamed liturgies, but the challenge we face is a larger form of the challenge the Church has always faced: some people become detached from the liturgy and the life of prayer and just stop coming. We need to work harder than ever to re-evangelize all of us, to get that obligation of the heart into everyone. It is a big challenge, but one that is worth the effort.*

**Can one participate in the sacrament of reconciliation through Zoom, by phone, or other electronic means?**

*There is no provision for receiving absolution by any other means than in person. At the same time, there is no reason why the rest of the sacramental celebration, the prayer, reading of scripture, confession of sin, spiritual counsel, and proposed penance and amendment of life could not be done in a non-sacramental setting. St. Thomas Aquinas encouraged us to constantly confess to one another – of if there was no one around, to confess to your horse!*

**I am a high school chaplain for students that are experiencing a mix of virtual learning and limited physical in-class time. In the absence of a physical Mass and gathered spiritual retreats, can you suggest alternative tangible ideas?**

*There have been some wonderful online retreats and spiritual gatherings for young people. Many of these are composer driven, so some the contemporary*

*Catholic composers like the ones that I work with here at OCP have been having virtual concerts and other retreats online. Many of the catechetical firms in the United States have also been offering online materials. But concretely I would work with young people using my book Unlocking the Feasts and Seasons of the Liturgical Year to have each person develop their own prayer calendar for the day, the week, and for days that matter to the young person throughout the year.*

**Can you speak to those like me who are quarantined at home?**

*Every home has holy places, and you can accent them and use them in your spiritual life and prayer. Since you are quarantined, the doorway to your home becomes a prayer for the day when you will be free to go out again. Make sure there is a crucifix or an image of a patron saint there, and pray there from time to time. The table where you eat is a holy place, so too is the bedroom where you sleep, and your computer and television are blessings in your life that allow you to stay in touch with the world. See them as blessings and use the broadcasts that are available in your prayer.*

**How can I make the most of TV Mass?**

*It is all about what you bring. Prepare for TV Mass by reading the readings and the prayers, do something to your home environment during Mass so that the focus is more on what you are watching. Follow the postures and say the responses in a good loud voice. It may feel a bit odd, but it is important for your entrance into the celebration. Listen to some liturgical music after Mass, either CD's or online. And make sure that you have a life of prayer. Mass on its own, especially a TV Mass is not strong enough to stand on its own as a complete spirituality.*

**How can we work better at explaining the dispensation for attending Mass in person?**

*The management system we have here at work speaks of the importance of over-communicating to say things time and again. I don't see why an invitation to those who are eligible to return to Mass could not be part of every live-stream celebration. But at the same time, there will need to be a lot of work done to get people to feel that obligation, not just hear it. Why the obligation exists, what we talked about today, will be very important.*

**I have been in conversation with people who have practiced "zoom Eucharist." How would you respond as a liturgical theologian to this practice?**

*As I mentioned during the Webinar, while as Catholics we do not see these events as celebrations of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, at the same time we are not going to say that Jesus was completely absent from such celebrations. We also believe that these celebrations might get in the way of people returning to the full celebration in Church when this becomes possible for them.*

**Which practices would you recommend regarding singing in the Mass?**

*I would follow the instructions of health professionals as to what is allowed. As soon as there can be live music, there should be, at least instrumental, with people singing along in their hearts, but then sung by a cantor as permitted, and ultimately all of us singing together, masks on or off.*