

Question: For many years, many people have understood that Saturday's Vigil Mass is for those who work on Sundays or have small children. But now, many people say that Saturday's Vigil Mass is valid for everyone, regardless of the reason. So, could you clarify whether it is a mortal sin or not to go to Saturday's Vigil Mass without a compelling reason, like the ones I mentioned above, and is it simply because you don't go on Sunday?

Answer: The Church allows the faithful to attend Saturday evening Mass to fulfill the Sunday obligation. This means that, on a liturgical level, there is no difference between going to Mass on Saturday evening or on Sunday.

When Jews celebrate the Sabbath (which begins at sunset the day before), they enter a sacred time in which secular time is suspended for 24 hours. During this period, they draw closer to God through specific rituals and strengthen family ties through prayer and fellowship at home. Therefore, the festivities begin the night before with First Vespers. As **Dies Domini (49)** explains, the liturgy of the "Vigil Mass" on Saturday is, in effect, the festive Mass of Sunday. Therefore, attending Mass on Saturday afternoon is liturgically the same as attending on Sunday.

Initially, this option was permitted to facilitate the faithful's participation in the celebration of the Lord's resurrection. With the **1983 Code of Canon Law**, it became a universal norm, so that a bishop's permission is no longer required to attend Saturday Mass and fulfill the Sunday precept. The original permission granted to bishops to allow the faithful to fulfill the Sunday obligation by attending Mass on Saturday afternoon was intended to help Christians more easily celebrate the day of the Lord's resurrection (**Eucharistic Mysterium, 28**). With the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law in 1983, this became a universal law and no longer depended on the bishop's permission. Thus, anyone who attends Mass on Saturday afternoon is exercising a right recognized by the Church.

It is not a mortal sin to attend Mass on Saturday instead of Sunday, since the Church recognizes this option as valid. However, deliberately missing Mass on both Saturday and Sunday without a valid reason is a grave sin (**CCC 2181**), because it fails to sanctify the Lord's Day.

In short, Saturday afternoon Mass is a legitimate alternative to fulfilling the Sunday obligation. **Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2175):** *"Sunday is expressly distinguished from the Sabbath, which it chronologically follows each week and whose liturgical prescription it replaces for Christians. In Christ's Passover, it fully realizes the spiritual truth of the Jewish Sabbath and proclaims man's eternal rest in God."*