

# When Catholics Don't Go to Mass

## When did they stop coming?

- **1963: 71% at Mass every Sunday**
- **2008: 23% at Mass every Sunday**

## How many come to Mass occasionally?

- **21% come at least once a month, but not weekly.**
- **24% come a few times a year.**
- **32% come rarely or never.**

## Who comes to Mass?

- **45 % Pre-Vatican II (born before 1946)**
- **24% Baby Boomers (born 1946-1960)**
- **15% Post Vatican II (born 1961-1980)**
- **17% Millennial Generation (born after 1981)**

*Source: CARA*

## Research Websites

- Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) [www.cara.georgetown.edu](http://www.cara.georgetown.edu)
- The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life [www.pewforum.org](http://www.pewforum.org)
- The Barna Group [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)



## Six signs someone is open to evangelization

**1. Questions** The most common sign is when someone begins to ask questions about God, good and evil, or the meaning of life. A lot of people in our society have lost that sense of meaning. They begin to ask, “What is my life about? Why do I do what I do? Is there any purpose in all of this?” As a parent, spouse, sibling or friend, your role is not to restore that meaning, but to help the person find meaning for him or herself. You can do that by active listening. Non-threatening comments such as, “It sounds like you’re really searching…” will encourage the person to talk in a more open manner. You don’t have to offer solutions or answers. Offer your opinion only when asked.

**2. Memories** Reminiscing is another sign someone may be open to evangelization. Sometimes people will recall childhood devotions to Our Lady or the saints. Memories of music, incense, or some special liturgy will surface. Don’t be afraid to share your own memories. You might want to suggest revisiting a childhood parish together or seek out a priest or religious who had a profound impact on the person. If remembering takes a negative turn, don’t be defensive. The person may be justified in his or her anger. Sometimes, talking about a bad experience can put it in perspective. If possible encourage the person to separate anger toward a person from anger at the Church and the Sacraments. It wasn’t the Church that caused the pain. It was a person connected to the Church. If a person is open to praying, ask the Holy Spirit for healing of memories.

**3. Reading** Some people are evangelized through reading. Keep Catholic books, magazines, newspapers and even your parish bulletin in places where family members and friends can pick them up. If there’s something particular that you find interesting, recommend it to family members and friends. One woman sent books on Dorothy Day and Edith Stein to her sister who was struggling with how she perceived the Church treats women.

**4. Current Events** Catholic news events can trigger interest in some people. Make sure you’re up to date on Papal visits, Marian apparitions, Vatican announcements and local news about Catholic people and events. Even the priest scandal was a great opportunity to explain to people why you are still a Catholic! When discussing any aspect of Catholic news, emphasize the universality of the Church. Unlike other Christian denominations that tend to attract people with similar interests and backgrounds, the Catholic Church numbers one billion people with different cultural, intellectual, and socioeconomic backgrounds. As James Joyce said, Catholic means, “Here comes everybody!”

**5. Major Life Events** Illness, death, divorce, the birth of a baby, a job loss or transfer, kids growing into teen years, moving to a new home are all life events that make people open to evangelization. It’s important to listen. Then share how you got through difficult times with the help of your Catholic faith. Offer to introduce the person to a priest, deacon or pastoral association. Invite them to come to Mass with you.

**6. God’s Presence** The real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is often a factor in bringing people back. Invite people to come with you for family funerals, weddings, baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, Ash Wednesday, May crownings, and Mass on Christmas and Easter. It’s hard for people to go to church by themselves. Be an inviter. If they don’t want to go to Mass, invite them to parish social, cultural or educational events. Keep the lines of communication open. Radiate God’s love to everyone. Let the Holy Spirit work through you. Before long, you’ll begin to see that people will be drawn to Jesus Christ and attracted to the Catholic Church because they want the faith, the love and the peace you possess.