

After last weekend's video, my good friend asked me: "OK, are you going to tell us the right answer next week?" How very Catholic! Bless you, my friend!

My sister, Marian, in Ireland had a similar observation: "I hope next week we will get an answer from you on 'why you go to church!'" She proceeded to outline some of her own reasons: "Personally, I go to Mass to spend some time with the Lord. It gives me time to talk to Him in a way that I might not necessarily do at home. Also, because I truly believe that there is someone much greater than me up there who carries me through the difficulties we face."

The available data shows there is a growing consensus around the world that Mass is not worth the effort. The ritual is perceived by many as uninteresting, boring, repetitive, impersonal and empty. One of the most common responses from friends who have ceased the practice of going regularly is: "I don't get anything out of it!" Obviously, the idea of obligation doesn't appeal to people anymore – thank God for that!

What kind of God is it that would force us to go to Mass using a Threat of Damnation? Obviously, this did not come through God, and was not cleared by Him, as is so abundantly clear in some of the recent Scripture Readings.

So, rather than asking "Why do I go to Church?" people end up asking, "How useful is it? What am I getting out of it? And, does it really matter if I don't bother going?"

They are good and valuable questions. And, while friends pose those questions to the Church and to each other, I believe those questions are best answered by addressing them to my God – and, not by others.

When I was learning my religion in school, there was a tendency among teachers to seek "the right answer." We received the message rather subtly. After a number of our mundane answers, somebody would come up with the answer the teacher had in mind. The teacher would joyfully announce to the whole class: "Now, did

everybody hear Paul's answer? Paul, would you please repeat your answer so that everybody can hear it?"

Well, there is no one, right answer to the question, "Why do I go to Church?" But, having a clear sense of intention and purpose will definitely make a huge difference in my life and in my personal relationship with Jesus Christ, as well as my experience of His community.

And, the answer, "I am the Pastor and I am 47-plus years old" is not a good reason!

I wish you a very Merry Christmas, and I hope to see you at Church for Christmas and throughout the New Year!