

## FAITH AT WORK

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT MASS WHEN I AM ON DUTY?



The Sacrifice of the Holy Mass is central to our faith and weekly attendance is required by the Church unless there is good reason why you cannot attend. These include sickness, and also being required to be at work while Mass is celebrated. For those on nights, this will rarely be a problem. It is easy to pop to Mass after finishing at 9am or in the evening after a sleep.

For those working on Sundays it may be impossible to get to Mass if you work a 9

to 9 shift. Some hospitals still have a Mass within the hospital, and it's great to go if you can. The Chaplaincy team and the patients love to see the doctors turning up and praying alongside them. But you should not go to this if doing so will compromise in anyway the safety of your patients. So its fine to go, as long as it is quiet and your bleep is on and you will answer straight away if you are called.

Sometimes this is tricky. I remember once when on call in general practice I was able to pop into Mass but turned up late and got bleeped after 5 minutes. The poor priest had no idea what I was doing and I left the door ajar too by mistake. He was not that pleased really. But at least I had done my best.

#### **And if you miss Mass?**

Do all you can to get to an evening Mass during the week to make up for missing Sunday. Otherwise it will be two weeks between your Sunday masses and that's a long time to be away. If you can find them, evening or early morning Masses are quiet, beautiful and a source of real grace. And later on in your career, if you are a parent it will be much harder to get along!

Last of all, don't forget about confession. Work brings us plenty of opportunities to sin and Confession is easy to neglect but a profound source of grace and forgiveness.

GRACES COME THROUGH WEEKDAY MASSES



Years ago when I was a houseman (F1) we got to the point where we had (pretty well) sorted out a good, efficient and effective resus team. On the ward round, a lady in her 50's was doing fine post MI. A quick check over was performed and we were planning discharge soon. 20 minutes later and the crash bleep went. Running back to the ward there she was, newly arrested. To be honest we really thought we would soon have her back with us but, this time, it was to no avail. All our efforts were of no effect and she died. We had failed with a delightful lady for whom we had had every expectation.

The next week, I went to Thursday evening Mass. To be honest, weekday Masses have been a great grace to me, over the years during the stresses and strain of being a doctor. There in the middle of Church was my patient's coffin resting before Our Lord. My sense of failure drew me to pray all the more for the woman of whose faith I had known nothing. After Mass, a little shocked and sheepish, a discussion about the lady arose. Clearly (due to confidentiality) there was nothing I could say other than, "What happened to her?" "Oh, she had a heart attack," came the reply. "She seemed to be doing well and then she just suddenly died. They did all they could, but they just could not save her." My sense of failure, in part, matched the parishioners' sense of shock, but there was no anger, no doubt, just sorrow at such a youthful passing.

I learned a lot from this patient. The world in which we live, eat and pray is the same world from which comes our patients. Confidentiality is important, and often enough, when we feel we did not succeed, others will see the efforts we made. Sometimes, you just cannot save them all. But we can pray better for those for whom we care if we see their humanity more fully.