

Church manners-All year round!

Recently someone sent me a clipping from a parish bulletin from a church that they had visited. The bulletin featured a section that was entitled, "Church etiquette-what you are invited to do. What you are invited to avoid." The article mentioned twelve things that would help a great deal in fostering an appropriate and reverent atmosphere in the church. This week in my own bulletin article, I thought I would share with you a few of those "Bulletin Points" to perhaps assist our own experience of worship here at St. Charles on Sundays.

Always dress modestly and appropriately. Yes, I know that it is now summer. However the church is air-conditioned and we should not be dressing as if we are headed for the beach! Proper dress illustrates that what we are doing is significant and important. What could be more important than receiving the Body of Jesus Christ in communion? There are some restaurants where you have to "Dress up" in order to obtain admittance. The church does not require a jacket or formal wear to get in, but it still shows respect for the Lord when we don our "Sunday best."

Turn off all mobile devices while still in the vestibule. This is a "Biggie" as they say. So many times before mass when people are trying to pray or even when the liturgy is going on, people's cell phones go off with some amusing ringtones that can be heard even on the altar. A priest friend of mine told me that a lady's cell phone was ringing during a funeral mass and that incredibly, she answered the call and whispered loudly, "Can't talk now, dear, I'm at a funeral!" Unless we are the president or the pope, there is nothing so urgent that requires our cell phone to be on during the hour we spend at mass on Sunday.

Use the restroom before or after mass. The bathroom at St. Charles I know is in the back of the church. But still it is a little distracting for the celebrant of the mass when he is preaching and there is a rush for the toilet! In one parish where I was assigned, we had a visiting priest on Sunday who saw so many people getting up to use the facilities during his homily that he stopped his remarks and joked, "Do many of you people here have bladder problems?" It was meant as a joke, but seriously, if we could wait to use the restroom until after mass that would be better. I can understand that there are situations with young children that might be difficult but as for the rest of us; a few minutes will not really hurt!

Deposit all water bottles, coffee cups, and gum in the garbage. Certainly this a "No brainer" but at times, I have had to tell people on the communion line to "Take the gum out of your mouth!" It is not appropriate to receive Holy Communion while chewing gum.

Commit to taking your child out if he or she is making a disturbance. A priest was

once giving a sermon and a baby was loudly crying. The mother started to take the baby out of the church down the aisle but the priest said to her, "Madam, don't worry, the baby is not bothering me." The woman replied, "Yes, but you're bothering the child!" If a baby is screaming then taking the child to the vestibule and calming it would be proper and would reduce stress to the parents and those sitting around.

*Finally, we need a little more **quiet** in church! Too much talking before mass and after! A spirit of quiet will help us to pray. Listen attentively to the readings, try to join in singing the hymns, always genuflect before the tabernacle and receive communion with great devotion.*

Remember we are at mass to praise and worship God. Let us give him our best!

Sincerely in Christ

Fr. Jerome