

Ask, Father James:

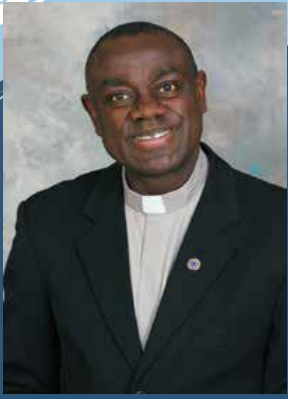
“Is Going to Church Necessary for Salvation?”

Salvation" (*soteria*) is the grace of being in the presence of Jesus. Jesus says; For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20). In Luke 19:9; Jesus says to Zaccheus, "today, salvation has come to this house..." I believe that the "salvation" event was Jesus himself coming to the house (Luke 19:5). Salvation is believing the Word present to us. The presence of Jesus. When Simeon sings, "My eyes have seen your salvation," he was looking at the infant Jesus (Luke 2:30).

According to Pew Research Centre, The overwhelming reason why people attend church services is to feel closer to God. At church, we partake of the sacrament (or Communion) - the real presence of Jesus. Jesus commanded, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). In the Bible, the Apostle Paul compared the church to a body, with Jesus as the head. He said for a body to work, every member is important and must do its part (see Ephesians 4:16). The church community helps us to "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). We need each other spiritually, not only socially.

You can find answers at church. Maybe you're struggling with a specific question or need some direction in your life. Maybe you just need to feel God's love and know that He is there. As you listen to sermons and study God's teachings, you will have opportunities to receive insight from God. He wants to communicate with you, and church is a good place to hear His voice in your heart and mind. In church you can also experience the fruits of the Holy Spirit, "love, joy, peace, gentleness, patience, goodness, [and] faith" (Galatians 5:22).

For many years, it was debated whether there was ordinary possibility of salvation outside of the church and it was agreed that just as there was no salvation outside Noah's ark when the world perished in the flood (Genesis 6:9-17); so also we believe that there is no certain salvation outside Christ, who offers himself to the elect in the Church' (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*). What they meant was that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour from sin' and sinners should not expect to be saved apart from the Church. The church offers Baptism and the other sacraments to help us participate fully in communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. St. Paul says in Col 2:9 that the fullness of divinity dwells in Christ and that the Church possesses 'the fullness of Christ's salvific mystery.



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