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Father Jim Martin, S.J., on Midnight Mass

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Distinctly Catholic

Over at America's "In All Things" blog, Father Jim Martin, S.J., has a great post about Midnight Mass and Vigil Masses of Christmas and whether or not they encourage a "let's get it out of the way" attitude to church attendance on Christmas.

I admit that if there is one 20th century reform I positively detest, it is the introduction of vigil Masses. They have robbed Sunday of its unique status as the day on which Christians worship, a "little Easter," and all the rest.

I understand that the toothpaste is out of the tube. At my home parish in Connecticut, they did away with the vigil Mass and a lot of families started attending nearby parishes, revenue plummeted, and they had to bring back the vigil. The Great Vigil of Easter is, of course, a different thing, and its revival happens to be my favorite reform of the past century.

There are sound, practical reasons why families like to go to vigil Masses. As one woman noted in Father Martin's piece, many families have to travel on Christmas Day in order to be with extended family. Certainly, celebrating Christmas with family is as important as celebrating it with the Holy Family at any hour.

Still, we have lost something precious. The secularization of the culture is only part of the reason Catholics continue to leave the church. Unless we teach our children at an early age that the claims of faith come first, even and especially claims upon our busy schedules, we are complicit in that secularization.

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