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CHRISTMAS MASS — CATHOLIC STRAGGLERS COME HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

DAYTON, Ohio — Whether it's nostalgia, loneliness or the music, something draws Catholic stragglers back to the church during the holidays. And even if attending Mass once or twice a year doesn't lead to a core commitment to the Catholic faith, it shouldn’t be scoffed at by traditional Catholics, says the Rev. Gene Contadino, S.M., campus minister at the University of Dayton.

He estimates that perhaps 10 percent of Catholics attend church sporadically or not at all. But it doesn’t take a catastrophic illness or other life-altering event to cause them to yearn for the church, says Contadino, who ministers to faculty and staff members at UD, one of the 10 largest Catholic universities in the nation. “People have a need, at certain times in life, to be attached, to be part of life,” he says. “It’s difficult to be on the outside looking in. Church is one of the easiest places to go.”

He says holiday Masses, such as Christmas and Easter, are easy to attend because “the sermons tend to be positive and uplifting. Each is a renewal of hope and enthusiasm.”

For those who want to maintain a casual commitment to the church, the crowds at holiday Masses can also help them preserve their anonymity. “But, if you’re thinking about coming back to the church spiritually, a typical Sunday may be better. Your chances of making contact and talking with someone are greater,” Contadino says.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: For interviews, call Father Gene Contadino at (513) 229-4241.