

Homily: 20th Sunday Cycle A: 2023: Is 56: 1, 6-7; Ps 67; Rom 11: 13-15, 29-32; Mt 15:21-28

“Keeping Holy the Lord’s Day”

The justice and righteousness we are to show in our relations with our fellow human beings must be rooted in giving God, His due, in justice. What does this mean in concrete reality? One of the main ways the Bible says we honor God and give Him proper respect is to “*keep holy the Sabbath*” (3rd Commandment). For us Catholics that means keeping Sunday holy. What does that mean? Our late great Holy Father Pope St. John Paul II back in 1998 wrote a beautiful apostolic letter on this very topic - it was called: ***Dies Domini “On Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy”***. It is very worthwhile reading. In it he pointed out that Sunday needs to be treated differently than the other 6 days of the week, which is a huge challenge in the modern secular world. It was much easier to do this when all the stores were closed and when employers didn’t make people work on Sunday. **In our increasingly secular culture, we need to be a counter-cultural witness to the holiness of Sunday.** It means getting out of the habit of shopping on Sunday if we have slipped into that (*you may say, I enjoy shopping and looking around - but by going to the store on Sunday we are preventing someone else from keeping the Sabbath, so in that sense it is a sin against fraternal charity*), or doing unnecessary servile labor on Sunday: meaning basically anything that could have been done the other 6 days of the week, *e.g., cutting grass, painting the house, etc.*, if we would have planned things out a bit better. These are sins against the 3rd Commandment that should be mentioned in Confession. We are allowed to do necessary jobs: cooking, washing the dishes. Use good spiritual sense or ask me in Confession if you are not sure. Sunday is a time when we need to place God first, and rest in Him. **Of course, the most important thing in that regard is participating in Sunday Mass with love and devotion, or in the Saturday evening anticipated Mass.** And giving God our best in that regard both: **interiorly** *in terms of really participating in our heart and mind by praying, listening and following the Mass attentively – with the help of the Holy Spirit - pray for more of the spiritual gift of holy recollection;* and also **exteriorly** by our

decorum at Mass in how we conduct ourselves: *genuflection or bowing (if we have bad knees or balance) to the Tabernacle when entering and leaving, reverential silence before and after Mass - when in the main Body of the Church - we all need to work on that in our noisy culture, esp. after Mass - if we want to talk to someone, please go outside to talk during the nice weather months, since this is God's House of Prayer and some might want to stay after Mass to pray. To reiterate what I said on **Corpus Christi**: we should also always examine our conscience to make sure we do not have mortal sin(s) on our soul – if so, to get to Confession ASAP; keeping the one hour fast before receiving Holy Communion which includes no chewing gum or candy at Mass which breaks the fast - unless we have a medical reason for taking a throat lozenge; to bow reverently and say Amen when receiving Communion, and also to look at how we dress for Mass: do we always dress in a modest and respectful way out of love for the Lord?*

Additionally, do we try to rest and relax with our families and friends on Sunday? - *to re-create our being (soul, mind, heart, and body) in divine and human love?*

Do we try to reach out to the lonely and suffering members of the Church, e.g., *to visit the sick, nursing homes, call people up, do other acts of charity?* We can and should do those things on other days, but it is also beautiful to do some acts of charity on Sunday for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Also remember ***Our Lady of LaSalette's message***, see my homily in May, and the need for reparation for those who don't – detach more from the over-emphasis on sports and gambling too on Sunday. **Keeping holy the Sabbath:** what a beautiful thing to do. As God tells us in the 1st reading, “*all who keep the Sabbath free from profanation and hold to my covenant, them I will bring to my holy mountain (Heaven) and make joyful in my house of prayer...*” If we truly and consistently keep the Lord's Day holy, we are far along on the narrow path that leads to Heaven. God bless you.

Recommended Reading:

Pope St. John Paul II. **Dies Domini “On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy.”** Apostolic Letter. 1998. Go to the Vatican's website - go to www.vatican.va, and then go under the Popes section, and then under Pope John Paul II, click on the link for Apostolic letters and you will find it. Also, you can purchase a hard copy from the Daughters of St. Paul: www.pauline.org. They have all the official Vatican documents in English.