

Monday week 23 of Ordinary time (Luke 6:6-11)

The Sabbath was (and still is) important to the Jews and there were (and still are, for observant Jews) very strict protocols on what can and cannot be done on the seventh day of the week which was a rest day. The third commandment says “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work” (Exodus 20:8). In the creation account, God “rested” on the seventh day as a sign of completion, and this is a model for us as we all need refreshment (c.f. Catechism 2172).

Christians have traditionally kept the first day of the week (Sunday) as the day of rest, because it is the day of the Lord’s Resurrection (c.f. Matthew 28:1). However, the first day of the week is also a reminder of the first day of creation and so the Resurrection marks a moment of “re-creation.” In about 150 AD, St. Justin explained that “We all gather on the day of the sun for it is the day when God, separating matter from darkness, made the world, and on this same day, Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead.”

How can we keep holy the Lord’s day (Sunday)?

Traditionally Catholics have been “obliged” to go to Mass on Sundays, but due to the current pandemic, this obligation has been lifted. Instead, the faithful are encouraged to either go on a different day of the week, or to make some kind of devotional act, which could be watching Mass online. There are four dimensions to the Christian life, and the liturgy is but one. The other three are: the profession of our faith (talking about it, or finding out more about it), living it in Christ and praying outside of the liturgy. On a Sunday, whether or not we are able to get to Mass, we can do the other things, such as: if we live with others, chat about what the Gospel or some other reading means for our lives (a good lunchtime conversation); cook a special meal or have a special desert, or have a cake in the afternoon; enjoy a family outing, even if it's just a walk; put away electronic devices for a time; visit an neighbour who is on their own; ring someone you have not been in touch with for a while; and end the day by lighting a candle and having a time of family or personal prayer, such as the rosary, or just say the Our Father together.

When we keep the Lord’s day holy, we are refreshed, re-created we could say, and our week is more balanced. We become more open to the Holy Spirit who equips us by His grace, to deal with the stresses life throws at us.

How can we make next Sunday holy?

Carol Ann Harnett 7th September 2020