

Session 8

Celebration, A time for the Family

A. Opening hymn and greeting

B. Invocation of the Holy Spirit

C. Reading from the Word of God

Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed. Since on the seventh day God was finished with the work he had been doing, he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation. Such is the story of the heavens and the earth at their creation (Gen 2:1-4a).

Remember to keep holy the sabbath day. Six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord, your God. No work may be done then either by you, or your son or daughter, or your male or female slave, or your beast, or by the alien who lives with you. In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord has blessed the sabbath day and made it holy (Ex 20:8-11).

D. Biblical Catechesis

1. *The seventh day of creation.*

Modern man created free time and lost the meaning of celebration. The meaning of the celebration, particularly Sunday, as “a time for man”, indeed, a “time for the family”, needs to be retrieved. Rediscovering the heart of the celebration is also decisive for humanizing work, for giving it a meaning that will not reduce it to a response to need but open it up to relations and sharing with the community, one’s neighbor and God.

The seventh day for Christians is the “Lord’s day” because it celebrates the Risen Christ who is present and living in the Christian community, the family and personal life. It is the weekly resurrection. Sunday does not break the continuity with the Hebrew sabbath but brings it to completion. To understand the uniqueness of the Christian Sunday, therefore, it is necessary to refer to the meaning of the commandment regarding the sabbath.

To sanctify the feast day, according to the commandment, the people of God must dedicate a time reserved for God and man. In the Old Testament there is a strong connection between the seventh day of creation and the law to sanctify the sabbath. The commandment of the sabbath, which reserves a time for God, also preserves its intention to create a time for man.



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commandment is not motivated only by the work of creation but also by the redemptive action: “For remember that you too were once slaves in Egypt, and the Lord, your God, brought you from there...That is why the Lord, your God, has commanded you to observe the sabbath day” (Dt 5:15). The work of creation and the remembrance of the liberation go hand in hand. “To observe the sabbath” means to make an “exodus” for the sake of human freedom going from “slavery” to “service”. For six days man will serve by toiling, but on the seventh day he will stop the servile work so that he can serve in gratitude and praise. So the sabbath takes out from service/slavery to introduce into service/ freedom.

In the Liturgy there is a wonderful prayer (the Offertory Prayer of the Twentieth Sunday) that can help us to rediscover the celebration as the completion of human work: “O Lord, accept our gifts in this mysterious encounter between our poverty and your greatness. We offer you the things you have given us and you, in exchange, give us yourself”. The text invokes the wondrous encounter between our poverty and God’s greatness.

This exchange is made in the encounter between work and celebration, between the “productive” dimension and the “gratuitous” dimension of life. At home and in the Christian community, the family experiences the joy of transforming everyday life into a living liturgy. In prayer at home, the couple prepares and irradiates the festive liturgical celebration. If children see their parents pray before them and with them, they will learn to pray in the ecclesial community.

The Offertory Prayer mentioned earlier concludes in this way: You, in exchange, give us yourself.

The invocation asks God not only for health, serenity and family peace, but nothing less than Himself.

The meaning of everyday toil is to transform our work into a grateful offering in recognition of the gift that has been given to us: life, one’s spouse, one’s children, health, work, one’s falls and recoveries in life. Christian freedom consists in man’s liberation from work and in work so that he will be free for God and for others.

The man and the woman, but especially the family, should include in their lifestyle the meaning of celebration in order to live not only as subjects in need, but also as a community of encounter.

The encounter with God and with others is the heart of the celebration.

The Sunday meal, at home and with the community, is different from an everyday meal. An everyday meal is for survival while the Sunday meal is to experience the joy of the encounter.



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The festive meal is a time for God, a space for listening, communion and readiness for worship and charity. Celebration and service are the two fundamental forms of the law through which God is honored and his gift of love is welcomed: in worship, God communicates his charity to us gratuitously; in service, the gift received becomes love that is shared and lived with others. The dies Domini must also become a dies hominis! If the family approaches the celebration in this way, it will be able to live it as “the Lord’s day”.

E. Listening to the Magisterium

A family that knows how to suspend the continuous flow of time and take a break to gratefully remember the benefits received from its Lord is training itself to enter into the Lord’s rest. The family called to rest in the Lord knows how to redirect the dispersion of the days towards the day of gratitude. It knows how to convert the expectation of the days into the one expectation of the Lord’s Day. It returns like the healed leper to give thanks to its Lord for the salvation of all. Through its insistent intercession, it shortens the time of waiting for the eighth day, for which the Bridegroom promised the bride: “‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen! Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20).

Remember the sabbath

The commandment of the Decalogue by which God decrees the Sabbath observance is formulated in the Book of Exodus in a distinctive way: “Remember the Sabbath day in order to keep it holy” (20:8). And the inspired text goes on to give the reason for this, recalling as it does the work of God: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (v. 11).

Before decreeing that something be done, the commandment urges that something be remembered. It is a call to awaken remembrance of the grand and fundamental work of God which is creation, a remembrance which must inspire the entire religious life of man and then fill the day on which man is called to rest. Rest therefore acquires a sacred value: the faithful are called to rest not only as God rested, but to rest in the Lord, bringing the entire creation to him, in praise and thanksgiving, intimate as a child and friendly as a spouse.

The connection between Sabbath rest and the theme of “remembering” God’s wonders is found also in the Book of Deuteronomy (5:12-15), where the precept is grounded less in the work of creation than in the work of liberation accomplished by God in the Exodus: “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with mighty hand and outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” (Dt 5:15).



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This formulation complements the one we have already seen; and taken together, the two reveal the meaning of “ the Lord’s Day” within a single theological vision which fuses creation and salvation. Therefore, the main point of the precept is not just any kind of interruption of work, but the celebration of the marvels which God has wrought.

Insofar as this “remembrance” is alive, full of thanksgiving and of the praise of God, human rest on the Lord’s Day takes on its full meaning. It is then that man enters the depths of God’s “rest” and can experience a tremor of the Creator’s joy when, after the creation, he saw that all he had made “was very good” (Gen 1:31).

[Dies Domini, 16-17]

F. Questions for dialogue in the couple and as a group

Questions for the couple

1. In our family, how do we live Sunday?
2. Is our Sunday a day of “rest in the Lord”?
3. For the Bible, the celebration is a time of inner freedom, reciprocal listening and family nearness: how is our domestic atmosphere on Sunday?
4. The encounter with God and with others is the heart of the celebration: does our Sunday really put the celebration of God and time for others at the center?

Questions for the family group and the community

1. In today’s society, what are the lifestyles of celebration and free time?
2. What experiences do the Christian communities propose to live Sunday as a time for God and for others?
3. Parish and ecclesial groups help to “observe Sunday”: what initiatives can be carried out?
4. In what way can the Sunday celebration become the “burning bush” that helps to rediscover the meaning of God?

G. A commitment for family and social life

H. Spontaneous prayers. Our Father

I. Closing hymn

