

SAINT MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

VICTORIA, TEXAS



THE OCTAVE OF EASTER (DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY)

SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2020

Dear Parish Family,

Although this was certainly an unusual Easter, the Lord did give us beautiful weather as we celebrated the Resurrection of Jesus and creation begun anew. Even as I write this note, I am outside enjoying the fresh air and admiring the beauty of the plants and life around me.

Last week I sent you the introduction to Pope St. John Paul II's letter, *Dies Domini* (The Lord's Day), and this week is included the first chapter which is focused on creation. As spring seems to be more and more present, what a perfect time to reflect on God's work of creation and how we are to appreciate and contemplate the wonders of this work, just as God Himself did.

This Sunday is Divine Mercy Sunday and although we will not be able to gather for our typical Divine Mercy celebration, we will have an hour of prayer on Sunday at 3:00 pm which you may join in virtually and/or spiritually. Please note that because of the pandemic, anyone who, with "the will to fulfill the usual conditions

(sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions), as soon as possible," recites the Divine Mercy Chaplet, reads Holy Scripture for at least half an hour, recites the Holy Rosary, or prays the Way of the Cross, with the intention "to implore from Almighty God the end of the epidemic, relief for those who are afflicted and eternal salvation for those whom the Lord has called to Himself," can receive a plenary indulgence each day.

May the peace of Christ be with you always,



Fr. Kristopher Fuchs

CHAPTER I DIES DOMINI

The Celebration of the Creator's Work

"Through him all things were made" (Jn 1:3)

8. For the Christian, Sunday is above all an Easter celebration, wholly illumined by the glory of the Risen Christ. It is the festival of the "new creation". Yet, when understood in depth, this aspect is inseparable from what the first pages of Scripture tell us of the plan of God in the creation of the world. It is true that the Word was made flesh in "the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4); but it is also true that, in virtue of the mystery of his identity as the eternal Son of the Father, he is the origin and end of the universe. As John writes in the Prologue of his Gospel: "Through him all things were made, and without him was made nothing that was made" (1:3). Paul too stresses this in writing to the Colossians: "In him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible All things were created through him and for him" (1:16). This active presence of the Son in the creative work of God is revealed fully in the Paschal Mystery, in which Christ, rising as "the first fruits of those who had fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20), established the new creation and began the process which he himself will bring to completion when he returns in glory to "deliver the kingdom to God the Father ..., so that God may be everything to everyone" (1 Cor 15:24,28).

Already at the dawn of creation, therefore, the plan of God implied Christ's "cosmic mission". This Christocentric perspective, embracing the whole arc of time, filled God's well-pleased gaze when, ceasing from all his work, he "blessed the seventh day and made it holy" (Gn 2:3). According to the Priestly writer of the first biblical creation story, then was born the "Sabbath", so characteristic of the first Covenant, and which in some ways foretells the sacred day of the new and final Covenant. The theme of "God's rest" (cf. Gn 2:2) and the rest which he offered to the people of the Exodus when they entered the Promised Land (cf. Ex 33:14; Dt 3:20; 12:9; Jos 21:44; Ps 95:11) is re-read in the New Testament in the light of the definitive "Sabbath rest" (Heb 4:9) into which Christ himself has entered by his Resurrection. The People of God are called to enter into this same rest by persevering in Christ's example of filial obedience (cf. Heb 4:3-16). In order to grasp fully the meaning of Sunday, therefore, we must re-read the great story of creation and deepen our understanding of the theology of the "Sabbath".

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gn 1:1)

9. The poetic style of the Genesis story conveys well the awe which people feel before the immensity of creation and the resulting sense of adoration of the One who brought all things into being from nothing. It is a story of intense religious significance, a hymn to the Creator of the universe, pointing to him as the only Lord in the face of recurring temptations to divinize the world itself. At the same time, it is a hymn to the goodness of creation, all fashioned by the mighty and merciful hand of God.

"God saw that it was good" (Gn 1:10,12, etc.). Punctuating the story as it does, this refrain sheds a positive light upon every element of the universe and reveals the secret for a proper understanding of it and for its eventual regeneration: the world is good insofar as it remains tied to its origin and, after being disfigured by sin, it is again made good when, with the help of grace, it returns to the One who made it. It is clear that this process directly concerns not inanimate objects and animals but human beings, who have been endowed with the incomparable gift and risk of freedom. Immediately after the creation stories, the Bible highlights the dramatic contrast between the grandeur of man, created in the image and likeness of God, and the fall of man, which unleashes on the world the darkness of sin and death (cf. Gn 3).

10. Coming as it does from the hand of God, the cosmos bears the imprint of his goodness. It is a beautiful world, rightly moving us to admiration and delight, but also calling for cultivation and development. At the "completion" of God's work, the world is ready for human activity. "On the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done" (Gn 2:2). With this anthropomorphic image of God's "work", the Bible not only gives us a glimpse of the mysterious relationship between the Creator and the created world, but also casts light upon the task of human beings in relation to the cosmos. The "work" of God is in some ways an example for man, called not only to inhabit the cosmos, but also to "build" it and thus become God's "co-worker". As I wrote in my Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, the first chapters of Genesis constitute in a sense the first "gospel of work".⁽¹⁰⁾ This is a truth which the Second Vatican Council also stressed: "Created in God's image, man was commissioned to subdue the earth and all it contains, to rule the world in justice and holiness, and, recognizing God as the creator of all things, to refer himself and the totality of things to God so that with everything subject to God, the divine name would be glorified in all the earth".⁽¹¹⁾

The exhilarating advance of science, technology and culture in their various forms — an ever more rapid and today even overwhelming development — is the historical consequence of the mission by which God entrusts to man and woman the task and responsibility of filling the earth and subduing it by means of their work, in the observance of God's Law.

"Shabbat": the Creator's joyful rest

11. If the first page of the Book of Genesis presents God's "work" as an example for man, the same is true of God's "rest": "On the seventh day God finished his work which he had done" (Gn 2:2). Here too we find an anthropomorphism charged with a wealth of meaning.

It would be banal to interpret God's "rest" as a kind of divine "inactivity". By its nature, the creative act which founds the world is unceasing and God is always at work, as Jesus himself declares in speaking of the Sabbath precept: "My Father is working still, and I am working" (Jn 5:17). The divine rest of the seventh day does not allude to an inactive God, but emphasizes the fullness of what has been accomplished. It speaks, as it were, of God's lingering before the "very good" work (Gn 1:31) which his hand has wrought, in order to cast upon it a gaze full of joyous delight. This is a "contemplative" gaze which does not look to new accomplishments but enjoys the beauty of what has already been achieved. It is a gaze which God casts upon all things, but in a special way upon man, the crown of creation. It is a gaze which already discloses something of the nuptial shape of the relationship which God wants to establish with the creature made in his own image, by calling that creature to enter a pact of love. This is what God will gradually accomplish, in offering salvation to all humanity through the saving covenant made with Israel and fulfilled in Christ. It will be the Word Incarnate, through the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit and the configuration of the Church as his Body and Bride, who will extend to all humanity the offer of mercy and the call of the Father's love.

12. In the Creator's plan, there is both a distinction and a close link between the order of creation and the order of salvation. This is emphasized in the Old Testament, when it links the "shabbat" commandment not only with God's mysterious "rest" after the days of creation (cf. Ex 20:8-11), but also with the salvation which he offers to Israel in the liberation from the slavery of Egypt (cf. Dt 5:12-15). The

God who rests on the seventh day, rejoicing in his creation, is the same God who reveals his glory in liberating his children from Pharaoh's oppression. Adopting an image dear to the Prophets, one could say that in both cases God reveals himself as the bridegroom before the bride (cf. Hos 2:16-24; Jer 2:2; Is 54:4-8).

As certain elements of the same Jewish tradition suggest,⁽¹²⁾ to reach the heart of the "shabbat", of God's "rest", we need to recognize in both the Old and the New Testament the nuptial intensity which marks the relationship between God and his people. Hosea, for instance, puts it thus in this marvelous passage: "I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord" (2:18-20).

"God blessed the seventh day and made it holy" (Gn 2:3)

13. The Sabbath precept, which in the first Covenant prepares for the Sunday of the new and eternal Covenant, is therefore rooted in the depths of God's plan. This is why, unlike many other precepts, it is set not within the context of strictly cultic stipulations but within the Decalogue, the "ten words" which represent the very pillars of the moral life inscribed on the human heart. In setting this commandment within the context of the basic structure of ethics, Israel and then the Church declare that they consider it not just a matter of community religious discipline but a defining and indelible expression of our relationship with God, announced and expounded by biblical revelation. This is the perspective within which Christians need to rediscover this precept today. Although the precept may merge naturally with the human need for rest, it is faith alone which gives access to its deeper meaning and ensures that it will not become banal and trivialized.

14. In the first place, therefore, Sunday is the day of rest because it is the day "blessed" by God and "made holy" by him, set apart from the other days to be, among all of them, "the Lord's Day". In order to grasp fully what the first of the biblical creation accounts means by keeping the Sabbath "holy", we need to consider the whole story, which shows clearly how every reality, without exception, must be referred back to God. Time and space belong to him. He is not the God of one day alone, but the God of all the days of humanity.

Therefore, if God "sanctifies" the seventh day with a special blessing and makes it "his day" par excellence, this must be understood within the deep dynamic of the dialogue of the Covenant, indeed the dialogue of "marriage". This is the dialogue of love which knows no interruption, yet is never monotonous. In fact, it employs the different registers of love, from the ordinary and indirect to those more intense, which the words of Scripture and the witness of so many mystics do not hesitate to describe in imagery drawn from the experience of married love.

15. All human life, and therefore all human time, must become praise of the Creator and thanksgiving to him. But man's relationship with God also demands times of explicit prayer, in which the relationship becomes an intense dialogue, involving every dimension of the person. "The Lord's Day" is the day of this relationship par excellence when men and women raise their song to God and become the voice of all creation.

This is precisely why it is also the day of rest. Speaking vividly as it does of "renewal" and "detachment", the interruption of the often oppressive rhythm of work expresses the dependence of man and the cosmos upon God. Everything belongs to God! The Lord's Day returns again and again to declare this principle within the weekly reckoning of time. The "Sabbath" has therefore been interpreted evocatively as a determining element in the kind of "sacred architecture" of time which marks biblical revelation.⁽¹³⁾ It recalls that the universe and history belong to God; and without a constant awareness of that truth, man cannot serve in the world as co-worker of the Creator.

To "keep holy" by "remembering"

16. 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.

17. 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).

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" (Gn 1:31).

From the Sabbath to Sunday

18. Because the Third Commandment depends upon the remembrance of God's saving works and because Christians saw the definitive time inaugurated by Christ as a new beginning, they made the first day after the Sabbath a festive day, for that was the day on which the Lord rose from the dead. The Paschal Mystery of Christ is the full revelation of the mystery of the world's origin, the climax of the history of salvation and the anticipation of the eschatological fulfillment of the world. What God accomplished in Creation and wrought for his People in the Exodus has found its fullest expression in Christ's Death and Resurrection, though its definitive fulfillment will not come until the Parousia, when Christ returns in glory. In him, the "spiritual" meaning of the Sabbath is fully realized, as Saint Gregory the Great declares: "For us, the true Sabbath is the person of our Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ". (14) This is why the joy with which God, on humanity's first Sabbath, contemplates all that was created from nothing, is now expressed in the joy with which Christ, on Easter Sunday, appeared to his disciples, bringing the gift of peace and the gift of the Spirit (cf. Jn 20:19-23). It was in the Paschal Mystery that humanity, and with it the whole creation, "groaning in birth-pangs until now" (Rom 8:22), came to know its new "exodus" into the freedom of God's children who can cry out with Christ, "Abba, Father!" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). In the light of this mystery, the meaning of the Old Testament precept concerning the Lord's Day is recovered, perfected and fully revealed in the glory which shines on the face of the Risen Christ (cf. 2 Cor 4:6). We move from the "Sabbath" to the "first day after the Sabbath", from the seventh day to the first day: the dies Domini becomes the dies Christi!

(10) No. 25: AAS 73 (1981), 639.

(11) Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 34.

(12) For our Jewish brothers and sisters, a "nuptial" spirituality characterizes the Sabbath, as appears, for example, in texts of Genesis Rabbah such as X, 9 and XI, 8 (cf. J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah*, vol. I, Atlanta 1985, p. 107 and p. 117). The song *Leka Dôdi* is also nuptial in tone: "Your God will delight in you, as the Bridegroom delights in the Bride ... In the midst of the faithful of your beloved people, come O Bride, O Shabbat Queen" (cf. *Pregliera serale del sabato*, issued by A. Toaff, Rome, 1968-69, p. 3).

(13) Cf. A. J. Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (22nd ed., 1995), pp. 3-24.

(14) "Verum autem sabbatum ipsum redemptorem nostrum Iesum Christum Dominum habemus": Epist. 13, 1: CCL 140A, 992.

THIS WEEK AT ST. MARY'S

Saturday, April 18 Easter Saturday
 4:00 pm Vigil Mass Mass Intention: Edwin Orsak †
 Martha Othold †

Sunday, April 19 Octave of Easter - Divine Mercy Sunday
 8:00 am Sunday Mass Mass Intention: Eugene Vrana Sr. †
 Henry Roy & Mary Frances Schaar (65th wedding anniversary)
 10:30 am Sunday Mass Mass Intention: People of the Parish
 3:00 pm Hour of Prayer with Divine Mercy Chaplet

Monday, April 20 Monday of the Second Week of Easter
 12:05 pm Daily Mass Mass Intention: Leslie Shedd & family

Tuesday, April 21 Tuesday of the Second Week of Easter
 12:05 pm Daily Mass Mass Intention: Leticia Johnston †

Wednesday, April 22 Wednesday of the Second Week of Easter
 12:05 pm Daily Mass Mass Intention: Gladys Von Minden †

Thursday, April 23 Thursday of the Second Week of Easter
 12:05 pm Daily Mass Mass Intention: Robert M. Johnston †

Friday, April 24 Friday of the Second Week of Easter
 12:05 pm Daily Mass Mass Intention: Mary Hyak & Robert Hyak †

Saturday, April 25 Feast of St. Mark, Evangelist
 4:00 pm Vigil Mass Mass Intention: Richard Fritz †
 A J Carver †

Sunday, April 26 Third Sunday of Easter
 8:00 am Sunday Mass Mass Intention: Agnes Hajek †
 Willie & Mary Vergara †
 10:30 am Sunday Mass Mass Intention: People of the Parish
 † symbol indicates the deceased

EASTER SUNDAY

April 11-12

Sunday Collection (by mail).....	\$2,010.00
On-line giving.....	\$1,625.00
Total.....	\$3,635.00

Amount needed weekly to meet budget: \$8,085.00

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

On-line contributions can be made
 through our website: www.stmvictoria.org
 or by mail to

St. Mary's Catholic Church
P.O. Box 2448
Victoria, TX 77902

THE SANCTUARY CANDLE

in the church
 burns this week
 in memory of
Ernest Innocenti
 by Mary Ann Innocenti

THE ADORATION CANDLES

in the chapel
 burn this week
 in memory of
Ernest Innocenti
 by Mary Ann Innocenti

THE CANDLE IN COMMEMORATION OF THE DECEASED

in the chapel
 burns this week
 in memory of
 Benito &
 Irene Menchaca
 by Benny Menchaca

**Please contact the parish
 office to sponsor these
 candles.**

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

The St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Mary's continues to distribute food to those in need. Please consider them in your charitable giving.

For sacramental needs (especially confession, anointing of the sick and viaticum), please contact the parish office at 361-573-4328 to speak with a priest.

Please pray for those whose baptisms, first Holy Communion, and Confirmations have had to be delayed.