



Keeping the Lord's Day

Pastoral Letter on the Importance of Sunday
in the Life of Every Christian Disciple

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Pandemic Reflections

Although he planned to write this letter at the conclusion of the Diocesan Holy Year in January 2020, Bishop Johnston says the current pandemic has led many people to reflect on what is truly important in life, noting that some polls suggest that Americans have become more religious during this time.

As we return to public celebrations of Mass, he invites us to reflect more deeply on the **value of Sunday, why God made it, and what it means in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ.**





Part 1: Pilgrims on the Way



In the breaking of the bread (Lk 24:35)

- ➡ Like the two disciples mentioned in the story of the Road to Emmaus, we are pilgrims on the way, sometimes distracted, oblivious and slow to understand the presence of Jesus among us as we walk through all the valleys and peaks of our lives.
- ➡ A pilgrim is someone on journey to a holy place. As soon as we are baptized, we are set on the road to our destination: heaven. We need companions, perseverance, prayer and grace as we cooperate with God.
- ➡ In Jn 14:6, Jesus says: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.* For pilgrim disciples, the Sunday Eucharist **is** Jesus Christ. Jesus left the gift of the Eucharist so we could live in him and he in us and that we might bear much fruit by becoming his disciples.



Bearing "Much Fruit"

- ➡ One fruit that comes from being a disciple is bearing witness to Jesus in such a way that others are drawn to the pilgrim journey themselves; becoming a disciple-maker.
- ➡ Pope Francis says, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, "anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or training to go out and proclaim that love."
- ➡ Pilgrim disciples need Sunday and Sunday Mass to stay on the right way, to bear fruit along the way, and to get home to the Father's House in heaven.





Part 2: Sunday Celebrated Well

Present to each other

➡ We see in the story of Jesus' visit to Bethany that he loved and found it necessary to be renewed by friends and to rest and recreate with them. Jesus' praise for Mary was because she focused on the person rather than activity: persons always take priority over things.

➡ Remember the Sabbath Day – keep it holy. In *Dies Domini*, Pope Saint John Paul II wrote: *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.*

➡ Worship and rest are closely joined together on Sunday. This is what Sunday is for: being present to each other, especially in the home and around the table. As the altar is the Eucharistic table for God's family, the dinner table is for the domestic church, the family.



Setting aside busyness and noticing

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Setting aside busyness and noticing

➡ God wants us to have the blessing of noticing the beauty of Creation and One who created, and noticing Jesus who gave himself for us and our salvation, and noticing the important people God has placed in our lives so that we can renew and deepen friendships.

➡ To do this, we must slow down, look into one another's eyes and listen to the hopes, dreams, disappointments and sufferings of our loved ones.

➡ It also means noticing those who are overlooked: the poor and those who are disenfranchised. What better time to serve others in charity than after we have experienced God's love poured out for us at Sunday Mass?



Setting aside busyness and noticing

- ➔ When our lives feel disconnected and scattered, we are experiencing disintegration. One of the remedies God provides for this is Sunday. The Sunday Mass is the sacrament of unity; attending Mass together as a family is ideal. Through the grace of unity, we are helped to integrate ourselves and our relationships.
- ➔ Sunday rest prepares us for the weekly celebration of the Lord's Day, and also for the Lord's Day at the end of our lives that will have no end. Sunday obligation is not a burden, but a blessing that helps keep us from drifting away from God and Jesus.
- ➔ *I wholeheartedly extend a special invitation to those who have been away from Mass for a time. Come home. Return to the family of families that is your parish church. You are missed and you have a place among us.*





Part 3: Sundays Filled with Grace

Celebrate Sunday well and full of grace



➡ From Acts 2:42.44.46 we learn how Sunday was celebrated in the early Church: *They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. All who believed were together and had all things in common.... They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart.* **I offer specific observations on how we might try to devote ourselves to celebrating Sunday well and full of grace.**

➡ First, eliminate the competition for our time and attention on Sunday. Beginning with the start of the new school year, our schools will not schedule certain activities on Sundays.* I invite all of us to examine our Sundays, separating what is good from those things that creep into our garden of Sunday.

➡ Second, be intentional about how you celebrate Sunday Mass. The ways we celebrate major events -- such as a Chiefs game-- is a good way to think about Sunday Mass. Anticipate by reading the Sunday Scriptures in advance. Prepare by making a good examination of conscience, arrive early to get your heart and head ready to turn to God. After pandemic regulations cease to be necessary, we can linger after Mass, in gratitude and to save and talk with others about it. Sunday Mass is special: treat it like it is!

• for the complete document, visit <https://kcsj catholic.org/keeping-the-lords-day-pastoral-letter-on-the-importance-of-sunday/>

A full copy of Bishop Johnston's Pastoral Letter, visit

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For reflection

➡ What will you/your family need to let go of in order to make time for celebrating Sunday well?

➡ Share ways Sunday has been celebrated in your family through recent generations.
What is the same? What is different? What can you learn about keeping Sunday well from previous generations?

➡ What relationships in your life would benefit from more listening and sharing?
What can you do - intentionally - to make that happen?

➡ How can you make your Sunday celebration as special as a major event?
Make a list of how you will do it this Sunday, locate the resources you will need (such as the Sunday Gospel,) invite those who will join you.



For reflection

- ➔ Do you have friends or family members with whom you can engage in a virtual or phone conversation about your Sunday celebration?
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- ➔ When was the last time you were excited to share what you heard and experienced at Mass? How can you cultivate sharing your experience of Sunday ?
- ➔ Has the pandemic influenced your own faith and religious practices in ways of growth? How so, or why not?



For reflection

- ➔ What dreams, disappointments, joys and sufferings in your own life would you be willing to share with family or friends?
- ➔ Is there someone in your social circle or family who no longer attends Mass? What are some simple ways you can invite them to share Sunday prayer and rest?
- ➔ Are the places in nature that cause you to reflect or feel closer to God? How can these be integrated into your celebration of Sunday?
- ➔ From which companions in faith have you become distanced during this time of Covid-19? How can you safely reconnect in order to draw strength from each other?

