

THANKING GOD for the GIFT of SUNDAY

Since on the seventh day God was finished with the work he had been doing, he rested. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy; because on it he rested from all the work He had done in creation. Genesis 2: 2-3



Let us pause and remember that we are in God's holy presence.

It is this God Who walks with us in our joys and our sorrows, our sickness and our health. He is our Strength, our Joy and our Rock.

In the name of the Father Who is the Source of All Being, and of the Son, Jesus, Who saved us from our sins, and in the name of the Spirit most holy, Who continually calls us to life and to wholeness. Amen.

Let us consider the statements found in Catechism of the Catholic Church:

THE SABBATH DAY

2168 The third commandment of the Decalogue recalls the holiness of the Sabbath: "The seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD."

2171 God entrusted the Sabbath to Israel to keep as a sign of the irrevocable covenant. The Sabbath is for the Lord, holy and set apart for the praise of God, His work of creation, and His saving actions on behalf of Israel.

2172 God's action is the model for human action. If God "rested and was refreshed" on the seventh day, man too ought to "rest" and should let others, especially the poor, "be refreshed." The Sabbath brings everyday work to a halt and provides a respite. It is a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money.

2173 The Gospel reports many incidents when Jesus was accused of violating the Sabbath law. But Jesus never fails to respect the holiness of this day. He gives this law its authentic and authoritative interpretation: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." With compassion, Christ declares the Sabbath for doing good rather than harm, for saving life rather than killing. The Sabbath is the day of the Lord of mercies and a day to honor God. "The Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

THE LORD'S DAY

This is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

2174 Jesus rose from the dead "on the first day of the week." Because it is the "first day," the day of Christ's Resurrection recalls the first creation. For Christians it has become the first of all days, the first of all feasts, the Lord's Day is Sunday.

2175 Sunday is expressly distinguished from the Sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the Sabbath. In Christ's Passover, Sunday fulfills the spiritual truth of the Jewish Sabbath and announces man's eternal rest in God. For worship under the Law prepared for the mystery of Christ, and what was done there prefigured some aspects of Christ:

Those who lived according to the old order of things have come to a new hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath, but the Lord's Day, in which our life is blessed by him and by his death.

2176 The celebration of Sunday observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in the human heart to render to God an outward, visible, public, and regular worship "as a sign of his universal beneficence to all."

2177 The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. "Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church."

2180 The precept of the Church specifies the law of the Lord more precisely: "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass." "The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day."

2181 The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason (for example, illness, the care of infants) or dispensed by their own pastor. Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin.

2182 Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to His Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

2183 "If because of lack of a sacred minister or for other grave cause participation in the celebration of the Eucharist is impossible, it is specially recommended that the faithful take part in the Liturgy of the Word if it is celebrated in the parish church or in another sacred place according to the prescriptions of the diocesan bishop, or engage in prayer for an appropriate amount of time personally or in a family or, as occasion offers, in groups of families."

2184 Just as God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done," human life has a rhythm of work and rest. The institution of the Lord's Day helps everyone enjoy adequate rest and leisure to cultivate their familial, cultural, social, and religious lives.

2185 On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are to refrain from engaging in work or activities that hinder the worship owed to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, the performance of the works of mercy, and the appropriate relaxation of mind and body. Family needs or important social service can legitimately excuse from the obligation of Sunday rest. The faithful should see to it that legitimate excuses do not lead to habits prejudicial to religion, family life, and health.

2186 Those Christians who have leisure should be mindful of their brother and sisters who have the same needs and the same rights, yet cannot rest from work because of poverty and misery. Sunday is traditionally consecrated by Christian piety to good works and humble service of the sick, the infirm, and the elderly. Christians will also sanctify Sunday by devoting time and care to their families and relatives, often difficult to do on other days of the week. Sunday is a time for reflection, silence, cultivation of the mind, and meditation which furthers the growth of the Christian interior life.

2187 Sanctifying Sundays and holy days requires a common effort. Every Christian should avoid making unnecessary demands on others that would hinder them from observing the Lord's Day. Traditional activities (sport, restaurants, etc.), and social necessities (public services, etc.), require some people to work on Sundays, but everyone should still take care to set aside sufficient time for leisure. With temperance and charity the faithful will see to it that they avoid the excesses and violence sometimes associated with popular leisure activities. In spite of economic constraints, public authorities should ensure citizens a time intended for rest and divine worship. Employers have a similar obligation toward their employees.

Gloria

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship You, we give You thanks, we praise You for Your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,
You take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
You are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 2: 6–20

"Therefore, keep the commandments of the Lord, your God, by walking in His ways and fearing Him.

For the Lord, your God, is bringing you into a good country, a land with streams of water, with springs and fountains welling up in the hills and valleys, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, of olive trees and of honey, a land where you can eat bread without stint and where you will lack nothing.

But when you have eaten your fill, you must bless the Lord, your God, for the good He has given you.

Be careful not to forget the Lord, your God, by neglecting His commandments and decrees and statutes which I enjoin on you today:

lest, when you have eaten your fill, and have built fine houses and lived in them, and have increased your herds and flocks, your silver and gold, and all your property, you then become haughty of heart and unmindful of the Lord, your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery; Who guided you through the vast and terrible desert with its serpents and scorpions, its parched and waterless ground; Who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock and fed you in the desert with manna, a food unknown to your fathers, that He might afflict you and test you, but also make you prosperous in the end.

Otherwise, you might say to yourselves, 'It is my own power and the strength of my own hand that has obtained for me this wealth.'

Remember then, it is the Lord, your God, Who gives you the power to acquire wealth, by fulfilling, as He has now done, the covenant which He swore to your fathers.

But if you forget the Lord, your God, and follow other gods, serving and worshipping them, I forewarn you this day that you will perish utterly.

Like the nations which the Lord destroys before you, so shall you too perish for not heeding the voice of the Lord, your God. The Word of the Lord!

In the Jewish celebration of the Sabbath, 18 minutes before sunset on Friday evening, the family gathers around the table and participates in the ritual to welcome the holy day or Shabbat. Among several blessings, the following are prayed:

BLESSING OF THE CANDLES

Blessed are you Lord, our God Ruler of the world, Who sanctified us through His commandments and commanded us to kindle the lights of the holy day.

BLESSING OVER THE WINE

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe Who has chosen us from among all people, and exalted us above every tongue and sanctified us with His commandments, and You gave us, Lord our God, with love this day of Sabbath. Indeed, You have chosen us and made us holy from all peoples and Your word is true and established for ever. Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King over all the world, Who sanctifies the Sabbath and Israel.

BLESSING OF THE BREAD (Challah)

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe Who brings forth bread from the earth.

In our Catholic tradition, we gather late Saturday afternoon or evening (the eve) or on Sunday to celebrate the Lord's Day. We hear the Word of God proclaimed and expounded upon, share our concerns in prayer, and share Eucharist together as our nourishment for the journey. It is a communal celebration and causes us to recognize the Risen Lord Jesus in our midst.



HYMN CHURCH of GOD

**Church of God, chosen people, sing your praises to God.
He has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.**

**Come People of God with joyful song,
Praise God the Father of all.
Baptized in Christ, reborn in Him
Our hearts are filled with joy.
He cleanses our sin renewing our lives.**

**The church is built with living stones
With Christ as cornerstone.
In Him we trust Who makes us one uniting us with love.
We build on the rock of faith in Christ.**

**As heirs of Christ redeemed by love
We wait for His return;
A priestly people of great praise to God the Source of hope.
For Jesus is Lord, our Savior and our God.**

**As water once springing from the rock
Once brought God's people life,
The living water given by Christ creates our lives anew.
So come you who thirst to springs of new life.**

**We gather here to worship God,
Our Eucharist to share,
We give Him thanks and celebrate the mystery of His love;
The Word is made flesh and given for us.**

**May fragrant some of incense rise to fill this house of prayer.
May we who gather find true peace, God's presence filling our lives.
Our hearts lift with praise, or lips sing in joy.**

**The light of Christ has come to us
Dispelling all our fears.
His light reveals the path of life and we follow Him in joy.
The glory of God, the Light of the world.**

Sr. Pamela Stotter ©1980, International Committee on English in the Liturgy

PRAYRS of INTERCESSION

Response: God of new life, hear us.

That each of us will make the Lord's Day a special day set apart from all others, we pray:

That we will realize the importance of coming together on Sundays as a worshiping community to hear the Word of God and to break and share the Bread of Eucharist, the Body and Blood of the Lord, we pray:

That we will use the Lord's Day as a day of worship and rest while re-creating ourselves, we pray:

That we will realize the special ness of the Lord's Day and refrain from all unnecessary work, we pray:

That we will inspire others to recognize the Lord's Day through our words and actions, we pray:

PRAYER

**Gracious God and Father,
we lift our grateful hearts to You now,
and ask that You would be pleased to honor Your name through our rest before You.**

**We ask that we would be enabled by Your Spirit to take it easy, to set down the burdens of our vocational callings, and prepare our hearts for worship
We ask that we would come to the liturgy of worship with overflowing hearts, and that we would simultaneously be filled by You, and overflow to the filling of others.**

We thank You for the time together in worship, and we do this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN

LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS TO THE LORD

**Lift up your hearts to the Lord, praise God's gracious mercy!
Sing out your joy to the Lord Whose love is enduring.**

Shout with joy to the Lord all the earth!

Praise His name above all names!

**Say to God, "How wondrous Your works,
how glorious Your name!"**

Let the earth worship, singing Your praise.

Praise the glory of Your name.

Come and see what God has revealed, less God's holy name.

**God's right hand made a path through the night,
splitting the waters of the sea.**

All creation lift up your voice: our God set us free.

Listen now, all you servants of God.

As I tell of these great works.

Blessed be the Lord of my life

Whose love shall endure!

Roc O'Conner, SJ © 1993 New Dawn Music



**Saint John Baptist de La Salle,
and all you holy Brothers who have gone before us,
help us to lift up our hearts to the Lord everyday
but most especially on the Lord's Day.**

Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever!

