

---

## THE DAY OF THE LORD



---

On the occasion of the 1994 Foire Brayonne [Edmundston Fair] I wish to each and everyone of you peace joy, at this most exciting homecoming. It will be my pleasure to celebrate the Day of the Lord with you, on Sunday, July 31. May the following, drawn from my Pastoral Letter on Human Dignity and the Holiness of God, published on the occasion of the feast of Pentecost 1994, help your reflection on the meaning of Sunday, in our religious tradition.

### THE DAY OF THE LORD

Sunday is the Day of the Lord: the way it is celebrated is an indication of our faith in the Risen Christ, a sign of our hope and an opportunity to grow in love as members of the same Christian community. We must rediscover together the deep meaning of Sunday and celebrate it with the entire community: it is a day of joy and celebration, it is a day like no other day, it is the day that the Lord has made.

I have asked that the Day of the Lord become re-valued for what it is: a period set aside for the family to get together, share together, celebrate together, and pray together. This could mean the following:

- on Sunday, family members meet together, visit one another, phone one another, relax together, share a meal together; fragile bonds are renewed, contact is established with those who are distant, reconciliation is made, and time is made for family prayer;
- the Day of the Lord is one of joy for each and everyone, including parish priests and heads of families; it finds once again its importance and meaning; it is a time of celebration and of faith renewal;
- the Sunday community gathering is most meaningful, and focus is on this gathering; schedules of our celebrations are revised to maintain only one Mass, generally: in most parishes, this should be enough; exceptionally, there could be two masses, one of them being held Saturday evening, specifically for those who could not conveniently attend on Sunday. All other celebrations could be eliminated: liturgy committees would no longer have to wonder about a multitude of celebrations but would concentrate all its energies and creativity on the Sunday Mass. As for the president, his efforts and those of his partners would be focused on welcoming the members of the community. In some churches it would be fitting to establish a convenient place of welcome and gathering. More time would be left for preparing consistent and lively homilies. In most of our parishes, the multiplicity of week-end celebrations has led to the splintering of our parish communities. It is important that together we rediscover the meaning of gathering together, the significance of the Day of the Lord, and the sense of belonging to a Christian community. The rescheduling of our celebrations would have beneficial consequences: it would allow to bring more care to song and prayer, allowing for the greater active and conscious celebration by all the baptised who come to the gathering. In this way, the priest would have more time to give to the liturgical and catechetical formation of different committees; and no one in the community would be forgotten;
- Sunday could be a time for prayer and spiritual renewal. It is not forbidden to have, sometime during the day, morning or evening prayer, or other indications of faith and charity. Looking back at our

history, we discover how our predecessors developed a sense of creativity: stress was first and foremost on the parish high mass, but other opportunities were there for gathering and prayer: benediction, vespers, processions, holy hours, novenas, etc.;

- it would be a good idea that in the same milieu there be some coordination to allow participation by those who, because of work or other occupation, cannot take part in their parish gathering. Moreover, since the priest will have to be more and more of a missionary and minister to different communities, it is important that zone schedules allow sufficient time for going from place to place, for welcoming and celebration. It would be neither normal nor healthy for a priest to celebrate in three different places within three hours;
- in order to avoid a watering-down of the desired Sunday renewal focused on the community assembly, it would be important to reflect together on whether Saturday afternoon eucharistic celebrations are warranted. The Diocesan Synod forcefully insisted on this; the Holy Spirit has spoken to our Church, regarding the Lord's Day: let us not risk opposing Him. If we believe in the importance of gathering as a community on the Day of the Lord, it will not be necessary to impose other legislation on this, whether it be regarding celebrations in special homes or recreation centres, weddings or funerals. The loftiest motives can be invoked to justify such and such a celebration, but following the Synod, I beg you to seriously consider the meaning of the Day of the Lord, the meaning of the Sunday gathering, the importance of the parish community, as well as everything that goes against these values;
- I am certain that liturgy committees will find and suggest simple ways to remind us of the Lord's Resurrection: each gesture, including the printing of a parish bulletin, can be an opportunity for faith education. In this way, the rite of sprinkling with water, a reminder of our baptism, can be very significant. Meaningful gestures, respect for the truth and vitality of the liturgy, promoting the personal and community dimensions of prayer, these are the great objectives of liturgy committees that are concerned with the vitality of our gatherings and with making them interesting and meaningful.

If Sunday is truly experienced as a family and as a parish community, it is probably the best pledge for the future of our communities and the promise of priestly vocations. In the midst of these gatherings, the indispensable role of each baptised participant and the wonderful ministry of him who is there as the servant of the people of God, sanctifier and educator, would be easily perceived. Sunday is the memorial of Christ's Resurrection: may it be for the entire community an Easter day - and why not a Pentecost day?

Have a good week!

*+ François Thibodeau ym*

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.  
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (027) (27 July 1994)