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## LET US CONTINUE TO CHERISH SUNDAYS

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Sunday is certainly not like any other day, and Sunday remains Sunday. I congratulate all those who ensure that this day is not treated like any other day. Because of deep religious convictions, several people have been acting discretely but with tenacity to render to “this day of joy that the Lord has made” some of its lost lustre; family members are contacted, visits are arranged among friends, time is set aside to relax and share a meal and reconnect once more; contact is made with those away, differences are patched up, and there is time for family prayer.

### LAST SUNDAY

The re-valuing of Sunday should take place within our respective families. We must sincerely look at how we usually experience Sunday. Let us take a few moments to look at the last Sunday we have gone through. In what way is this day different from the others? Have we taken the time to stop at all? Did we contact our families? Did we take time to pray? Did we take time to be part of a religious service? Did we think of the people making up the parish community? What balance have we sought to establish between rest, work, prayer, and sport? What conclusions must I draw, of this day? How could we truly improve this day to make it truly “the day of the Lord?”

### SUNDAY GATHERING

The Day of the Lord should be a day of joy for one and all, a time of celebration and of renewal of one's faith. In order to give it all of its importance and meaning, my conviction is that we must revalue our Sunday Gatherings, or rather, our Sunday Gathering. If in each parish we strove to prepare and live out carefully a community gathering that would be meaningful, interesting, throughout the 52 weeks of the year, year in year out we would make great progress. This would give a reason to those who have left the community gathering to come back for more.

### EXAMINE MOTIVES

It requires cooperation from the entire community, to revalue the Sunday gathering. May those who are faithful in attending be open to improve the liturgy, and may those who do not attend on a regular basis consider their decision and way of acting. In a world in flux, we must at times look back and check the values which animate us and which we wish to transmit to our children. To take the time to consecrate one hour of the new week to gather with one's brothers and sisters in prayer, reflection, and fellowship may on the long run prove more beneficial than once thought. Discovering what we are as a human and Christian community, and appreciating the bonds of friendship, faith, hope, and love that bind us together in our daily commitment, these are part of our personal and community growth. Looking at others and the events of life with a new vision can charge one's batteries and stimulate daily witness. Deep down, we must remind ourselves in all honesty of the deep motives that incite us to share or not to share in the Sunday gathering.

## THE LATE HIGH MASS

We probably went a little too fast in eliminating our old parish high mass, we probably replaced it all too quickly with a multitude of celebrations. I do not say this out of nostalgia, but it is to help us rediscover the important values that caused this way of acting. Even though it came along every week and the unfolding of the high mass was pretty much the same every week, one can still maintain that this Sunday gathering welded together the Christian community week after week, and that this gathering nourished the faith, hope, and charity of our ancestors. All these regular gatherings, all these prayers, all these gestures of mutual aid have tempered the soul of our people. It wasn't always visible but through the unfolding of the liturgical season, from Advent to Advent, Lent to Lent, and Easter to Easter, a common Spirit would arise, as well as a growing community. The Word of God, living and effective, was doing a marvelous deed.

## ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

It's up to us to decide whether to pursue or not the tradition, to give it new life, to revitalise it. To live deeply, in an extraordinary way the ordinary things of our lives. To revalue the Sunday gathering as should be done, to make it one that would be significant, beautiful, interesting. In most of our parishes, at least in 28 of our 33 parishes, would it not be preferable to have but one Mass, and that, on Sunday? As an exception, one could consider two or three Masses, one of which would be held Saturday evening, in our more numerous parishes for those who could not otherwise attend Mass. All other celebrations could be suppressed, and the liturgy committee would no longer have to look after countless liturgies but could concentrate its energy and creativity on the Sunday Eucharist. The celebrant, on his part, would funnel his energies and those of his partners on welcoming the people of his community, and to employing more time in the preparation of consistent and lively homilies. In most communities, the multiplication of weekend celebrations has splintered the gathering itself, the meaning of the Lord's Day and the meaning of belonging to a specific Christian community. It is as a community that we must rediscover the meaning of the Christian community. The rescheduling of our celebrations would be beneficial; it would allow the careful learning of songs and prayers in order to promote a more active and conscious participation of those who come to the eucharistic gathering. In this way the pastor could look more closely at the liturgical and catechetical formation of different committees, and no one in the community would be forgotten.

## TWO EXAMPLES

For a few months now the parishes of St. Léonard-Parent and Clair have taken this approach: it is good to get together as a parish community that is happy to get together and that wishes to pray together in common faith and charity. I am certain that the liturgy committees will suggest and find simple ways of reminding ourselves of the Resurrection of the Lord. To give meaning to the gestures we perform, respecting the truth and vitality of the liturgy, promoting the personal and communitarian dimensions of prayer, these are major objectives for parish communities concerned with making the gathering meaningful and intelligent. If Sunday is truly lived by the family and the parish community, this may be the last pledge regarding the future of our communities. I have asked our pastors and pastoral agents to undertake with the members of their parish pastoral councils an inventory of the means at their disposal to give back its lustre to the Day of the Lord, and to retain two or three of them. With all the imagination of which you are capable and the courage which has marked our predecessors and can mark us today, with all the love that you have for the Lord, you will wind the means allowing us to start together so that our Sunday in the Diocese of Edmundston truly be the Day of the Lord, and that our Sunday gathering be among the best.

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