
THE NEED TO FULLY LIVE THE LORD'S DAY



If Sunday is a feastday, if it is a day of joy, if Sunday is a day for meeting others and THE Day of the Eucharist, why then are we obliged to take part in the Mass, on that day? Putting the question this way is also to answer it. It is true that it may seem odd, being forced to join in a celebration, but if we think about it, it is not only an obligation for Christians to fully live the Lord's Day: it is also a necessity. Training for an athlete is not optional. In the same way, whoever wants to grow in faith, hope, and charity must employ the appropriate means.

IF WE COULD ONLY DISCOVER...

Failure to recognise or appreciate the source of our faith in the Risen Jesus and its implications in the rhythm of our daily lives; failure to appreciate one's Christian community; the absence of a real brotherly sense of welcome, the insignificance of certain ceremonies, as well as other causes that could be mentioned, all these make it easy to understand why some have distanced themselves from the Sunday gathering and deserted the eucharistic community. But it is important that we relearn together how to celebrate in joy and enthusiasm, in faith, hope, and charity. We would be the first to benefit from it. I can even wager that if you yourself take a step in the direction of a personal and community renewal of the celebration and persist in it, within a few months some measure of renewal will be seen.

NEEDED INITIATION

Still, it bears repeating: The reality of the Lord's Day, the reality of a celebration, the reality of a gathering presupposes a degree of initiation. We must not fear to return to the basics. In the early Church, when it came time for the Eucharist, the non-initiated were excluded from the assembly so as not to profane the sacred mysteries, by their presence. In certain gatherings, especially at weddings or funerals where many non-initiated [That is, non-Catholic] people attend, a number of pastors would be tempted to hold but a liturgy of the Word, and even here need is felt for a certain initiation into the Word of God. At a time that is becoming more and more secularised and pluralistic, we shall have to exercise much patience, as much so as the Lord himself was for his people and as he still is, today.

THE TRUE METHOD

Sent by the Father, Jesus first gathered together those he had prayerfully chosen to be his disciples. He lived with them among the people, he taught them to pray and he revealed to them the Father's love. He gradually sent them out to proclaim in his name the Good News of the coming of the Kingdom of God. This is a thumbnail sketch of Jesus' ministry that led his disciples to the Easter experience. Can we do otherwise? I don't believe so. True, methods of teaching and ways of doing pastoral ministry can be modified but basically, we must take the pattern that Jesus followed.

TO DO IN MEMORY OF HIM

In our day-to-day activities we are invited to follow Jesus in his prayer life and to welcome in the depths of our souls all those he has handed over to our care: our loved ones and family members, and the members of our community. We have to live with the people in their own milieu and learn to pray with them. This presupposes that both pastor and parishioners develop an intense prayer life and an indomitable conviction of being loved by God. And in order to recognise in us messengers of the Good News, sent by God to our brothers and sisters, we must rediscover the good news that is the Gospel, share it as our beloved inheritance, and celebrate it in joy... We are invited to step out in faith, as each day progresses, to start over each day if need be, since we are not always assured success. Nevertheless, the seed sown can easily become the tree that Jesus himself mentions.

A USEFUL VISIT

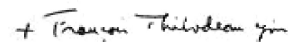
A little while ago a priest from another diocese stopped in for a visit. He told me that when he arrived at his new parish, there were but a few people attending Sunday Mass. What was he to do? "If the mountain does not come to us, then we must go to the mountain." And that is what he did. He started visiting each family patiently and joyfully to explain to them the ABCs of our faith, to deposit in them a desire for God, for others, for prayer, for the Mass. Happy news! After a few months the parish church became too small to hold in the crowd that came. This took place very recently and in our country, not at the turn of the century in a foreign land.

UNITY WEEK

In these days of prayer for the unity of Christians we would do well to relearn the value of the Lord's Day and to recognise the Sunday gathering in our local parish and ecumenical communities as an essential element of brotherhood and solidarity on the road to unity.

HELPING ONE ANOTHER

We shall have to help one another, along this long road of revaluing the Day of the Lord, constantly supporting one another without giving way to discouragement. It is good to remind ourselves of our forebears who brought the Gospel to our midst without having all the means that we have, to spread the Good News. It seems to me that such a revaluing of the Lord's Day is like an extraordinary grace for the new evangelisation so often mentioned by Pope John Paul II. We must proclaim from the rooftops but also to everyone we meet, the Good News of the Risen Christ. If Saint Paul, because of the different cultures he came across - Jewish, Greek, and Roman mostly - was able to repeat in different ways the content of the Good News, we too must do the same, as we reach the end of this twentieth century. We must pass on the Good News of God which we have inherited: *His love is truly from age to age!* Have a good week!



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