

It is worth, first of all, reminding ourselves that following the practice Jesus himself would have known, and followed, whereby The Sabbath begins at sunset on the Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday the Church introduced the “First Mass of Sunday on a Saturday”. That is Sunday begins at sunset on the Saturday.

Have we lost our way? When even Bishops have written and spoken of “weekend” Masses for years, whilst also, strangely, restoring the Sunday “obligation” post covid, it is not difficult to see why The Lord’s Day, The First Day of The Week, the day of Christ’s resurrection has less significance in the lives of many. By using secular terminology and speaking of “weekend Masses” Sunday just becomes another day marked by even the secular world. It is meant to be a day for God, prayer, resting and recreation and a celebration of the fact Christ has conquered sin and death.

Wikipedia offers insight on Papal teaching, nay Christian teaching, on The Lord’s Day: “*Dies Domini* is an apostolic letter promulgated by Pope John Paul II on July 30, 1998. In this doctrine, Pope John Paul encourages the Catholic population to 'rediscover the meaning' behind keeping the Lord's Day holy. Pope John Paul II explains the meaning of the Sunday in the light of Christian tradition. To celebrate Sunday is to make present the graces of the Paschal mystery, which is the climax of the salvation history:

The Paschal Mystery of Christ is the full revelation of the mystery of the world's origin, the climax of the history of salvation and the anticipation of the eschatological fulfilment of the world. What God accomplished in Creation and wrought for his People in the Exodus has found its fullest expression in Christ's Death and Resurrection, though its definitive fulfilment will not come until the Parousia, when Christ returns in glory. In him, the "spiritual" meaning of the Sabbath is fully realized, as Saint Gregory the Great declares: "For us, the true Sabbath is the person of our Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ."

— *Dies Domini*, 18

It is the day which recalls in grateful adoration the world’s first day and looks forward in active hope to the 'last day,' when Christ will come in glory and all things will be made new.” Sunday recalls the day of Christ’s Resurrection. This is a tradition going back to the Apostles, taking its origin from the actual day of Christ’s Resurrection—a day thus appropriately designated “the Lord’s Day.”

Speaking of the various dimensions of the Christian celebration of Sunday, the document declares that it is *Dies Domini* with regard to the work of creation, *Dies Christi* as the day of the new creation and the Risen Lord’s gift of the Holy Spirit, *Dies Ecclesiae* as the day on which the Christian community gathers for the celebration, and *Dies Hominis* as the day of joy, rest and fraternal charity.

https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_05071998_dies-domini.html

We have allowed Christmas to become a “secular season”, and we have adapted all the trimmings of a secular Christmas in our churches. We need to remind ourselves that Jesus is the reason for the season.

Some people who are not Christian begin taking down their decorations by the end of Christmas Day, or by December 26th which for Catholics, at least, is St Stephens Day, but even Catholics speak of it as “Boxing Day”. Odder still no one can agree on the meaning or origin of “Boxing Day”, but we do know St Stephen was the first Christian Martyr. Will we have any Christian festivals left in years to come?

Cardinal Hume once spoke of Shopping Centres as the new Cathedrals in a secular world. Yet again we have begun to copy the secular world, by decorating our Churches like shopping centres at Christmas.

The Altar and The Table of The Word should remain our focus during Holy Mass, any Mass! The Holy Mass being the perfect representation of Calvary during which we celebrate Christ’s redemptive act, and we ascend The Mountain of God, and Heaven and Earth meet. Catholics have an obligation of love to celebrate Holy Mass each Sunday and Holy Day.

The crib focusses our minds on the true meaning of Christmas.

Let’s not distract ourselves, and the world, by shifting our focus from what really matters, and where the true action of the Salvific work of Christ is to be observed.

In the beginning was the Word:
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.
Through him all things came to be,
not one thing had its being but through him.
All that came to be had life in him
and that life was the light of men,
a light that shines in the dark,
a light that darkness could not overpower.

A man came, sent by God.
His name was John.
He came as a witness,
as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light,
only a witness to speak for the light.

The Word was the true light
that enlightens all men;
and he was coming into the world.
He was in the world
that had its being through him,
and the world did not know him.
He came to his own domain
and his own people did not accept him.
But to all who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God,
to all who believe in the name of him
who was born not out of human stock
or urge of the flesh
or will of man
but of God himself.

The Word was made flesh,
he lived among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father,
full of grace and truth.

John appears as his witness. He proclaims:
'This is the one of whom I said:
He who comes after me ranks before me
because he existed before me.'

Indeed, from his fullness we have, all of us, received –
yes, grace in return for grace,
since, though the Law was given through Moses,
grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ.
No one has ever seen God;
it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart,
who has made him known.

John 1: 1-18

Wishing you every joy and blessing during this Holy Season.

Thank You for your active commitment, and participation, in the life our Parish, and for the work you do to maintain our buildings, and perhaps more especially enhance our liturgy and worship, and your kindness to your Parish Priest.

A Parish Church is a “house amongst houses”, and the local centre of evangelisation. Any Church will close if people withdraw their presence, their acts of goodwill and service and material giving. Keep the faith, and keep our Parish Churches open!