national bulletin on Liturgy

The Lord's Day, Our Day
Part Two
National Bulletin on Liturgy
A review published by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

This bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope. It is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, catechists, teachers, religious, seminarians, clergy, diocesan liturgical commissions, and for all who are involved in preparing, celebrating, and improving the community’s life of worship and prayer.

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Part Two
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*Questions for Discussion are found in the shaded areas within this article.
Bulletin #157 continues the exploration of Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter entitled *Dies Domini* that was begun in Bulletin #156. We pick up in the middle of the third chapter as the Pope begins to explore the structure of the Sunday celebration of the eucharist. Once again the text of the letter is presented in easier-to-read sense lines, along with helpful commentary and questions to stimulate thinking, discussion and action in local communities.

Three articles help to flesh out possibilities for living Sunday's call to joy, rest and solidarity. Several years ago a group in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, undertook the challenge of a ministry to the sick that includes, but is not restricted to, a live television broadcast of the Sunday celebration of the eucharist. A parish in Kitchener, Ontario has taken up the challenge of bringing the Sunday eucharist to residents in the local prison and vice versa. These groups tell their stories in this issue of the Bulletin. In addition, Marilyn Sweet offers her very personal reflections on responding to the challenge of keeping the Lord's Day holy for a busy family.

In “From the Regions,” the Ontario Liturgical Conference gives a report from the annual meeting in early November, as well as a preview of the 1999 Ontario Liturgical Conference Summer School for Liturgical Musicians in Toronto. In “From the National Office,” Donna Kelly, the director, reports on the ecumenical dimension of her work. Our new book reviewer, Murray Kroetsch, former director of the National Office, begins his work of keeping us informed about what's out there in liturgical reading. “The Last Word” comes from Marcel Gervais, current chair of the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy. He calls on Christians everywhere to utterly reject the growing hysteria connected with the year 2000.
The table of the word

39. As in every Eucharistic celebration, the Risen Lord is encountered in the Sunday assembly at the twofold table of the word and of the Bread of Life.

The table of the word offers the same understanding of the history of salvation and especially of the Paschal Mystery which the Risen Jesus himself gave to his disciples: it is Christ who speaks, present as he is in his word “when Sacred Scripture is read in the Church”. 60

At the table of the Bread of Life, the Risen Lord becomes really, substantially and enduringly present through the memorial of his Passion and Resurrection, and the Bread of Life is offered as a pledge of future glory.

The Second Vatican Council recalled that “the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are so closely joined together that they form a single act of worship”. 61

The Council also urged that “the table of the word of God be more lavishly prepared for the faithful, opening to them more abundantly the treasures of the Bible”. 62

It then decreed that, in Masses of Sunday and holy days of obligation, the homily should not be omitted except for serious reasons. 63

These timely decrees were faithfully embodied in the liturgical reform, about which Paul VI wrote, commenting upon the richer offering of biblical readings on Sunday and holy days:

“All this has been decreed so as to foster more and more in the faithful ‘that hunger for hearing the word of the Lord’ (Am 8:11) which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, spurs the People of the New Covenant on towards the perfect unity of the Church”. 64

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60 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium, 7; cf. 33.
61 Ibid., 56; cf. Ordo Lectionum Missae, Praenotanda, No. 10.
62 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium, 51.
63 Cf. ibid., 52; Code of Canon Law, Canon 767, 2; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, Canon 614.
40. In considering the Sunday Eucharist more than thirty years after the Council, we need to assess how well the word of God is being proclaimed and how effectively the People of God have grown in knowledge and love of Sacred Scripture.65

There are two aspects of this —
that of celebration and that of personal appropriation — and they are very closely related.

At the level of celebration,
the fact that the Council made it possible to proclaim the word of God in the language of the community taking part in the celebration must awaken a new sense of responsibility towards the word, allowing “the distinctive character of the sacred text” to shine forth “even in the mode of reading or singing”.66

At the level of personal appropriation,
the hearing of the word of God proclaimed must be well prepared in the souls of the faithful by an apt knowledge of Scripture and, where pastorally possible, by special initiatives designed to deepen understanding of the biblical readings, particularly those used on Sundays and holy days.

If Christian individuals and families are not regularly drawing new life from the reading of the sacred text in a spirit of prayer and docility to the Church's interpretation,67 then it is difficult for the liturgical proclamation of the word of God alone to produce the fruit we might expect.

This is the value of initiatives in parish communities that bring together during the week those who take part in the Eucharist — priest, ministers and faithful68 — in order to prepare the Sunday liturgy, reflecting beforehand upon the word of God that will be proclaimed.

The objective sought here is that the entire celebration — praying, singing, listening, and not just the preaching — should express in some way the theme of the Sunday liturgy, so that all those taking part may be penetrated more powerfully by it.

Clearly, much depends on those who exercise the ministry of the word. It is their duty to prepare the reflection on the word of the Lord by prayer and study of the sacred text, so that they may then express its contents faithfully and apply them to people's concerns and to their daily lives.

41. It should also be borne in mind that the liturgical proclamation of the word of God, especially in the Eucharistic assembly, is not so much a time for meditation and catechesis

65 The Council's Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium speaks of “suavis et vivus Sacrae Scripturae affectus” (No. 24).
68 Cf. Ordo Lectionum Missae, Praenotanda, Chap. III.
as a dialogue between God and his People,
a dialogue in which the wonders of salvation are proclaimed
and the demands of the Covenant are continually restated.

On their part,
the People of God are drawn to respond to this dialogue of love
by giving thanks and praise,
also by demonstrating their fidelity to the task of continual "conversion".

The Sunday assembly commits us therefore to an inner renewal
of our baptismal promises,
which are in a sense implicit in the recitation of the Creed,
and are an explicit part of the liturgy of the Easter Vigil
and whenever Baptism is celebrated during Mass.

In this context,
the proclamation of the word in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration
takes on the solemn tone found in the Old Testament
at moments when the Covenant was renewed,
when the Law was proclaimed and the community of Israel was called —
like the People in the desert at the foot of Sinai
(cf. Ex 19:7-8; 24:3,7) —
to repeat its "yes",
renewing its decision to be faithful to God
and to obey his commandments.

In speaking his word,
God awaits our response:
a response which Christ has already made for us with his "Amen"
(cf. 2 Cor 1:20-22),
and which echoes in us through the Holy Spirit
so that what we hear may involve us at the deepest level. 69

The table of the Body of Christ
42. The table of the word leads naturally to the table of the Eucharistic Bread
and prepares the community to live its many aspects,
which in the Sunday Eucharist assume an especially solemn character.

As the whole community gathers to celebrate "the Lord's Day",
the Eucharist appears more clearly than on other days as the
great "thanksgiving"
in which the Spirit-filled Church turns to the Father,
becoming one with Christ
and speaking in the name of all humanity.

The rhythm of the week prompts us
to gather up in grateful memory the events of the days which have just passed,
to review them in the light of God
and to thank him for his countless gifts,
glorifying him
"through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit".

The Christian community thus comes to a renewed awareness
of the fact that all things were created through Christ (cf. Col 1:16; Jn 1:3),
and that in Christ,

who came in the form of a slave
to take on and redeem our human condition,
all things have been restored (cf. Eph 1:10),
in order to be handed over to God the Father,
from whom all things come to be and draw their life.
Then, giving assent to the Eucharistic doxology with their “Amen”,
the People of God look in faith and hope towards the eschatological end,
when Christ “will deliver the kingdom to God the Father ...
so that God may be everything to everyone” (1 Cor 15:24, 28).

43. This “ascending” movement is inherent in every Eucharistic celebration
and makes it a joyous event, overflowing with gratitude and hope.
But it emerges particularly at Sunday Mass
because of its special link with the commemoration of the Resurrection.
By contrast,
this “Eucharistic” rejoicing which “lifts up our hearts”
is the fruit of God’s “descending” movement towards us,
which remains for ever etched
in the essential sacrificial element of the Eucharist,
the supreme expression and celebration of the mystery of the kenosis,
the descent by which Christ “humbled himself,
and became obedient unto death, even death on a Cross” (Phil 2:8).

The Mass in fact truly makes present the sacrifice of the Cross.
Under the species of bread and wine,
upon which has been invoked the outpouring of the Spirit
who works with absolutely unique power in the words of consecration,
Christ offers himself to the Father
in the same act of sacrifice by which he offered himself on the Cross.
“In this divine sacrifice that is accomplished in the Mass,
the same Christ
who offered himself once and for all in a bloody manner
on the altar of the Cross
is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner”.70
To his sacrifice Christ unites the sacrifice of the Church:
“In the Eucharist
the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body.
The lives of the faithful,
their praise, sufferings, prayer and work,
are united with those of Christ and with his total offering,
and so acquire a new value”12
The truth that the whole community shares in Christ’s sacrifice
is especially evident in the Sunday gathering,
which makes it possible to bring to the altar the week that has passed,
with all its human burdens.

71 Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1368.
Chapter III • Dies Ecclesiae: The Eucharistic Assembly: Heart of Sunday

Easter banquet and fraternal gathering

44. The communal character of the Eucharist emerges in a special way when it is seen as the Easter banquet, in which Christ himself becomes our nourishment.

In fact, “for this purpose Christ entrusted to the Church this sacrifice: so that the faithful might share in it, both spiritually, in faith and charity, and sacramentally, in the banquet of Holy Communion.

Sharing in the Lord’s Supper is always communion with Christ, who offers himself for us in sacrifice to the Father”.  

This is why the Church recommends that the faithful receive communion when they take part in the Eucharist, provided that they are properly disposed and, if aware of grave sin, have received God’s pardon in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in the spirit of what Saint Paul writes to the community at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 11:27-32).

Obviously, the invitation to Eucharistic communion is more insistent in the case of Mass on Sundays and holy days.

It is also important to be ever mindful that communion with Christ is deeply tied to communion with our brothers and sisters.

The Sunday Eucharistic gathering is an experience of brotherhood, which the celebration should demonstrate clearly, while ever respecting the nature of the liturgical action.

All this will be helped by gestures of welcome and by the tone of prayer, alert to the needs of all in the community.

The sign of peace — in the Roman Rite significantly placed before Eucharistic communion — is a particularly expressive gesture which the faithful are invited to make as a manifestation of the People of God’s acceptance of all that has been accomplished in the celebration and of the commitment to mutual love which is made in sharing the one bread, with the demanding words of Christ in mind: “If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Mt 5:23-24).

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74 Cf. Innocent I, Epist. 25, 1 to Decentius of Gubbio: PL 20, 553.
From Mass to “mission”

45. Receiving the Bread of Life, the disciples of Christ ready themselves to undertake with the strength of the Risen Lord and his Spirit the tasks that await them in their ordinary life. For the faithful who have understood the meaning of what they have done, the Eucharistic celebration does not stop at the church door. Like the first witnesses of the Resurrection, Christians who gather each Sunday to experience and proclaim the presence of the Risen Lord are called to evangelize and bear witness in their daily lives. Given this, the Prayer after Communion and the Concluding Rite — the Final Blessing and the Dismissal — need to be better valued and appreciated, so that all who have shared in the Eucharist may come to a deeper sense of the responsibility that is entrusted to them.

Once the assembly disperses, Christ’s disciples return to their everyday surroundings with the commitment to make their whole life a gift, a spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God (cf. Rom 12:1). They feel indebted to their brothers and sisters because of what they have received in the celebration, not unlike the disciples of Emmaus who, once they had recognized the Risen Christ “in the breaking of the bread” (cf. Lk 24:30-32), felt the need to return immediately to share with their brothers and sisters the joy of meeting the Lord (cf. Lk 24:33-35).

The Sunday obligation

46. Since the Eucharist is the very heart of Sunday, it is clear why, from the earliest centuries, the Pastors of the Church have not ceased to remind the faithful of the need to take part in the liturgical assembly. “Leave everything on the Lord’s Day”, urges the third-century text known as the Didascalia, “and run diligently to your assembly, because it is your praise of God. Otherwise, what excuse will they make to God, those who do not come together on the Lord’s Day to hear the word of life and feed on the divine nourishment that lasts forever?”

The faithful have generally accepted this call of the Pastors with conviction of soul and, although there have been times and situations

Chapter III • Dies Ecclesiae: The Eucharistic Assembly: Heart of Sunday

when this duty has not been perfectly met,
one should never forget the genuine heroism of priests and faithful
who have fulfilled this obligation
even when faced with danger and the denial of religious freedom,
as can be documented
from the first centuries of Christianity up to our own time.

In his first Apology
addressed to the Emperor Antoninus and the Senate,
Saint Justin proudly described the Christian practice of the Sunday assembly,
which gathered in one place
Christians from both the city and the countryside. 76

When, during the persecution of Diocletian,
their assemblies were banned with the greatest severity,
many were courageous enough to defy the imperial decree
and accepted death rather than miss the Sunday Eucharist.

This was the case of the martyrs of Abitina, in Proconsular Africa,
who replied to their accusers:
"Without fear of any kind we have celebrated the Lord's Supper,
because it cannot be missed; that is our law";
"We cannot live without the Lord's Supper".

As she confessed her faith, one of the martyrs said:
"Yes, I went to the assembly
and I celebrated the Lord's Supper with my brothers and sisters,
because I am a Christian". 77

47. Even if in the earliest times it was not judged necessary to be prescriptive,
the Church has not ceased to confirm this obligation of conscience,
which rises from the inner need
felt so strongly by the Christians of the first centuries.

It was only later,
faced with the half-heartedness or negligence of some,
that the Church had to make explicit the duty to attend Sunday Mass:
more often than not, this was done in the form of exhortation,
but at times the Church had to resort to specific canonical precepts.

This was the case in a number of local Councils from the fourth century onwards
(as at the Council of Elvira of 300,
which speaks not of an obligation but of penalties after three absences) 78
and most especially from the sixth century onwards
(as at the Council of Agde in 506). 79

These decrees of local Councils led to a universal practice,
the obligatory character of which was taken as something quite normal. 80

76 Cf. Apologia I, 67, 3-5: PG 6, 430.
77 Acta SS. Sauerini, Dativi et aliorum plurimorum Martyrum in Africa, 7, 9, 10: PL 8, 707, 709-710.
78 Cf. Canon 21, Mansi, Conc. II, 9.
79 Cf. Canon 47, Mansi, Conc. VIII, 332.
80 Cf. the contrary proposition, condemned by Innocent XI in 1679, concerning the moral obligation to
keep the feast-day holy: DS 2152.
The Code of Canon Law of 1917 for the first time gathered this tradition into a universal law.\textsuperscript{81}

The present Code reiterates this, saying that “on Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to attend Mass”.\textsuperscript{82}

This legislation has normally been understood as entailing a grave obligation: this is the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church,\textsuperscript{24} and it is easy to understand why

if we keep in mind how vital Sunday is for the Christian life.

48. Today, as in the heroic times of the beginning, many who wish to live in accord with the demands of their faith are being faced with difficult situations in various parts of the world.

They live in surroundings that are sometimes decidedly hostile and at other times — more frequently in fact — indifferent and unresponsive to the Gospel message.

If believers are not to be overwhelmed, they must be able to count on the support of the Christian community. This is why they must be convinced that it is crucially important for the life of faith that they should come together with others on Sundays to celebrate the Passover of the Lord in the sacrament of the New Covenant.

It is the special responsibility of the Bishops, therefore, “to ensure that Sunday is appreciated by all the faithful, kept holy and celebrated as truly ‘the Lord’s Day’ on which the Church comes together to renew the remembrance of the Easter mystery in hearing the word of God, in offering the sacrifice of the Lord, in keeping the day holy by means of prayer, works of charity and abstention from work”.\textsuperscript{84}

49. Because the faithful are obliged to attend Mass unless there is a grave impediment,
Pastors have the corresponding duty to offer to everyone the real possibility of fulfilling the precept.

The provisions of Church law move in this direction, as for example in the faculty granted to priests, with the prior authorization of the diocesan Bishop,

\textsuperscript{81} Canon 1248: “Festis de praecepto diebus Missa audienda est”: Canon 1247, 1: “Dies festi sub praecepto in universa Ecclesia sunt... omnes et singuli dies dominici”.

\textsuperscript{82} Code of Canon Law, Canon 1247; the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, Canon 881, 1, prescribes that “the Christian faithful are bound by the obligation to participate on Sundays and feast days in the Divine Liturgy or, according to the prescriptions or legitimate customs of their own Church sui iuris, in the celebration of the divine praises”.

\textsuperscript{83} No. 2181: “Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave sin”.

\textsuperscript{84} Sacred Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops Ecclesiae Imago (22 February 1973), 86a: Enchiridion Vaticanum 4, 2069.
to celebrate more than one Mass on Sundays and holy days,\textsuperscript{85}
and the provision
which allows the obligation to be fulfilled from Saturday evening onwards,
starting at the time of First Vespers of Sunday.\textsuperscript{87}
From a liturgical point of view, in fact, holy days begin with First Vespers.\textsuperscript{88}
Consequently,
the liturgy of what is sometimes called the “Vigil Mass”
is in effect the “festive” Mass of Sunday,
at which the celebrant is required to preach the homily
and recite the Prayer of the Faithful.

Moreover, Pastors should remind the faithful
that when they are away from home on Sundays
they are to take care to attend Mass wherever they may be,
enriching the local community with their personal witness.
At the same time,
these communities should show a warm sense of welcome
to visiting brothers and sisters,
especially in places that attract many tourists and pilgrims,
for whom it will often be necessary to provide special religious assistance.\textsuperscript{89}

A joyful celebration in song

50. Given the nature of Sunday Mass
and its importance in the lives of the faithful,
it must be prepared with special care.
In ways dictated by pastoral experience and local custom
in keeping with liturgical norms,
efforts must be made to ensure that the celebration has the festive character
appropriate to the day commemorating the Lord’s Resurrection.
To this end,
it is important to devote attention to the songs used by the assembly,
since singing is a particularly apt way to express a joyful heart,
accentuating the solemnity of the celebration
and fostering the sense of a common faith and a shared love.
Care must be taken to ensure the quality, both of the texts and of the melodies,
so that what is proposed today as new and creative
will conform to liturgical requirements
and be worthy of the Church’s tradition
which, in the field of sacred music, boasts a priceless heritage.

\textsuperscript{85} Cf. Code of Canon Law, Canon 905, 2.
\textsuperscript{87} Cf. Code of Canon Law, Canon 1248, 1; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, Canon 881, 2.
\textsuperscript{88} Cf. Missale Romanum, Normae Universales de Anno Liturgico et de Calendario, 3.
\textsuperscript{89} Cf. Sacred Congregation of Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops Ecclesiae Imago (22 February 1973), 86: Enchiridion Vaticanum 4, 2069-2073.
A celebration involving all

51. There is a need too to ensure
that all those present, children and adults, take an active interest,
by encouraging their involvement
at those points where the liturgy suggests and recommends it.  

Of course,
it falls only to those who exercise the priestly ministry
to effect the Eucharistic Sacrifice
and to offer it to God in the name of the whole people.  

This is the basis of the distinction,
which is much more than a matter of discipline,
between the task proper to the celebrant
and that which belongs to deacons and the non-ordained faithful.  

Yet the faithful must realize
that, because of the common priesthood received in Baptism,
"they participate in the offering of the Eucharist".  

Although there is a distinction of roles,
they still "offer to God the divine victim and themselves with him.
Offering the sacrifice and receiving holy communion,
they take part actively in the liturgy", finding in it light and strength
to live their baptismal priesthood and the witness of a holy life.

Other moments of the Christian Sunday

52. Sharing in the Eucharist is the heart of Sunday,
but the duty to keep Sunday holy cannot be reduced to this.
In fact,
the Lord's Day is lived well
if it is marked from beginning to end
by grateful and active remembrance of God's saving work.
This commits each of Christ's disciples to shape the other moments of the day —
those outside the liturgical context:
family life, social relationships, moments of relaxation —
in such a way
that the peace and joy of the Risen Lord will emerge
in the ordinary events of life.

For example,
the relaxed gathering of parents and children can be an opportunity
not only to listen to one another
but also to share a few formative and more reflective moments.

Even in lay life,
when possible, why not make provision for special times of prayer —

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91 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 10.  
93 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, 10: "in oblationem Eucharistiae concurrunt".  
94 Ibid., 11.
especially the solemn celebration of Vespers, for example — 
or moments of catechesis, 
which on the eve of Sunday or on Sunday afternoon 
might prepare for or complete 
the gift of the Eucharist 
in people’s hearts?

This rather traditional way of keeping Sunday holy 
has perhaps become more difficult for many people; 
but the Church shows her faith in the strength of the Risen Lord 
and the power of the Holy Spirit 
by making it known that, today more than ever, 
she is unwilling to settle for minimalism and mediocrity at the level of faith. 
She wants to help Christians to do what is most correct and pleasing to the Lord. 
And despite the difficulties, 
there are positive and encouraging signs. 
In many parts of the Church, 
a new need for prayer in its many forms is being felt; 
and this is a gift of the Holy Spirit. 
There is also a rediscovery of ancient religious practices, such as pilgrimages; 
and often the faithful take advantage of Sunday rest to visit a Shrine 
where, with the whole family perhaps, 
they can spend time in a more intense experience of faith. 
These are moments of grace 
that must be fostered through evangelization 
and guided by genuine pastoral wisdom.

**Sunday assemblies without a priest**

53. There remains the problem 
of parishes that do not have the ministry of a priest 
for the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist. 
This is often the case in young Churches, 
where one priest has pastoral responsibility 
for faithful scattered over a vast area.

However, 
emergency situations can also arise in countries 
of long-standing Christian tradition, 
where diminishing numbers of clergy 
make it impossible 

to guarantee the presence of a priest in every parish community. 

In situations where the Eucharist cannot be celebrated, 
the Church recommends 
that the Sunday assembly come together even without a priest, 
in keeping with the indications and directives of the Holy See 
that have been entrusted to the Episcopal Conferences 
for implementation.  

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Yet the objective must always remain the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, the only way in which the Passover of the Lord becomes truly present, over which the priest presides in persona Christi, breaking the bread of the word and the Eucharist.

At the pastoral level, therefore, everything has to be done to ensure that the Sacrifice of the Mass is made available as often as possible to the faithful who are regularly deprived of it, either by arranging the presence of a priest from time to time, or by taking every opportunity to organize a gathering in a central location accessible to scattered groups.

Radio and television

54. Finally, the faithful who, because of sickness, disability or some other serious cause, are prevented from taking part, should as best they can unite themselves with the celebration of Sunday Mass from afar, preferably by means of the readings and prayers for that day from the Missal, as well as through their desire for the Eucharist. 97

In many countries, radio and television make it possible to join in the Eucharistic celebration broadcast from some sacred place. 98

Clearly, this kind of broadcast does not in itself fulfill the Sunday obligation, which requires participation in the fraternal assembly gathered in one place, where Eucharistic communion can be received. But for those who cannot take part in the Eucharist and who are therefore excused from the obligation, radio and television are a precious help, especially if accompanied by the generous service of extraordinary ministers who bring the Eucharist to the sick, also bringing them the greeting and solidarity of the whole community. Sunday Mass thus produces rich fruits for these Christians too, and they are truly enabled to experience Sunday as “the Lord’s Day” and “the Church’s day”. 97

Gathered at the Table of the Word

To this point in Chapter III, Pope John Paul has given us a remarkable overview of the Sunday eucharistic assembly. He now turns his attention to the two major parts of the Sunday eucharist: the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist.

The Pope speaks of the “table of the word” and the “table of the Eucharist,” and, quoting the Second Vatican Council, he reminds us that “the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are so closely joined together that they form a single act of worship” (39).

Turning to the liturgy of the word, Pope John Paul highlights the presence of the Risen Lord. It is he who speaks, “present as he is in his word ‘when Sacred Scripture is read in the Church’” (39). Thus, the proclamation of the word is “a dialogue between God and his People” (41).

Unpacking the Text

For centuries, in the Roman rite at least, the liturgy of the word had suffered a kind of decline. It was reduced to two readings, and the extraneous sermon replaced the traditional homily. The common perception was that this first part of the mass was entirely secondary to what followed.

As the Pope has noted, the Second Vatican Council restored the liturgy of the word to its original stature (39), allowing us to see more clearly that the Church gives full value to the scriptures. In fact, when the Council insists that the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist “form a single act of worship,” it is asserting the sacramental nature of the word that is proclaimed in the eucharistic assembly. This word is filled with power to reveal and to save, especially since it is the Risen Lord himself who speaks, calling the world this very day to salvation.

If the Sunday eucharistic assembly is the setting for the Risen Lord’s ongoing dialogue with the world, his call demands our human response within the celebration. This response is made explicit in the eucharistic prayer, when, joined to the Risen Lord, we offer heartfelt praise and thanksgiving and proclaim our “Amen” to God.

Thus, the Sunday eucharist engages the world in a solemn act of covenanting with its God. In the “dialogue between God and his People ... the wonders of salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the Covenant are restated” (41). Driving home the point, Pope John Paul draws a comparison between the Sunday eucharistic assembly and the great assemblies recorded in the Old Testament, “when the Covenant was renewed, when the Law was proclaimed and the community of Israel was called – like the People in the desert at the foot of Sinai – to renew its ‘yes’ [to God]” (41).

Once we see the extraordinary significance and power of the liturgy of the word, we recognize the importance of the strong, faith-filled proclamation of the readings and the full, conscious and active participation of the people of God. Nothing less will do.

Gathered at the Table of the Body of Christ

Turning his attention to the liturgy of the eucharist, Pope John Paul highlights
the principal features of the sacred meal: the table blessing (the eucharistic prayer) and our feasting at the table of the Lord (holy communion).

Beginning with the eucharistic prayer, he describes the eucharist as "the 'great thanksgiving' in which the Spirit-filled Church turns to the Father, becoming one with Christ and speaking in the name of all humanity" (42). This is the prayer that lifts up all things to God, leading the assembly to "look in faith and hope toward the eschatological end, when Christ 'will deliver the kingdom to God the Father ... so that God may be everything to everyone'" (42).

Unpacking the Text
The Pope raises our awareness of a fundamental aspect of the Sunday celebration: it is all about thanksgiving. This is underscored by the fact that the word "eucharist" means "thanksgiving," so that when we call the Sunday liturgy "the eucharist" we are calling it "the thanksgiving." The eucharistic (or thanksgiving) prayer – the Church's table blessing – dominates the feast, making the Lord's Supper a thanksgiving meal celebrated to the glory of God.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the eucharistic prayer. Through this prayer we express our very identity as a people of praise and thanksgiving, gratefully and lovingly offering the gift of our lives in Christ to the glory of God.

From a pastoral standpoint, the central importance of the eucharistic prayer urges pastors to ensure the fullest participation of the people of God. This prayer is the assembly's prayer, proclaimed in the name of the entire community by the presiding priest as the sacramental icon of Christ. The presider's careful proclamation of this prayer, the assembly's standing, covenantal posture, and its vocal participation in the acclama-

itions are important aspects of the celebration.

Taking us further into the prayer, the Pope describes the "descending" and "ascending" movement of the liturgy (43). As at the Last Supper, the Lord's presence brings with it his self-emptying (kenosis) love for the world, making the eucharistic celebration "a joyous event overflowing with gratitude and hope" (43). In the liturgy, the Lord unites the sacrifice of the Church to his own sacrifice (43), gathering us with the angels and saints in his high-priestly prayer at the throne of God. It is the mystery of the passage.

Gathered at the Easter Banquet
The Lord's Supper flows naturally from the grand table blessing to our sharing in the eucharistic food and drink, the body and blood of Christ. Pope John Paul highlights the goal and effect of our sharing in the sacred meal: communion with Christ and with one another in him. "Sharing in the Lord's Supper is always communion with Christ ..." and "communion with Christ is deeply tied to communion with our brothers and sisters" (44).

Unpacking the Text
Throughout Dies Domini Pope John Paul has insisted on the paschal nature of the Lord's Supper. At this sacred meal the Risen Lord shares his paschal life with us, making us one with him in his sacrificial death and resurrection and ascension into glory. We are drawn into his self-emptying love and his high-priestly prayer at the throne of God, which is the "table blessing" of the banquet feast of the kingdom.

Thus, when we participate in the Lord's Supper we become one with Christ in the most profound way. He lives in us, and we live in him; we become the body of Christ, which is the Church. This is
why we call this sharing in the eucharistic food and drink "holy communion." Together, as one people, we enter into communion of life with Christ and, in him, communion of life in the triune God. The eucharist is truly the sacrament of unity and the sacrament of our salvation.

During the Middle Ages certain events led many Catholics to view holy communion as an individual and intensely private act of devotion—an attitude that is not unknown in the present day. The Pope’s focus on the “experience of brotherhood” (44) is therefore a timely one. In our celebrations today, the communal dimension of holy communion is highlighted by the dramatic gesture of the “breaking of the bread” in which the one eucharistic bread is broken in order to be shared by all, by our participation in the one cup, and by the shared song that accompanies the procession.

Gathered for Mission

Having examined the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the eucharist, the Pope turns his attention to the Church’s mission. More precisely, he links liturgy and mission, telling us that “Christians who gather each Sunday to experience and proclaim the presence of the Risen Lord are called to evangelize and bear witness in their daily lives” (45). Indeed, this is the “responsibility” of “all who have shared in the Eucharist.” We are called upon to make our “whole life a gift, a spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God” (45).

Unpacking the Text

It must be admitted that the missionary dimension of the eucharist has been severely underplayed for a long, long time. The fact is that many Catholics view the eucharist from only one perspective: namely, that of meeting their own spiritual needs. The result is clear and predictable: too many communities are turned in upon themselves, and the work of mission is not a factor in their lives.

This inward-looking approach to the eucharist changes once we see the fundamental covenant-making nature of the celebration. Just as at the Last Supper, so today at the Lord’s Supper, the Lord fashions a community of disciples, sending them out to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God.

In the eucharistic prayer, the assembly joins itself to Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, offering its life to God and affirming its commitment in the Great Amen. And in holy communion it seals its covenant with God in the body and blood of Christ. A whole-hearted return to communion from the cup will strengthen this understanding of the rite of communion, since the eucharistic prayer describes the cup as “the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant.” After communion, in the official dismissal from the eucharist, the community is sent forth on its mission in the world.

Quite rightly the Pope tells us that the dismissal needs “to be better valued and appreciated”(45). It is not a simple “Goodbye, have a good week, and we’ll see you again next Sunday.” Rather, it is the dramatic hinge between liturgy and mission, sending the community of disciples forth to announce the kingdom of God. With this in mind, the closing procession may be seen as the movement of the community outward to undertake its work in the world.

In the Lord’s Supper, the Risen Lord shares his very life with us. Thus, in holy communion a remarkable transformation takes place: we become the body of Christ and his sacramental presence in the world. It is through his body, the Church, that the Risen Lord continues his work of calling the world back to God, making the Church an essential ingredient in the plan of salvation.
and the fulfillment of the kingdom of God.

The common notion that mission is the sole responsibility of the ordained clergy has had a debilitating effect on the Church's mission. One can only imagine what would happen if entire communities, so rich in diverse gifts and talents, were to take up this task under the leadership of their bishop and their parish priests.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has been blessed with the restored catechumenate and a new Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. But this initiative will succeed only if parishioners know that sharing their faith and welcoming catechumens is their primary work, their corporate responsibility, and their special joy.

Recognizing the Need to Be There

Today's Catholics are generally well aware of their responsibility to “attend mass on Sunday,” yet a sizeable number are not present on a regular basis. Perhaps for this reason, Pope John Paul outlines the history of the Sunday obligation and underscores “the need to take part in the liturgical assembly” (46). He shares with us the witness of the martyrs of Abitina, who said, “Without fear of any kind we have celebrated the Lord's Supper, because it cannot be missed; that is our law” (46).

Unpacking the Text

It is probably true that the link between being Christian and celebrating the Sunday eucharist has not been made with sufficient care. Many Catholics, when asked to explain the Sunday obligation, would begin with baptism: when we are baptized we take on certain obligations; one of these, at least from the age of reason, is to go to mass on Sunday.

In Dies Domini, however, Pope John Paul begins with the Sunday eucharist. As we have seen, he stresses that this Sunday eucharist is what we are all about. When we come together for eucharist on the Lord's Day we express fully “the very identity of the Church, the ekklesia, the assembly called together by the Risen Lord” (31). The eucharist “feeds and forms” the Church” (31). Thus, the Sunday eucharist is not just one of many obligations that we have as Christians. It is the central celebration of our Christian lives, the event that defines and expresses who we are, and the very reason why we were baptized and confirmed. It makes us the community of salvation.

The Pope's concern about the Sunday observance is well founded. For example, some pastors report that more and more young people are taking part-time jobs on Sunday and excusing themselves from the eucharistic assembly. He reminds bishops, therefore, that it is their special responsibility “to ensure that Sunday is appreciated by all the faithful, kept holy and celebrated as truly “the Lord's Day,” on which the Church comes together to renew the remembrance of the Easter mystery” (48).

For some, the word “obligation” may always have a negative connotation. Perhaps “responsibility” is a good alternative. If it is the Risen Lord himself who calls us to gather with him, if he speaks to us from the heart, if he shares his table and his very life with us, if he fulfills our lives in holy communion, then we surely have a responsibility to be there and to offer the praise of God. Quoting the Didascalia, the Pope says, “Leave everything on the Lord's Day and run diligently to your assembly, because it is your praise of God. Otherwise, what excuse will they make to God, those who do not come together on the Lord's Day to hear the word of life and feed on the divine nourishment which lasts forever?” (46).
Celebrating with Joyful Song

Pope John Paul now comments on the quality of the Sunday eucharist. He calls for a celebration that “has the festive character appropriate for the day commemorating the Lord's Resurrection” (50). With special emphasis, he draws our attention “to the songs used by the assembly, since singing is a particularly apt way to express a joyful heart, accentuating the solemnity of the celebration and fostering the sense of a common faith and a shared love” (50).

Unpacking the Text

The Pope's comments here are brief but very much to the point. Some Catholics have had a lingering feeling that festivity and joyful song are somehow inappropriate in the celebration of the sacred liturgy. But Sunday is the day of the Lord's resurrection, the eucharist celebrates the wonderful Passover of the Lord, and the Risen Lord himself is present in our midst. One cannot imagine an event more deserving of the fullest joy. Indeed, the quality of our joy may be the measure of our faith.

Celebrating as an Assembly

Having underscored the importance of joyful song, Pope John Paul looks further into the assembly's participation in the Sunday eucharist. Noting the distinctive roles of the presiding priest and the deacon, the Pope goes on to highlight the fundamental role of all the people of God: “Offering the sacrifice and receiving holy communion, they take part actively in the liturgy” (51).

Unpacking the Text

A careful reading of Dies Domini reveals an important shift in emphasis that first appeared in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Our obligation or responsibility is not simply “to be present at mass”; it is “to take part in the liturgical assembly” (46). As is well known, full, conscious and active participation by all the people is the hallmark of the Constitution, and the entire reform of the liturgy has this participation as its goal (see Constitution, #14).

The manner in which the liturgy was celebrated prior to the Council left the overall impression that the priest was the sole celebrant of the mass and that the people simply assisted at his celebration. For many Catholics, then, it was a change of dramatic proportions when the Council, solidly in step with the ancient tradition, insisted that full participation was their corporate responsibility by reason of their baptism (Constitution, #14).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, drawing on the Constitution, has the following to say: “It is the whole community, the Body of Christ united with its Head, that celebrates” (Catechism, #1140).

From all of this it is evident that the full participation of all the people can no longer be viewed as a luxury or an option. The truth is that, today, this participation is the fundamental, unremovable gauge of the quality of every eucharistic celebration.

Celebrating throughout the Day

The Sunday eucharistic assembly is surely the decisive, defining moment of the Lord's Day. But Pope John Paul reminds us that the entire Day of the Resurrection should be lived in the light of the liturgical experience, “marked from beginning to end by grateful and active remembrance of God's saving work” (52).

Unpacking the Text

There is no doubt that the Pope strikes a sensitive chord when he reflects on the danger of “minimalism and mediocrity at the level of faith” (52). The conviction that we should celebrate the Lord's Day in a way that reflects “the peace and
joy of the Risen Lord” (52) has, often enough, given way to the perception that the singular religious aspect of Sunday is the celebration of mass.

Pope John Paul makes a number of pastoral suggestions to mark the Day of the Resurrection. One that is applicable to every community and particularly in keeping with the long tradition of the Church is the celebration of evening prayer. The Canadian ritual book Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours and the Catholic Book of Worship provide the necessary resources to support a faith-filled celebration.

Celebrating Without a Priest

Throughout Dies Domini, Pope John Paul shows that he is keenly aware of the pastoral needs of the faithful. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that he brings Chapter III to a close by addressing first the concerns of communities lacking a priest and then the needs of those who are prevented from taking part in the Sunday eucharist by reason of sickness or some other cause.

With regard to Sunday assemblies without a priest, the Pope notes something that now pertains to Canada, namely, that “emergency situations can also arise in countries of long-standing Christian tradition, where diminishing numbers of clergy make it impossible to guarantee the presence of a priest in every parish community” (53).

However, while recognizing and supporting recent initiatives to bring these communities together on Sunday even without a priest, he is careful to insist that “the objective must always remain the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, the one way in which the Passover of the Lord becomes truly present, the only full realization of the Eucharistic assembly over which the priest presides in persona Christi, breaking the bread of the word and the Eucharist” (53).

Unpacking the Text

There can be no doubt that Catholics now have a far richer way of celebrating on Sunday in the absence of a priest than they used to. As the Pope mentions, the Holy See has provided some guidelines for such celebrations, and a number of episcopal conferences have implemented them.

In our own country, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued a fine ritual book titled Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours, and a number of dioceses have undertaken training programs for parishioners who would lead these celebrations. All of this is noteworthy and highly commendable.

At the same time, it must be said that there is a very real problem here. It is rooted in the conviction that the Lord’s Supper is the foundation and building block of the Church. Put another way, the eucharist is not simply something that the Church does; it is the event that makes the Church to be Church. There is no substitute, therefore, for the assembly for eucharist on the Lord’s Day.

The danger, then, is that communities without a priest might fail to make an adequate value-distinction between the available celebrations of the word and hours and the Lord’s Supper, especially when holy communion is given. There is already some anecdotal evidence that this is the case, with some people indicating a preference for a liturgy of the word and holy communion because it is a shorter celebration. Prolonged exposure to this kind of arrangement might leave communities less hungry for the Lord’s Supper and more satisfied with what they have, leading to a profound distortion of the sacramental structures of the Church.

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that all of this is happening in the midst of a liturgical reform that is not yet complete. There still lingers a rather simplis-
tic approach to the Lord's Supper that sees the only purpose of the eucharistic prayer is to consecrate the bread and wine so that the people can receive holy communion. Within this inadequate framework, it follows that, if communion is available, nothing is lost.

Further to the same point, many of our communities are still receiving communion from previously consecrated hosts at Sunday mass, even though official Roman documents continue to urge communion from bread and wine consecrated at this table during this celebration (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 56h and elsewhere). Thus, many people find nothing unusual about communion from the tabernacle.

The pastoral notes and the format of Canada's Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours have made every effort to address this concern.

**Connecting with Those Who Are Not Present**

Pope John Paul closes Chapter III by expressing his concern for those who, "because of sickness, disability or some other serious cause, are prevented from taking part [in the Sunday eucharist]" (54). He supports the pastoral initiatives that radio and television can provide: "In many countries, radio and television make it possible to join in the Eucharistic celebration broadcast from some sacred place" (54).

**Unpacking the Text**

One of the happiest outcomes of the liturgical renewal has been the practice of bringing communion to the sick from the table of the Sunday eucharistic celebration. In this way those who cannot be present are made one with the assembly in the strongest possible way.

This pattern has been particularly well received because it follows the natural instincts of our lives. At a Thanksgiving dinner, for example, it just seems right for us to bring some of the food from the table to a member of the family who is ill at home. The Pope recognizes this sense of things when he says that the eucharistic ministers also bring "the greeting and solidarity of the whole community" (54).

While noting the advantages of televised celebrations, it seems that a certain caveat is in order, since in some instances – and for understandable reasons – the masses are "pre-packaged" for release at a later time. For example, a small group of people celebrating masses for the third, four, fifth and sixth Sundays of Easter might be video-taped in a television studio during Lent. This kind of arrangement raises questions that require an answer. How can we celebrate a Sunday eucharist during the week? How can we celebrate the fourth Sunday of Easter during Lent, or some other time during the Easter season, for that matter? Where is the assembly? And, in brief, are we not doing the wrong thing?

Other arrangements – those that remain faithful to the Sunday assembly for eucharist and the liturgical year – often seem out of reach. Our country stretches through several time zones, and our population is thin. One possible solution might be to select a cathedral or parish church (perhaps on the East coast) where the Saturday evening celebration would be video-taped on a regular basis and released to the cable networks for broadcast on Sunday.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. **Gathered at the Table of the Word**
   How would you rate the quality of proclamation in your Sunday eucharistic celebrations? Do your readers truly engage the assembly?
2. Gathered at the Table of the Body of Christ
Is the note of thanksgiving sufficiently highlighted in your parish celebrations? Does the assembly realize that the eucharistic prayer is their prayer as the People of God?

3. Gathered at the Easter Banquet
Does your parish community understand that in holy communion we share in the passage of Jesus to risen and glorious life? Do your parish celebrations reflect the communal nature of holy communion?

4. Gathered for Mission
How strong is the sense of mission in your parish community? Is the Sunday eucharistic assembly aware of the significance of the dismissal as a sending forth for mission?

5. Recognizing the Need to Be There
How can you strengthen your community’s awareness of the importance of the Sunday eucharist? Can you provide better hospitality at the doors?

6. Celebrating with Joyful Song
Is your Sunday eucharist a truly festive celebration? How can you make your songs more joyful? How can you ensure that they fully engage the assembly?

7. Celebrating as an Assembly
Does your community understand that the entire assembly is responsible for the Sunday celebration? What is the present quality of participation and how can you improve it?

8. Celebrating throughout the Day
Pope John Paul has made several suggestions designed to enhance the Lord’s Day. What can you do in your parish to strengthen the entire day?

9. Celebrating Without a Priest
How would you prepare your community for Sunday celebrations without a priest? Should you begin to study the Canadian ritual Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours?

10. Connecting with Those Who Are Not Present
Does your parish bring communion to the sick from the Sunday eucharist? Is this communion arranged in such a way that those who are ill can experience the genuine “greeting and solidarity of the whole community”?
Chapter IV
Dies Hominis
Sunday: Day of Joy, Rest and Solidarity

The “full joy” of Christ

55. “Blessed be he who has raised the great day of Sunday above all other days. The heavens and the earth, angels and of men give themselves over to joy”.

This cry of the Maronite liturgy captures well the intense acclamations of joy that have always characterized Sunday in the liturgy of both East and West. Moreover, historically —

even before it was seen as a day of rest,

which in any case was not provided for in the civil calendar —

Christians celebrated the weekly day of the Risen Lord primarily as a day of joy.

“On the first day of the week, you shall all rejoice”, urges the Didascalia.

This was also emphasized by liturgical practice, through the choice of appropriate gestures.

Voicing an awareness widespread in the Church, Saint Augustine describes the joy of the weekly Easter:

“Fasting is set aside and prayers are said standing, as a sign of the Resurrection, which is also why the Alleluia is sung on every Sunday”.

56. Beyond particular ritual forms, which can vary in time depending upon Church discipline, there remains the fact that Sunday, as a weekly echo of the first encounter with the Risen Lord, is unfailingly marked by the joy with which the disciples greeted the Master:

“The disciples rejoiced to see the Lord” (Jn 20:20).

This was the confirmation of the words which Jesus spoke before the Passion and which resound in every Christian generation:

“You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy” (Jn 16:20).

Had not he himself prayed for this, that the disciples would have “the fullness of his joy” (cf. Jn 17:13)?

The festive character of the Sunday Eucharist

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99 This is the Deacon’s proclamation in honour of the Lord’s Day: cf. the Syriac text in the Missal of the Church of Antioch of the Maronites (edition in Syriac and Arabic), Jounieh (Lebanon) 1959, p. 38.

100 V, 20, 11: ed. F. X. Funk, 1905, p. 298; cf. Didache 14, 1: ed. F. X. Funk, 1901, p. 32; Tertullian, Apologeticum 16, 11: CCL 1, 116. See in particular the Epistle of Barnabas, 15, 9: SC 172, 188-189. “This is why we celebrate as a joyous feast the eighth day on which Jesus was raised from the dead and, after having appeared, ascended into heaven”.

101 Tertullian for example tells us that on Sunday it was forbidden to kneel, since kneeling, which was then seen as an essentially penitential gesture, seemed unsuited to the day of joy. Cf. De Corona 3, 4: CCL 2, 1043.

expresses the joy that Christ communicates to his Church through the gift of the Spirit. Joy is precisely one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22).

57. Therefore, if we wish to rediscover the full meaning of Sunday, we must rediscover this aspect of the life of faith. Certainly, Christian joy must mark the whole of life, and not just one day of the week. But in virtue of its significance as the day of the Risen Lord, celebrating God's work of creation and "new creation", Sunday is the day of joy in a very special way, indeed the day most suitable for learning how to rejoice and to rediscover the true nature and deep roots of joy. This joy should never be confused with shallow feelings of satisfaction and pleasure, which inebriate the senses and emotions for a brief moment, but then leave the heart unfulfilled and perhaps even embittered. In the Christian view, joy is much more enduring and consoling; as the saints attest, it can hold firm even in the dark night of suffering. It is, in a certain sense, a "virtue" to be nurtured.

58. Yet there is no conflict whatever between Christian joy and true human joys, which in fact are exalted and find their ultimate foundation precisely in the joy of the glorified Christ, the perfect image and revelation of man as God intended. As my revered predecessor Paul VI wrote in his Exhortation on Christian joy: "In essence, Christian joy is a sharing in the unfathomable joy, at once divine and human, found in the heart of the glorified Christ". Pope Paul concluded his Exhortation by asking that, on the Lord's Day, the Church should witness powerfully to the joy experienced by the Apostles when they saw the Lord on the evening of Easter. To this end, he urged pastors to insist "upon the need for the baptized to celebrate the Sunday Eucharist in joy. How could they neglect this encounter, this banquet which Christ prepares for us in his love? May our sharing in it be most worthy and joyful! It is Christ, crucified and glorified,

who comes among his disciples,
to lead them all together into the newness of his Resurrection.

This is the climax,
here below,
the covenant of love between God and his people:
the sign and source of Christian joy,
a stage on the way to the eternal feast".105

This vision of faith
shows the Christian Sunday to be a true “time for celebration”,
a day given by God to men and women
for their full human and spiritual growth.

The fulfillment of the Sabbath

59. This aspect of the Christian Sunday
shows in a special way
how it is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Sabbath.

On the Lord's Day,
which
-- as we have already said --
the Old Testament links
to the work of creation (cf. Gn 2:1-3; Ex 20:8-11)
and the Exodus (cf. Dt 5:12-15),
the Christian is called to proclaim the new creation and the new covenant
brought about in the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

Far from being abolished,
the celebration of creation becomes more profound
within a Christocentric perspective,
being seen in the light of God's plan “to unite all things in [Christ],
things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph 1:10).

The remembrance of the liberation of the Exodus
also assumes its full meaning
as it becomes a remembrance of the universal redemption
accomplished by Christ
in his Death and Resurrection.

More than a “replacement” for the Sabbath, therefore,
Sunday is its fulfillment,
and in a certain sense its extension and full expression
in the ordered unfolding of the history of salvation,
which reaches its culmination in Christ.

60. In this perspective,
the biblical theology of the “Sabbath” can be recovered in full,
without compromising the Christian character of Sunday.

It is a theology
that leads us ever anew and in unfailing awe
to the mystery of the beginning,
when the eternal Word of God,

105 Ibid. VII, l.c., 322.
by a free decision of love,
created the world from nothing.

The work of creation was sealed
by the blessing and consecration of the day
on which God ceased “from all the work that he had done in creation”
(Gn 2:3).

This day of God’s rest confers meaning upon time,
which in the sequence of weeks assumes not only a chronological regularity
but also, in a manner of speaking, a theological resonance.

The constant return of the “shabbat” ensures
that there is no risk of time being closed in upon itself,
since, in welcoming God and his kairoi —
the moments of his grace and his saving acts —
time remains open to eternity.

61. As the seventh day blessed and consecrated by God,
the “shabbat” concludes the whole work of creation,
and is therefore immediately linked to the work of the sixth day
when God made man “in his image and likeness” (cf. Gn 1:26).

This very close connection
between the “day of God” and the “day of man”
did not escape the Fathers in their meditation on the biblical creation story.

Saint Ambrose says in this regard:
“Thanks, then, to the Lord our God
who accomplished a work in which he might find rest.
He made the heavens,
but I do not read that he found rest there;
he made the stars, the moon, the sun,
and neither do I read that he found rest in them.
I read instead that he made man
and that then he rested,
finding in man one to whom he could offer the forgiveness of sins”.

Thus there will be for ever a direct link
between the “day of God” and the “day of man”.

When the divine commandment declares:
“Remember the Sabbath day in order to keep it holy” (Ex 20:8),
the rest decreed in order to honour the day dedicated to God
is not at all a burden imposed upon man,
but rather an aid
to help him to recognize
his life-giving and liberating dependence upon the Creator,
and at the same time
his calling to cooperate in the Creator’s work
and to receive his grace.

In honoring God’s “rest”, man fully discovers himself,
and thus the Lord’s Day bears the profound imprint of God’s blessing
(cf. Gn 2:3),
by virtue of which, we might say, it is endowed

106 Hex. 6, 10, 76: CSEL 32/1, 261.
in a way similar to the animals and to man himself, with a kind of "fruitfulness" (cf. Gn 1:22, 28).

This "fruitfulness" is apparent above all in filling and, in a certain sense, "multiplying" time itself, deepening in men and women the joy of living and the desire to foster and communicate life.

62. It is the duty of Christians therefore to remember that, although the practices of the Jewish Sabbath are gone, surpassed as they are by the "fulfillment" which Sunday brings, the underlying reasons for keeping "the Lord's Day" holy — inscribed solemnly in the Ten Commandments — remain valid, though they need to be reinterpreted in the light of the theology and spirituality of Sunday: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Then you shall do no work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your servant, or your maid, or your ox, or your ass, or any of your beasts, or the foreigner within your gates, that your servant and maid may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded that you keep the Sabbath day" (Dt 5:12-15).

Here the Sabbath observance is closely linked with the liberation which God accomplished for his people.

63. Christ came to accomplish a new "exodus", to restore freedom to the oppressed. He performed many healings on the Sabbath (cf. Mt 12:9-14 and parallels), certainly not to violate the Lord's Day, but to reveal its full meaning: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27). Opposing the excessively legalistic interpretation of some of his contemporaries, and developing the true meaning of the biblical Sabbath, Jesus, as "Lord of the Sabbath" (Mk 2:28), restores to the Sabbath observance its liberating character, carefully safeguarding the rights of God and the rights of man. This is why Christians, called as they are to proclaim the liberation won by the blood of Christ, felt that they had the authority to transfer the meaning of the Sabbath to the day of the Resurrection. The Passover of Christ has in fact liberated man from a slavery more radical than any weighing upon an oppressed people —
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the slavery of sin,
which alienates man from God,
and alienates man from himself and from others,
constantly sowing within history the seeds of evil and violence.

The day of rest

64. For several centuries,
Christians observed Sunday simply as a day of worship,
without being able to give it the specific meaning of Sabbath rest.
Only in the fourth century
did the civil law of the Roman Empire recognize the weekly recurrence,
determining
that on “the day of the sun”
the judges, the people of the cities and the various trade corporations
would not work.107

Christians rejoiced
to see thus removed
the obstacles
which until then
had sometimes made observance of the Lord’s Day heroic.
They could now devote themselves to prayer in common without hindrance.108

It would therefore be wrong
to see in this legislation of the rhythm of the week
a mere historical circumstance
with no special significance for the Church
and which she could simply set aside.
Even after the fall of the Empire,
the Councils did not cease to insist upon
the arrangements regarding Sunday rest.
In countries where Christians are in the minority
and where the festive days of the calendar do not coincide with Sunday,
it is still Sunday that remains the Lord’s Day,
the day on which the faithful come together for the Eucharistic assembly.
But this involves real sacrifices.
For Christians
it is not normal
that Sunday, the day of joyful celebration, should not also be a day of rest,
and it is difficult for them to keep Sunday holy
if they do not have enough free time.

65. By contrast,
the link between the Lord’s Day and the day of rest in civil society
has a meaning and importance
that go beyond the distinctly Christian point of view.

107 Cf. The Edict of Constantine, 3 July 321: Codex Theodosianus II, tit. 8, 1, ed. T. Mommsen, 1/2, p. 87; Codex Iustini, 3, 12, 2, ed. P. Krueger, p. 248.
The alternation between work and rest, built into human nature, is willed by God himself, as appears in the creation story in the Book of Genesis (cf. 2:2-3; Ex 20:8-11):

rest is something “sacred”,
because it is man’s way
of withdrawing from the sometimes excessively demanding cycle of earthly tasks
in order to renew his awareness that everything is the work of God.

There is a risk
that the prodigious power over creation which God gives to man can lead him to forget
that God is the Creator upon whom everything depends.

It is all the more urgent to recognize this dependence in our own time, when science and technology have so incredibly increased the power which man exercises through his work.

66. Finally,
it should not be forgotten
that even in our own day work is very oppressive for many people,
either because of miserable working conditions and long hours — especially in the poorer regions of the world — or because of the persistence in economically more developed societies of too many cases of injustice and exploitation of man by man.

When, through the centuries,
she has made laws concerning Sunday rest,\textsuperscript{109} the Church has had in mind above all the work of servants and workers, certainly not because this work was any less worthy when compared to the spiritual requirements of Sunday observance, but rather because it needed greater regulation to lighten its burden and thus enable everyone to keep the Lord’s Day holy.

In this matter,
my predecessor Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical \textit{Rerum Novarum}
spoke of Sunday rest as a worker’s right that the State must guarantee.\textsuperscript{110}

In our own historical context there remains the obligation to ensure that everyone can enjoy the freedom, rest and relaxation which human dignity requires, together with the associated religious, family, cultural and interpersonal needs which are difficult to meet if there is no guarantee

\textsuperscript{109} The most ancient text of this kind is can. 29 of the Council of Laodicea (second half of the fourth century): Mansi, II, 569-570. From the sixth to the ninth century, many Councils prohibited "\textit{opera ruralia}". The legislation on prohibited activities, supported by civil laws, became increasingly detailed.

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of at least one day of the week
on which people can both rest and celebrate.

Naturally,
this right of workers to rest presupposes their right to work
and, as we reflect on the question of the Christian understanding of Sunday,
we cannot but recall with a deep sense of solidarity
the hardship of countless men and women
who, because of the lack of jobs,
are forced to remain inactive on workdays as well.

67. Through Sunday rest,
daily concerns and tasks can find their proper perspective:
the material things about which we worry give way to spiritual values;
in a moment of encounter and less pressured exchange,
we see the true face of the people with whom we live.

Even the beauties of nature —
too often marred by the desire to exploit,
which turns against man himself —
can be rediscovered and enjoyed to the full.

As the day on which man is at peace with God, with himself and with others,
Sunday becomes a moment
when people can look anew upon the wonders of nature,
allowing themselves
to be caught up in that marvelous and mysterious harmony
which, in the words of Saint Ambrose,
weds the many elements of the cosmos
in a “bond of communion and peace”
by “an inviolable law of concord and love”.\textsuperscript{111}

Men and women then come to a deeper sense,
as the Apostle says,
that “everything created by God is good
and nothing is to be rejected
if it is received with thanksgiving,
for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim 4:4-5).

If after six days of work —
reduced in fact to five for many people —
people look for time to relax
and to pay more attention to other aspects of their lives,
this corresponds to an authentic need
that is in full harmony with the vision of the Gospel message.

Believers are therefore called to satisfy this need
in a way consistent
with the manifestation of their personal and community faith,
as expressed in the celebration and sanctification of the Lord’s Day.

Therefore,
also in the particular circumstances of our own time,
Christians will naturally strive

\textsuperscript{111} Hex. 2, 1, 1: CSEL 321, 41.
to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy.

In any case, they are obliged in conscience to arrange their Sunday rest in a way that allows them to take part in the Eucharist, refraining from work and activities that are incompatible with the sanctification of the Lord's Day, with its characteristic joy and necessary rest for spirit and body. 112

68. In order that rest may not degenerate into emptiness or boredom, it must offer spiritual enrichment, greater freedom, opportunities for contemplation and fraternal communion. Therefore, among the forms of culture and entertainment which society offers, the faithful should choose those which are most in keeping with a life lived in obedience to the precepts of the Gospel. Sunday rest then becomes "prophetic", affirming not only the absolute primacy of God, but also the primacy and dignity of the person with respect to the demands of social and economic life, and anticipating in a certain sense the "new heavens" and the "new earth", in which liberation from slavery to needs will be final and complete. In short, the Lord's Day thus becomes in the truest sense the day of man as well.

A day of solidarity

69. Sunday should also give the faithful an opportunity to devote themselves to works of mercy, charity and apostolate. To experience the joy of the Risen Lord deep within is to share fully the love that pulses in his heart: there is no joy without love! Jesus himself explains this, linking the "new commandment" with the gift of joy: "If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept the Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this that my own joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:10-12).

The Sunday Eucharist, therefore, not only does not absolve the faithful from the duties of charity,

but on the contrary commits them even more
“to all the works of charity, of mercy, of apostolic outreach,
by means of which it is seen
that the faithful of Christ are not of this world
and yet are the light of the world,
giving glory to the Father in the presence of men”. 113

70. Ever since Apostolic times,
the Sunday gathering has in fact been
for Christians
a moment of fraternal sharing with the very poor.
“On the first day of the week,
each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn” (1 Cor 16:2),
says Saint Paul
referring to the collection organized for the poor Churches of Judaea.

In the Sunday Eucharist,
the believing heart opens wide to embrace all aspects of the Church.
But the full range of the apostolic summons needs to be accepted:
far from trying to create a narrow “gift” mentality,
Paul calls rather for a demanding culture of sharing,
to be lived not only among the members of the community itself
but also in society as a whole. 114

More than ever,
we need to listen once again to the stern warning
which Paul addresses to the community at Corinth,
guilty of having humiliated the poor in the fraternal agapē
which accompanied “the Lord’s Supper”:
“When you meet together, it is not the Lord’s Supper that you eat.
For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal,
and one is hungry and another is drunk.
What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?
Or do you despise the Church of God
and humiliate those who have nothing?” (1 Cor 11:20-22).

James is equally forceful in what he writes:
“If a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your assembly
and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in,
and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing
and say, ‘Take a seat here, please’,
while you say to the poor man, ‘Stand there’, or, ‘Sit at my feet’,
have you not made distinctions among yourselves,
and become judges with evil thoughts?” (2:2-4).

71. The teachings of the Apostles struck a sympathetic chord
from the earliest centuries,
and evoked strong echoes in the preaching of the Fathers of the Church.

114 Cf. also Saint Justin, Apologia I, 67, 6: “Each of those who have an abundance and who wish to make
an offering gives freely whatever he chooses, and what is collected is given to him who presides and he
assists the orphans, the widows, the sick, the poor, the prisoners, the foreign visitors — in a word, he
helps all those who are in need”: PG 6, 430.
Saint Ambrose addressed words of fire to the rich
who presumed to fulfill their religious obligations
by attending church without sharing their goods with the poor,
and who perhaps even exploited them:
"You who are rich, do you hear what the Lord God says?
Yet you come into church not to give to the poor but to take instead".115

Saint John Chrysostom is no less demanding:
"Do you wish to honour the body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked.
Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk only then to neglect him outside
where he suffers cold and nakedness.

He who said:
'This is my body'
is the same One who said:
'You saw me hungry and you gave me no food',
and
'Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also to me'...

What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices,
when he is dying of hunger?
Start by satisfying his hunger,
and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well".116

These words effectively remind the Christian community
of the duty to make the Eucharist
the place where fraternity becomes practical solidarity,
where the last are the first in the minds and attentions of the brethren,
where Christ himself —
through the generous gifts from the rich to the very poor —
may somehow prolong in time
the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves.117

72. The Eucharist is an event and program of true brotherhood.
From the Sunday Mass there flows a tide of charity
destined to spread into the whole life of the faithful,
beginning by inspiring the very way in which they live the rest of Sunday.
If Sunday is a day of joy,
Christians should declare by their actual behaviour
that we cannot be happy "on our own".
They look around to find people who may need their help.
It may be that in their neighbourhood or among those they know
there are sick people, elderly people, children or immigrants
who precisely on Sundays
feel more keenly their isolation, needs and suffering.

115 De Nabuthae, 10, 45: "Audis, dives, quid Dominus Deus dicat? Et tu ad ecclesiam venis, non ut aliquid largiatis pauperi, sed ut auferas": CSEL 32/2, 492.
116 Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew, 50, 3-4: PG 58, 508-509.
117 Saint Paulinus of Nola, Ep. 13, 11-12 to Pamachius: CSEL 29, 92-93. The Roman Senator is praised because, by combining participation in the Eucharist with distribution of food to the poor, he in a sense reproduced the Gospel miracle.
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It is true that commitment to these people cannot be restricted to occasional Sunday gestures. But presuming a wider sense of commitment, why not make the Lord's Day a more intense time of sharing, encouraging all the inventiveness of which Christian charity is capable? Inviting to a meal people who are alone, visiting the sick, providing food for needy families, spending a few hours in voluntary work and acts of solidarity: these would certainly be ways of bringing into people's lives the love of Christ received at the Eucharistic table.

73. Lived in this way, not only the Sunday Eucharist but the whole of Sunday becomes a great school of charity, justice and peace. The presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of his people becomes an undertaking of solidarity, a compelling force for inner renewal, an inspiration to change the structures of sin in which individuals, communities and at times entire peoples are entangled. Far from being an escape, the Christian Sunday is a "prophecy" inscribed on time itself, a prophecy obliging the faithful to follow in the footsteps of the One who came "to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to captives and new sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk 4:18-19).

In the Sunday commemoration of Easter, believers learn from Christ, and remembering his promise: "I leave you peace, my peace I give you" (Jn 14:27), they become in their turn builders of peace.
Sunday Musings of a Wife and Mother with Grown Children

Marilyn Sweet

For Christian families, the Sunday assembly is one of the most outstanding expressions of their identity and their ‘ministry’ as ‘domestic churches’, when parents share with their children at the one Table of the Word and of the Bread of Life.” (36)

“Sunday is the day of joy in a very special way, indeed the day most suitable for learning how to rejoice and to rediscover the true nature and deep roots of joy. This joy should never be confused with shallow feelings of satisfaction and pleasure, which inebriate the senses and emotions for a brief moment, but then leave the heart unfulfilled and perhaps even embittered.” (57)

If we could do it all over again …

At the very beginning of our marriage we would agree that on Sundays, no matter what, we would be deliberate about honouring God and celebrating God’s blessings to us, expressing our joy and gratitude and sharing those gifts with others. We would build into our family life the rhythms and flavours of the Church year. Even if my partner were not a church-goer, we would honour this agreement, because faith values will help to build a good strong family that will be filled with love.

The symbols of our faith would be visible in our home in a variety of ways, and we would tell the stories about them just as we told other family stories.

We would create a space for prayer that was welcoming for everyone in the family, and a sign for all who came into our home. Seasonal elements, objects from nature and things that had personal meaning, as well as the sacred scriptures, would be part of the space, and it would be refreshed every week in preparation for Sunday. We would pray together.

We would accept that on Sunday we run on another kind of time, the prodigal time of the totally gracious Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Our Sunday would not just be a “day off work,” but a ‘day in the kingdom’. And we would spend that time in acts of joy and love, in works of praise and charity.

We would make the time before mass on Sunday an opportunity for the family to prepare together. This might be the only time all week that all family members were all going to be at the same event at the same time, and so it would already be very different from every other day of the week. The mood could be made even better by a common agreement to live peacefully in the family, quickly forgiving the small irritations, skipping just for today those personal habits that annoy

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others in the family and helping each other to be ready on time. It would help if the basic preparations were completed ahead – set out the Sunday school books, the money for the collection, the food bank contributions, the Sunday clothes, whatever other things were needed. Singing the hymns and psalms or parts of the Mass, or helping children to recite the prayers and to practice blessing themselves – these joyful sounds of Sunday morning would form the family on this day of grace for the domestic church.

There are lots of things we would not do on Sunday morning, because they would take away from this time of family grace. Skip the morning television for parents and for children – fill the house with different sounds of joy and kindness. Save the Sunday paper until later – be open and available to others in the family as everyone prepares for Sunday worship. Don’t let major weekend projects usurp Sunday morning time – give witness to the importance of this family value by putting it ahead of everything else. Don’t steal from “kingdom time” for those things that eat up the rest of the week. And save the lectures for another day – make this a “get out of jail free” morning and be as wasteful as God is with your love, affection, encouragement and acceptance.

We would be hospitable to others. We would bring other children to church with us; we would encourage single people to be part of our family in church; we would learn the names of other people and greet them; we would invite people to join us for our family meal afterwards.

We would accept some (but not all!) of the responsibility for the life of the parish on Sunday. We would carry out liturgical, catechetical, and charitable ministries as necessary, and we would build those ministries into our family experience of this day. Service in the Church is part of ordinary Christian life, and children can share in that service from an early age. Everyone can help keep the house of the church tidy; all share in the work of hospitality; and all lend their voices to the community’s prayer and song. Children are willing testers for catechetical projects and enjoy serving as critic for the lector or musician. Preparing the church for major celebrations fosters a profound appreciation for the concrete physical reality of the feasts and seasons of the Church year.

And after we all returned from mass, and perhaps Sunday school or other ministry, we would take the time to talk about it all. What did we hear? What did we see? What was exciting, challenging, hopeful? What are the flavours of this season? What was confusing or upsetting? Why did I find it all so boring? How present was I to the celebration, or what did I allow to distract me? What do I experience of God now? How am I changed? What does it all mean for how we live today and the rest of the week? And everyone in the family would be part of the conversation – youngest to oldest – and it is still “get out of jail free” day!

We would tell the stories of our ancestors in faith. We would begin with our own family heroes – how grandparents helped build the church, how everyone prayed for the healing of a sick person, how an uncle has always cared for the poor. And we would tell about the saints and other heroes in our church and in our world – and the decisions they made to be faithful to the vision of the kingdom of God. The people we meet in the scriptures would be part of our storytelling too. We would make pilgrimages to the places where the faith of our family was nourished or expressed – the church where grandparents and parents were baptized and married; the cemeteries with headstones that tell the stories of people’s faith and trust in God; the schools and offices where our family members have lived out their commitment to the Gospel.
On Sunday we would talk together about our family life and our individual daily lives, and the ways in which we live out the Gospel. So, the seven-year-old would have a chance to tell about bullies in the schoolyard and the thirteen-year-old could talk about some of the pressure from peers. I could speak of the need to put in extra time at work and how this would keep me away from the family at suppertime. And my husband could tell of the hospital visit he made to our neighbour who is facing terminal illness.

And there would still be lots of time on Sunday to enjoy nature, play sports, visit family and friends, and then get ready for the week. The difference would be that my husband and I would long ago have made a firm decision to begin by keeping Sunday as the Day of the Lord. This decision would surely strengthen and nourish the family, the domestic church.

If we could do it all over again …

The Diocese of London invites applications for the position of Director of Liturgy

Qualifications: M.A. in Liturgy or equivalent; at least five years pastoral experience; background in adult education; good communication skills; good interpersonal skills. Proficiency in English and French would be an asset.

This is a full-time position, with a full-time support person.

Job Description: posted on the Diocese of London website (http://www.rcelondon.on.ca)

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Starting date: July, 1999

Interested persons should send detailed letter, curriculum vitae, and three references to:
The Search Committee (Liturgy Director)
Offices of Ministry and Personnel
2nd Floor Aquinas House, 1070 Colborne Street
London, Ontario N6A 4B3

Deadline for applications is June 1, 1999
Mass for Shut-ins

Gerald Campbell

There's a wonderful line at the end of the rock musical, "Jesus Christ Superstar." The spirit of the dead Judas addresses the crucified Jesus and he laments Jesus' poor timing of coming into the world: "Why did you choose such a backward time in such a strange land? If you'd come today you would have reached a whole nation. Israel in 4 BC had no mass communication." Biblical scholars today may still disagree on the exact year of Jesus' birth (6 - 4 BC carries most weight), but there is little disagreement on the role that mass communication plays in evangelization in today's world. Indeed, if Jesus had grown up in the connected world of today's generation, he could conceivably have reached not hundreds or thousands of people, as he did two thousand years ago, but millions and even billions of people.

The Church and Modern Communication

Today the potential that exists for the promotion of religious and moral values throughout the world is unprecedented. We are constantly inundated with the view that the industrial age, which has reigned for most of the past century in the western world, has now been replaced by the information age. This transition is, of course, due to the rapid growth in communication technology and the growing importance of information as a source of economic and social development.

Many religious bodies have been at the forefront in taking advantage of modern means of communication to promote their message. If you were to ask a person on the street for their image of religion and mass media, most would probably say: "TV evangelists." Many TV evangelists are household names, mostly American fundamentalist preachers. The traditional emphasis on the bible and preaching within Protestantism has generally shaped both form and content in the use of mass media within that stream of Christianity. The question that arises from this is: "How has the modern media been used within the Catholic tradition?" It shouldn't be surprising that one of the most significant forms that has been utilized comes out of our traditional expression of Catholic spirituality – the celebration of the eucharist, especially the Sunday eucharist.

The purpose of this article is to present one specific example of how the media is being utilized in broadcasting the celebration of the Sunday eucharist on TV. "Mass for Shut-ins" is produced by the Diocese of Antigonish and is televised weekly from mid-October to mid-May on the Atlantic Television Network (ATV) on Sundays at 12 noon. ATV broadcasts to the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and eastern parts of Quebec. This is a live broadcast from the ATV studio in Sydney, NS. It began in 1963 and has been running continuously ever since.

Gerald Campbell is a pastor in the Diocese of Antigonish and is also producer of "Mass for Shut-ins."
In the fall of 1998 we began the thirty-fifth year of live telecasting of the Sunday mass. The name of the telecast indicates the group it attempts to reach – sick and shut-in people who can’t participate in the mass in their parish churches.

**Beginnings of “Mass for Shut-ins”**

In Antigonish diocese in the early 1960’s, Catholic religious broadcasting consisted mainly of radio programs which presented religious dramas, weekly sermons, or the praying of the rosary. But the newly developed media of television had not yet been utilized for religious programming. In 1962 the new director of the Office of Religious Education for the diocese, Fr. Frank Abbass, took the initiative to plan a television broadcast of the Sunday mass. By the spring of 1963, all the logistics were put in place. On March 3 a six-week pilot project was begun that would see the mass televised during Lent on the local Sydney station CJCB-TV (reaching Cape Breton and eastern Nova Scotia). “Mass for Shut-ins” was born. This initial project proved successful enough to expand the number of Sundays to eighteen starting in the fall of that same year. In the following years it would be expanded to thirty Sundays a year, where it currently stands.

In the fall of 1973, Fr. Abbass, with the approval and financial support of the Atlantic bishops, took the initiative of sending the broadcast signal carrying “Mass for Shut-ins” throughout the Maritimes on the newly formed ATV system; the broadcast has continued to this day. The Atlantic bishops continue to be stewardship partners for the television mass along with Maritime councils of the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Women’s League, the Religious Congregations of Sisters, and individual supporters who number in the hundreds.

**“Mass for Shut-ins” and Good Liturgy**

If a televised celebration of the eucharist is to be widely accepted, then good liturgy is a necessity. Every effort is made to ensure that our televised mass effectively presents the church at prayer. Now I would like to describe the basic format of “Mass for Shut-ins” to give some indication that both its appeal and the loyalty of the shut-in congregation are well placed.

The mass is not a videotaped production but a live celebration that takes place on the Lord’s Day. The setting for it is a television studio that has been converted into a studio chapel with backdrops, complete sanctuary furniture and plenty of room for a congregation. Our chapel can hold up to seventy people. The physical setting for the mass is indeed conducive to prayer and liturgy. Viewing it on TV, one gets the impression that it’s taking place in a small church. Since it is produced by Antigonish Diocese, it is the job of the producer to contact local parishes and invite them to celebrate the televised mass. If they agree, they bring along their pastor as presider, a congregation, and all the ministries for the mass (lectors, choir, server, gift bearers, and a eucharistic minister since communion is shared under both forms). The main challenge is to celebrate the Sunday mass in thirty minutes since we go off the air after that. Because of the time limit something must be omitted or shortened. There is no opening hymn and the presider is asked to keep his homily to four or five minutes. But everything else takes place as usual with all the parts of the mass sung including the psalm, communion hymn and closing hymn.

It has generally been understood that because the televised mass goes out to parishes all across the Maritimes, it should model what takes place on any
Sunday in any Catholic community where good liturgy is being celebrated. This principle has ensured that the quality of the celebration is maintained at a high level following the Church's liturgical guidelines.

The TV Mass and a Sense of Community

Over the years, the at-home congregation of "Mass for Shut-ins" has evolved into an electronic parish community. One of the ways this has been developed was by maintaining contact throughout the year with those for whom the TV mass is intended. For example, the office receives hundreds of letters each year from viewers (most with a donation). All letters are promptly responded to. A number of viewers send in an offering on a monthly basis in the same way as parishioners might give to their parish community.

The other very important contact is developed by use of a newsletter called "Good News," which is sent out to viewers five times a year throughout the telecast season. Everyone who writes to the office is automatically placed on the mailing list. The newsletter consists of a number of sections. There is a spiritual message from the producer, which is geared around the theme of the current Church season. Then there is the "Wisdom Corner," which offers a poem or story with a religious theme. Finally there is the upcoming schedule of parishes and presiders celebrating "Mass for Shut-ins." I suppose the newsletter can be viewed as our "parish bulletin" that keeps the TV community informed.

One other element of the community aspect of "Mass for Shut-ins," without which the telecast would not be possible, is the contribution made by the volunteer and technical staff. The volunteers are a dedicated group of men and women who devote their Sunday mornings to helping with the production of the TV mass. They arrive well before the twelve o'clock broadcast and are there to greet the parish that will lead the celebration. They work with the congregation, presider, lectors, server, eucharistic minister, gift bearers, and choir to ensure a smooth and prayerful telecast. They also do the physical set-up of the congregational seating, choir set-up, lighting, chapel decoration, and hospitality ministry. The studio technical staff (technical director, sound technician, production director and camera crew) are also a very professional group of people whose goal is to present the Church's celebration of the eucharist in the most technically perfect manner as possible. By all accounts, they have succeeded tremendously. It can be said that the motto of the entire staff is: "A well-prepared liturgy is a prayerful liturgy."

Conclusion

As we prepare to enter a new century and new millennium, it looks like "Mass for Shut-ins" will continue to fulfill the need for a quality televised celebration of the Sunday eucharist. The experiment of presenting a televised mass has proven there is a large at-home congregation of people who rely on this as their only connection with the Church's celebration of the eucharist.
Celebrating the Day of the Lord in Prison

Cornelius O’Mahony

St. Aloysius Parish in Kitchener, Ontario, is a large community. It is geographically divided both by a wide river and wooded groves much used for wildlife observation and for recreation, and by sprawling industrial estates which are the economic lifeblood of the community. We are an ordinary parish community of hardworking, caring people. Among us are new immigrants, many of whom are still getting used to their new surroundings and to an unfamiliar language, as well as single-parent families and the unemployed. The parish also includes the usual assortment of schools, nursing homes, and a hospital.

Sandwiched between one of the large factories and a major historical attraction is a neat grouping of modern, comfortable-looking homes and a large building just like a school or business complex. Most of the time, 80 women live there, although very few of them would call it home. Some stay for a short time; others for a few years; some others will grow very old indeed before they have the freedom to leave. Grand Valley Institution for Women is one of several new prisons for women built over the last number of years in Canada. Its development is the result of years of study, research and planning and it seeks to offer the women sentenced to federal prisons a more stable environment in which to serve out their sentences.

The women of Grand Valley made mistakes, were caught, and the vast majority will never again find themselves in this situation. They are for the most part poorly-educated, single parents, and the victims of abuse that in some cases began in early childhood. They are mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, our neighbours.

The announcement that our community had been chosen as the site for one of these new prisons was the cause of much anger; community meetings disintegrated into explosive confrontations where very hurtful things were said. As people's anger and fears were reported in the media and in the community, the more moderate voices speaking words of compassion and reason were silenced to a barely audible hum. Eighteen months later the institution was about to receive the first women. As the new pastor I asked the community to pray for the women who were coming, for the staff of the institution and for ourselves as a community that we would minister well to these women. The response of some was clear: "We do not want these women; why must we take care of them?"

Cornelius (Con) O’Mahony is pastor of St. Aloysius Parish in Kitchener, Ontario. His ongoing experience at Grand Valley Institution for Women is his first involvement in prison ministry.
others came quietly, willing to help, asking what they could do to make the women feel welcome.

Over time, a group of women from the community, who were completing a program of study for pastoral ministry came forward. Together with the chaplain at Grand Valley we began to map out a pastoral plan. The gathering of the community around the word and the table on Sunday was central to our planning. We also set out to emphasize that the women to whom we would minister were members of our parish community, even if for a short time. And as the women began to arrive at Grand Valley, they played a key role in shaping the liturgy for Sunday.

Mass is normally celebrated at the prison on two Sundays a month; and on the other Sundays the Sunday celebration of the word with the distribution of communion takes place. A program was developed to prepare the volunteers who would preside and preach on Sunday, as this was a unique pastoral situation.

Many of the women reconnect with Sunday as the Day of the Lord while at Grand Valley, their last connection having been with school or one of the sacraments of initiation for their children. Some women bring stories of great hurts suffered at the hands of the Church in the past; these have to be heard and acknowledged. From the start we discovered in the women a genuine desire not only to participate but also to learn. In the first year the women indicated a desire to learn more about what we do on Sunday, so a seven-week study of the mass was offered and was well attended. As a follow-up to that program, they now have a liturgy committee that meets regularly, takes care of all the preparations and assists in the selection of music. This year they have expressed a desire to learn more about the sacrament of reconciliation.

The physical setting in which we gather has been shaped by the women. The chapel at Grand Valley is a large, circular room in the centre of the administration building, with big windows and lots of light. The women set it up so that everyone is seated in a circle in full view of each other; those who are hesitant or shy are gently encouraged to become part of that circle. The proclamation of the word and the homily in simple language and with simple illustrations very often leads to an opportunity for the women to share their own insights, and sometimes to discussions that last well into the week. The table is prepared with great dignity and the acclamations are sung with gusto. Singing is very important and is entered into with enthusiasm. Very often social gatherings end with a good old singsong around the piano; old-time favourites from the Salvation Army Hymn Book are still echoing through the halls days later. Catholic Book of Worship III does not yet enjoy the same popularity, but we are working on it. Sunday is a time to be with others, and many of the women have visits from family and friends; but for others it is a reminder of their isolation and loneliness. That is why the sign of peace has developed into an embrace – a time to draw strength and hope from others and also a time to make peace.

Over the last two and a half years, we have allowed what we do together on Sunday to change us all. Looking beyond an initial concern to care for one another around the Lord's table on Sunday, the women at Grand Valley have sought to find ways to heal the wounds in the community that the building of the institution caused; they have been remarkably successful. They
have embraced community projects and concerns, and in the last year some of the women have gone out into the community to speak about their own lives, their fears and their dreams. On the first Sunday of Advent we welcomed “Charlotte” to our celebration of eucharist on Sunday morning; she was greeted with thunderous applause and a standing ovation. Currently, after each Sunday celebration the women and some of the staff at Grand Valley meet together to seek a way to share their own desire to reach out to those in need by supporting a program to assist women in prison in Nepal. 

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Questions for Discussion

1. Joy
What are the signs of joy in our parish’s Sunday celebration? What moment is the most joyful? Which is least joyful? How are families reminded, encouraged, assisted and freed to keep the Lord’s Day holy and joyful together?

2. Rest
How is the community reminded, encouraged, assisted and freed to rest on the Lord’s Day?
How is the Church working with civic and business leaders to safeguard the Lord’s Day as a day of rest for all?
How is the parish reaching out to those who do not have meaningful work from which to rest: the unemployed, underemployed, those forced into early retirement?

3. Solidarity
How has the parish responded to the needs of those who cannot come to the Sunday celebration with the rest of the community? To what extent is the whole community involved?
How are the poor of the community involved or connected with the Sunday celebration? Are they welcomed into the assembly?
In what ways does the parish reach out to the poor on Sundays? How are individuals encouraged to do so?

4. Three Responses
What stays with you after reading the responses written by Marilyn Sweet, Cornelius O’Mahony, and Gerald Campbell?
Do you have a story to add? How might you change your Sunday habits?
Sunday: The Primordial Feast, Revealing the Meaning of Time

Christ the Alpha and Omega of time

74. "In Christianity
time has a fundamental importance.
Within the dimension of time the world was created;
within it the history of salvation unfolds,
finding its culmination in the ‘fullness of time’ of the Incarnation,
and its goal in the glorious return of the Son of God at the end of time.
In Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh,
time becomes a dimension of God, who is himself eternal".\textsuperscript{118}

In the light of the New Testament,
the years of Christ’s earthly life truly constitute the center of time;
this center reaches its apex in the Resurrection.
It is true that Jesus is God made man
from the very moment of his conception in the womb of the Blessed Virgin,
but only in the Resurrection is his humanity wholly transfigured
and glorified,
thus revealing the fullness of his divine identity and glory.

In his speech in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia (cf. Acts 13:33),
Paul applies the words of Psalm 2 to the Resurrection of Christ:
“You are my Son, this day I have begotten you” (v. 7).

It is precisely for this reason
that, in celebrating the Easter Vigil,
the Church acclaims the Risen Christ
as “the Beginning and End, the Alpha and Omega”.
These are the words spoken by the celebrant as he prepares the Paschal candle,
which bears the number of the current year.
These words clearly attest that “Christ is the Lord of time;
he is its beginning and its end;
every year, every day and every moment
are embraced by his Incarnation and Resurrection,
and thus become part of the ‘fullness of time’”.\textsuperscript{119}

75. Since Sunday is the weekly Easter,
recalling and making present
the day upon which Christ rose from the dead,
it is also the day that reveals the meaning of time.
It has nothing in common with the cosmic cycles

\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid.}
according to which
natural religion and human culture tend to impose a structure on time,
succumbing perhaps to the myth of eternal return.
The Christian Sunday is wholly other!
Springing from the Resurrection,
it cuts through human time,
the months, the years, the centuries,
like a directional arrow that points them towards their target:
Christ's Second Coming.
Sunday foreshadows the last day,
the day of the Parousia,
which in a way is already anticipated
by Christ's glory in the event of the Resurrection.
In fact,
everything that will happen until the end of the world
will be no more than an extension and unfolding
of what happened
on the day when the battered body of the Crucified Lord
was raised by the power of the Spirit
and became in turn the wellspring of the Spirit for all humanity.
Christians know that there is no need to wait for another time of salvation,
since, however long the world may last,
they are already living in the last times.
Not only the Church,
but the cosmos itself and history
are ceaselessly ruled and governed by the glorified Christ.
It is this life-force that propels creation,
"groaning in birth-pangs until now" (Rom 8:22),
towards the goal of its full redemption.
Mankind can have only a faint intuition of this process,
but Christians have the key and the certainty.
Keeping Sunday holy is the important witness that they are called to bear,
so that every stage of human history will be upheld by hope.

Sunday in the Liturgical Year
76. With its weekly recurrence,
the Lord's Day is rooted in the most ancient tradition of the Church
and is vitally important for the Christian.
But there was another rhythm that soon established itself:
the annual liturgical cycle.
Human psychology in fact desires the celebration of anniversaries,
associating the return of dates and seasons
with the remembrance of past events.
When these events are decisive in the life of a people,
their celebration generally creates a festive atmosphere
that breaks the monotony of daily routine.
Now, by God's design,
the great saving events upon which the Church's life is founded
were closely linked to the annual Jewish feasts of Passover and Pentecost,
and were prophetically foreshadowed in them.
Since the second century, the annual celebration of Easter by Christians — having been added to the weekly Easter celebration — allowed a more ample meditation on the mystery of Christ crucified and risen. Preceded by a preparatory fast, celebrated in the course of a long vigil, extended into the fifty days leading to Pentecost, the feast of Easter — "solemnity of solemnities" — became the day par excellence for the initiation of catechumens. Through baptism they die to sin and rise to a new life because Jesus "was put to death for our sins and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25; cf. 6:3-11). Intimately connected to the Paschal Mystery, the Solemnity of Pentecost takes on special importance, celebrating as it does the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles gathered with Mary and inaugurating the mission to all peoples.120

77. A similar commemorative logic guided the arrangement of the entire Liturgical Year. As the Second Vatican Council recalls, the Church wished to extend throughout the year "the entire mystery of Christ, from the Incarnation and Nativity to the Ascension, to the day of Pentecost and to the waiting in blessed hope for the return of the Lord. Remembering in this way the mysteries of redemption, the Church opens to the faithful the treasury of the Lord's power and merits, making them present in some sense to all times, so that the faithful may approach them and be filled by them with the grace of salvation".121

After Easter and Pentecost, the most solemn celebration is undoubtedly the Nativity of the Lord, when Christians ponder the mystery of the Incarnation and contemplate the Word of God who deigns to assume our humanity in order to give us a share in his divinity.

78. Likewise, "in celebrating this annual cycle of the mysteries of Christ, the holy Church venerates with special love the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, united forever with the saving work of her Son".122

120 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 731-732.
121 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium, 102.
122 Ibid., 103.
In a similar way, by inserting into the annual cycle the commemoration of the martyrs and other saints on the occasion of their anniversaries, "the Church proclaims the Easter mystery of the saints who suffered with Christ and with him are now glorified". When celebrated in the true spirit of the liturgy, the commemoration of the saints does not obscure the centrality of Christ, but on the contrary extols it, demonstrating as it does the power of the redemption wrought by him. As Saint Paulinus of Nola sings, "all things pass, but the glory of the saints endures in Christ, who renews all things, while he himself remains unchanged". The intrinsic relationship between the glory of the saints and that of Christ is built into the very arrangement of the Liturgical Year, and is expressed most eloquently in the fundamental and sovereign character of Sunday as the Lord’s Day. Following the seasons of the Liturgical Year in the Sunday observance that structures it from beginning to end, the ecclesial and spiritual commitment of Christians comes to be profoundly anchored in Christ, in whom believers find their reason for living and from whom they draw sustenance and inspiration. 79. Sunday emerges therefore as the natural model for understanding and celebrating these feast-days of the Liturgical Year, which are of such value for the Christian life that the Church has chosen to emphasize their importance by making it obligatory for the faithful to attend Mass and to observe a time of rest, even though these feast-days may fall on variable days of the week. Their number has been changed from time to time, taking into account social and economic conditions, as also how firmly they are established in tradition, and how well they are supported by civil legislation. The present canonical and liturgical provisions allow each Episcopal Conference, because of particular circumstances in one country or another, to reduce the list of Holy Days of obligation.

123 Ibid., 104.
124 Carm. XVI, 3-4: "Omnia praeferunt, sanctorum gloria durat in Christo qui cuncta novat, dum permanet ipse": CSEL 30, 67.
126 By general law, the holy days of obligation in the Latin Church are the Feasts of the Nativity of the Lord, the Epiphany, the Ascension, the Body and Blood of Christ, Mary Mother of God, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, Saint Joseph, Saints Peter and Paul and All Saints: cf. Code of Canon Law, Canon 1246. The holy days of obligation in all the Eastern Churches are the Feasts of the Nativity of the Lord, the Epiphany, the Ascension, the Dormition of Mary Mother of God and Saints Peter and Paul: cf. Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, Canon 880, 3.

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Any decision in this regard 
needs to receive the special approval of the Apostolic See,127 
and in such cases the celebration of a mystery of the Lord, 
such as the Epiphany, 
the Ascension 
or the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, 
must be transferred to Sunday, 
in accordance with liturgical norms, 
so that the faithful are not denied 
the chance to meditate upon the mystery.128 
Pastors should also take care to encourage the faithful to attend Mass 
on other important feast-days celebrated during the week.129 

80. There is a need for special pastoral attention to the many situations 
where there is a risk 
that the popular and cultural traditions of a region 
may intrude upon the celebration of Sundays 
and other liturgical feast-days, 
m mingling the spirit of genuine Christian faith 
with elements which are foreign to it and may distort it. 

In such cases, 
catechesis and well-chosen pastoral initiatives 
need to clarify these situations, 
eliminating all that is incompatible with the Gospel of Christ. 

At the same time, 
it should not be forgotten 
that these traditions — 
and, by analogy, some recent cultural initiatives in civil society — 
of ten embody values 
that are not difficult to integrate with the demands of faith. 

It rests with the discernment of Pastors 
to preserve the genuine values 
found in the culture of a particular social context 
and especially in popular piety, 
so that liturgical celebration — 
avove all on Sundays and holy days — 
does not suffer 
but rather may actually benefit.130
for those involved in the hands-on work of pastoral liturgy, Chapter V of Dies Domini proves the adage that there is “nothing more practical than solid theory” – in this case, Pope John Paul II’s discussion of the very nature of time and history: the world’s, Christ’s, and our own.

Cycles and Timelines
We humans know, almost instinctively, that there are two ways of viewing and experiencing time: the cyclic and the linear. The clearest basis for the understanding of cyclic time is within nature itself. Morning, afternoon, evening, and night follow one another in a sure unalterable sequence; likewise with spring, summer, autumn, and winter. “What goes around comes around.” Our activities, our levels of energy, even our mood swings, are influenced by these patterns. We humans are not disconnected from the rest of the natural world. In fact, many of us even know people who must work the night shift in winter and, because of this routine, find a kind of depression setting in because they hardly ever see the light of day.

The cyclic experience, however, is not the only way in which we live in time. Every individual cannot help but be in touch with his or her personal linear timeline. Each person is born into time, lives through infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. When a person, under any number of circumstances, dies prematurely, relatives and friends mourn not only their loss, but the fact that this person never had the chance to experience the whole of life. People live through moments and stages in their own development; along with our levels of experience and (we hope) maturity, which are not as easily measured, our bodily functions and physical appearance change. This often becomes the subject of conversation, even joking, among friends – which, perhaps especially the joking, shows how seriously each one takes his or her stage.

The continued popularity of pop-psychology and self-help literature is just another sign of the need we all have to live our journey intentionally. We need, as it were, to live life, not let life live us.

Celebrating Christ, the Centre
The Great Vigil
While the liturgy is celebrated within the context of natural cycles, its clear emphasis is on the linear. The pope insists that we use the linear approach as the main paradigm in a Christian’s way of taking seriously not only personal timelines, but all of history. His example of the dedication of the paschal candle at the Easter Vigil provides a wonderful focal point for relating this abstract theory to the concrete experience of liturgical celebration and of life itself understood under the reign of God revealed in Christ.

In the northern hemisphere where our traditional liturgical patterns developed, the vigil takes place in the spring. It is celebrated in the dead of night and begins outdoors around a great fire. In its natural cycle, the earth is beginning to wake from its sleep. Even the people are coming to life again and regrouping around a springtime fire to begin again, socializing more freely after a long winter’s confinement. In the light of this fire, the paschal candle is carved with the symbol of the cross, embracing the whole world – north, south,
east, and west. Christ is named alpha and omega (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) – the beginning and end of all that is – after which the current year is likewise carved into the candle. Christ is proclaimed as a light illuminating all of human history and as a light illuminating 1999 or 2000 or 2001.

What Is Happening in the Action?
Participants in the vigil are invited to discover and experience what is happening in this liturgical action at three levels all at once: the world’s, Christ’s and ours.

Christ and the world’s time
As spring rolls around, the Risen Christ is identified with the creative word spoken at the very beginning of creation. The spirit of the Risen Christ is identified with the spirit of God breathing over the abyss before the world began. He is likewise identified with the goal of all creation, the new and eternal spring: the end time foreshadowed in the glory of the resurrection. The Risen Christ is identified with the Word of God calling all things into being, calling all things to account and calling them to fullness of being when time as we know it breaks into the world to come. He is alpha and omega.

Christ and his hour
In the vigil, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is also commemorated and celebrated in the uniqueness of its own history. The eternal word (the beginning and the end) was made flesh in the midst of history – as its high point – to communicate once and for all God’s willed direction for humanity.

Christ and our time
The Risen Christ is also identified with our own time, with this very year, especially with the events taking place at the paschal vigil – on the Sunday of Sundays – as new members are being plunged into the waters of death and rebirth, sealed with the spirit, and called to the banquet, which itself propels believers toward the eternal feast of heaven. In the sacraments of initiation, persons from one generation to the next are called and gathered as members of Christ’s body, living in their own bodies the pattern of his death and resurrection.

What Is Being Celebrated?
Celebrated on this Sunday of Sundays is the directional sweep of all creation and all history. Celebrated as well is the directional sweep of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh in history. Celebrated as well is the directional sweep of the life of Christians living today who bear his name and share his spirit.

Feasts and Seasons
During the course of the liturgical year, the feasts and seasons highlight certain moments in the great sweep of Christ’s journey through life to death and rising. In reflecting on and celebrating these key moments, Christians in the course of their personal histories, as well as in the course of universal history, are invited to assess their own stance before life, their own values, and their own progress in the direction Christ holds out for them as the Way, the Truth and the Life. They are also invited to be open to the creative and re-creative energy (grace) offered to them in the sacraments to nourish them and to nudge them on toward their final destiny in him.

Each Sunday, but from a different vantage point and with a different flavour determined by the place of the particular Sunday in the liturgical year, the community contemplates and celebrates the following:

- the wonder of the created world and its destiny – especially the role and destiny of humanity;
- the unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ, whose death and rising offer humanity the Way, the Truth, and the Life (paschal mystery); and
- the unique way in which this paradigm is lived out in community by each baptized person, who through, with, and in Christ moves within history to a final goal.

Questions and Challenges
To make all of this more concrete, those responsible for developing the actual form in which the Sunday will take shape will need to question and challenge their practice on all three levels (the world, Christ, and us).
Commentary • The World’s Time, Christ’s Time, Our Time

About Sunday

1. Are the wonder and dignity of the created world, as well as the unity of the whole human family and its common destiny, taken seriously?
2. Is the uniqueness of Christ highlighted? Is his life, death and resurrection front and centre as the paradigm for all human journeying?
3. Are persons as individuals and groups being taken seriously in their own call to be patterned after Christ, in their own uniqueness, and in the context of their own historical and cultural circumstances?

About the Great Vigil

Let’s take this up again, as the Pope does, with the vigil – the climax of the Paschal Triduum – Sunday of Sundays: the heart and centre of the liturgical year.

1. At Easter, are we celebrating God’s call to the whole created universe to be continually renewed in Christ? Are Christians being called and empowered by their liturgy for the authentic renewal of the earth and of the human community – a new springtime? Or are flowers and candles and springtime colours merely cultural or sentimental?
2. Is the personal passage of Jesus, and the nature and meaning of his resurrection being explored and celebrated in an authentic and challenging way? Or are formulas, even clichés, simply being repeated? (This question takes on added importance in light of media coverage and controversy around the historical Jesus and the foundations of Christianity.)
3. Are candidates for the sacraments of initiation – adults and children – being taken seriously? Or are we simply going through certain motions and routines?

Most of our communities probably fall somewhere between these poles, but the questions are well worth asking.

About the Ninety Days

All of this, of course, does not “just happen” during the Triduum, but fills the whole of the liturgical year – in this case, specifically, the season from Ash Wednesday to Pentecost.

As we anticipate the Triduum, and throughout its follow up, simple but effective steps can be taken so that the paschal candle will shine out in all its multifaceted splendour.

From the point of view of the world

1. How are lenten alms handled? How is the Development and Peace collection integrated into the overall spirit of the season: in the prayers of the faithful, in the presentation of gifts during Lent? How are social justice activities and projects that are undertaken by young people and children integrated into the life of the whole parish community?
2. During the Easter season, is there real festivity around spring and renewal? Can the clean-up of parish buildings and grounds in the spring be integrated into the Easter spirit? Is the sprinkling rite with its wonderful prayers around springtime renewal being used generously during Easter?
3. In what sense is the eucharist experienced as eschatological – pointing towards the eternal springtime feast of heaven? Does it call out for justice and human renewal at every level of life?
4. How can Pentecost include a celebration of the multicultural, multinationnal reality which is truly “catholic?” For example, could a multicultural potluck supper be organized for Pentecost followed by solemn evening prayer?

How is the Risen Christ alpha and omega for the world and for all history?

With reference to Christ

1. Are there opportunities for people to deepen their knowledge of Christ and his message – adult education sessions, afternoons or evenings of recollection, the personal witness of fellow believers? Are reading materials, videos and tapes available to be borrowed?
2. Are there ways to deepen appreciation for the great traditional Christian
hymns – for example, “At the Name of Jesus,” “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” “Crown Him with Many Crowns” – that would help the assembly to sing them out of conviction and from the heart!

3. Are there ways (especially perhaps with children and young people) of recovering the way of the cross (stations) as a devotion that can lead to a greater appreciation of the Christ event: especially the revised biblical stations which the Pope himself has been modelling?

4. Does the paschal candle as a central ritual object of the Easter season have a size, shape, and place worthy of its role?

How is the cross of Christ – the event of his death and resurrection – truly central to human history?

With reference to our own living community of faith

1. Are the scrutiny Sundays being used to celebrate not only with the elect, but with the whole assembly – perhaps even pointing toward and inviting the baptized to the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation?

2. How are the initiation sacraments being celebrated? How are families and the whole community involved to make these celebrations significant events in the lives of all concerned? Are these celebrations (for example, confirmation and first communion) integral to the Sunday celebration of the whole assembly? Are baptisms being celebrated within the context of eucharist on some Sundays during the Easter season? Would it be possible to think of reunion events for those initiated last year – even last year's confirmandi – in connection with the season?

3. Are there ways that Pentecost can celebrate the fruits of our common baptism: the diverse gifts and ministries at work in the community?

How is 1999 (or 2000 or 2001) being lived as a “year of the Lord”? How are Christians being affirmed in their dignity and vocation through our Sunday worship and all that supports it?

Advent and Christmas

A similar approach could be taken to the Christmas season, which also has a preparatory period – Advent – and overflows through Epiphany to the Baptism of our Lord. The theme of the end time in the celebration of the Solemnity of Christ the King and in early Advent leads forward to the moral demands of John the Baptist, the international tradition around the magi, and the new beginning for Israel and all of humanity in the baptism of Jesus. In the dead of winter and in the context of a secular culture that, as the Pope notes, provides both positive and negative influences and pressures, all of this lends itself to careful and imaginative application within the context of Sunday liturgy. Special attention to children and to the gifts being given to the poor (perhaps even incorporated into the preparation of table and gifts and dismissal rites, and certainly into the prayers of the faithful) offers possibilities for expression and celebration limited only by the imagination.

The infancy narratives and the Prologue of John's gospel, which provides the traditional gospel texts of the earliest Roman celebrations, are marvellous and exciting statements of the centrality of Christ to all of history.

The lights of Christmas are simply another kind of paschal candle that enlightens believers and invites them to ponder and celebrate this season from the same three points of view discussed in the context of Easter.

Conclusion

Consistent with the style and tone of the whole document, Chapter V invites those involved in the preparation and celebration of Sunday to dig deep into the tradition as well as into their own social consciousness and religious imagination. This is in no way a merely theoretical consideration. The Spirit can work out of this rich treasury to bring Sunday alive throughout the year.
81. The spiritual and pastoral riches of Sunday, as it has been handed on to us by tradition, are truly great. When its significance and implications are understood in their entirety, Sunday in a way becomes a synthesis of the Christian life and a condition for living it well. It is clear therefore why the observance of the Lord's Day is so close to the Church's heart, and why in the Church's discipline it remains a real obligation. Yet more than as a precept, the observance should be seen as a need rising from the depths of Christian life. It is crucially important that all the faithful should be convinced that they cannot live their faith or share fully in the life of the Christian community unless they take part regularly in the Sunday Eucharistic assembly. The Eucharist is the full realization of the worship which humanity owes to God, and it cannot be compared to any other religious experience. A particularly efficacious expression of this is the Sunday gathering of the entire community, obedient to the voice of the Risen Lord who calls the faithful together to give them the light of his word and the nourishment of his Body as the perennial sacramental wellspring of redemption. The grace flowing from this wellspring renews mankind, life and history.

82. It is with this strong conviction of faith, and with awareness of the heritage of human values which the observance of Sunday entails, that Christians today must face the enticements of a culture which has accepted the benefits of rest and free time, but which often uses them frivolously and is at times attracted by morally questionable forms of entertainment. Certainly, Christians are no different from other people in enjoying the weekly day of rest; but at the same time they are keenly aware of the uniqueness and originality of Sunday, the day on which they are called to celebrate their salvation and the salvation of all humanity. Sunday is the day of joy and the day of rest precisely because it is "the Lord's Day", the day of the Risen Lord.
83. Understood and lived in this fashion,
Sunday in a way becomes the soul of the other days,
and in this sense we can recall the insight of Origen
that the perfect Christian "is always in the Lord's Day,
and is always celebrating Sunday". 131

Sunday is a true school,
an enduring program of Church pedagogy —
an irreplaceable pedagogy,
especially with social conditions
now marked more and more by a fragmentation and cultural pluralism
that constantly test the faithfulness of individual Christians
to the practical demands of their faith.

In many parts of the world,
we see a "diaspora" Christianity, which is put to the test
because the scattered disciples of Christ
can no longer easily maintain contact with one another,
and lack the support
of the structures and traditions proper to Christian culture.

In a situation of such difficulty,
the opportunity to come together on Sundays with fellow believers,
exchanging gifts of brotherhood,
is an indispensable help.

84. Sustaining Christian life as it does,
Sunday has the additional value of being a testimony and a proclamation.
As a day of prayer, communion and joy,
Sunday resounds throughout society,
emanating vital energies and reasons for hope.

Sunday is the proclamation
that time, in which he who is the Risen Lord of history makes his home,
is not the grave of our illusions
but the cradle of an ever new future,
an opportunity
given to us to turn the fleeting moments of this life into seeds of eternity.

Sunday is an invitation to look ahead;
it is the day on which the Christian community cries out to Christ,
"Marana tha: Come, O Lord!" (1 Cor 16:22).

With this cry of hope and expectation,
the Church is the companion and support of human hope.

From Sunday to Sunday,
enlightened by Christ,
she goes forward towards the unending Sunday of the heavenly Jerusalem,
which "has no need of the sun or moon to shine upon it,
for the glory of God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb" (Rev 21:23).

85. As she strains towards her goal,
the Church is sustained and enlivened by the Spirit.

Conclusion

It is he who awakens memory

and makes present for every generation of believers

the event of the Resurrection.

He is the inward gift

uniting us to the Risen Lord and to our brothers and sisters

in the intimacy of a single body,

reviving our faith,

filling our hearts with charity

and renewing our hope.

The Spirit is unfailingly present to every one of the Church's days,

appearing unpredictably and lavishly with the wealth of his gifts.

But it is in the Sunday gathering for the weekly celebration of Easter

that the Church listens to the Spirit in a special way

and reaches out with him to Christ

in the ardent desire that he return in glory:


Precisely in consideration of the role of the Spirit,

I have wished

that this exhortation

aimed at rediscovering the meaning of Sunday

should appear in this year

which, in the immediate preparation for the Jubilee,

is dedicated to the Holy Spirit.

86. I entrust this Apostolic Letter to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin,

that it may be received and put into practice by the Christian community.

Without in any way detracting from the centrality of Christ and his Spirit,

Mary is always present in the Church's Sunday.

It is the mystery of Christ itself that demands this:

indeed, how could she

who is Mater Domini and Mater Ecclesiae

fail to be uniquely present

on the day that is both dies Domini and dies Ecclesiae?

As they listen to the word proclaimed in the Sunday assembly,

the faithful look to the Virgin Mary,

learning from her to keep it and ponder it in their hearts (cf. Lk 2:19).

With Mary, they learn to stand at the foot of the Cross,

offering to the Father the sacrifice of Christ

and joining to it the offering of their own lives.

With Mary, they experience the joy of the Resurrection,

making their own the words of the Magnificat

that extol the inexhaustible gift of divine mercy

in the inexorable flow of time:

"His mercy is from age to age upon those who fear him" (Lk 1:50).

From Sunday to Sunday,

the pilgrim people follow in the footsteps of Mary,

and her maternal intercession gives special power and fervor

to the prayer that rises from the Church to the Most Holy Trinity.
87. Dear Brothers and Sisters,
    the imminence of the Jubilee
    invites us to a deeper spiritual and pastoral commitment.
Indeed, this is its true purpose.
In the Jubilee year, much will be done to give it the particular stamp
    demanded by the ending of the Second Millennium
    and the beginning of the Third since the Incarnation of the Word of God.
But this year and this special time will pass,
    as we look to other jubilees and other solemn events.
As the weekly “solemnity”, however,
    Sunday will continue to shape the time of the Church’s pilgrimage,
    until that Sunday that will know no evening.
Therefore, dear Brother Bishops and Priests,
    I urge you to work tirelessly with the faithful
    to ensure
    that the value of this sacred day is understood and lived ever more deeply.
This will bear rich fruit in Christian communities,
    and will not fail to have a positive influence on civil society as a whole.
In coming to know the Church,
    which, every Sunday,
    joyfully celebrates the mystery from which she draws her life,
    may the men and women of the Third Millennium
    come to know the Risen Christ.
And
    constantly renewed by the weekly commemoration of Easter,
    may Christ’s disciples be ever more credible
    in proclaiming the Gospel of salvation
    and ever more effective in building the civilization of love.

My blessing to you all!

From the Vatican, on 31 May, the Solemnity of Pentecost,
    in the year 1998, the twentieth of my Pontificate.

Joannes Paulus II
In the last issue of the Bulletin I described some of the projects that the office is currently working on. In this article I would like to highlight some ecumenical endeavours in which the office is involved. There are two organizations which I have become part of: the Consultation on Common Texts (CCT), and the Canadian Churches Coordinating Group on Worship (CCCGOW).

CCT meets twice a year in New York City at the General Seminary; CCCGOW meets twice a year in Toronto. CCT is the North American arm of an organization called English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC), which meets every second year. ELLC was founded to prepare English language liturgical texts which are shared ecumenically. We use some of these texts in our celebrations of the eucharist: the Lord Have Mercy; Glory to God; Nicene Creed; Apostles' Creed; Holy, Holy; Lamb of God and Our Father.

Meeting with these groups has provided former directors and myself with contacts and a vision of Church beyond the confines of the Roman Catholic tradition. One of the fruits of this ecumenical contact has been that Rev. Fred Graham (Worship Director of the United Church) and Rev. Barbara Liotscos (Consultant in Ministry and Worship for the Anglican Church) and myself have made a joint presentation each year at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax. The topic of these presentations has varied over the last number of years; this past February our presentation was on music in the various denominations of the Roman Catholic tradition.

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For the Anglicans and ourselves, the use of music during eucharistic celebrations means that we sing many times throughout the liturgy (e.g., penitential rite, psalm response, gospel acclamation, eucharistic acclamations, lamb of God, etc.) as well as singing hymns. For the United Church, singing throughout the service is a new experience. (I was the organist at a United Church for two years during the early 1970's; singing was restricted to four hymns sung at assigned times throughout the worship service.) Fred Graham shared in his presentation that at one recent Sunday worship service, the hymnal was used fifteen times. As we sang various hymns and service music throughout the evening, it became clear that shared music is an immensely important factor in our growing toward ecumenical convergence. Our CBW III has benefited from the musical creativity of the hymn composition tradition of all denominations; and it is not unusual to see initials such as S.J. or to recognize some names of Roman Catholic hymn writers in Voices United and Common Praise.

A project that we are working on at CCCGOW is to identify—now that all three hymn books are completed—our common hymns and the common hymn tunes we

Donna Kelly, cnr, has been the director of the National Liturgy Office since 1995.
share. A comprehensive list will enable us to prepare ecumenical services of all kinds, confident that the music is familiar to all who will be gathering. This will eventually bring a different spirit of celebration to our prayers for Christian unity.

From the Regions

The Ontario Liturgical Conference is an advisory and consultative body to the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops. By pooling resources province-wide, the conference is also able to sponsor the Summer School for Liturgical Musicians and provincial institutes dealing with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

The 1998 annual meeting was held in early November. Bernadette Gasslein led conference members in an exploration of “Paschal Living” using the Philippians hymn (2.6-11) as a starting point. This process laid the groundwork for meeting one of the conference’s long-term goals: to raise general awareness of the connection between the paschal mystery and the daily life of Christians. In its business meeting the conference developed plans to help local communities focus on the quality of the Sunday celebration of eucharist during the Great Jubilee Year 2000 and beyond.

This summer the full-week version of the conference’s Summer School for Liturgical Musicians is again taking place in Toronto. Centred at St. Joseph’s College residence, the summer school is ideally situated to meet the needs of participants, with access to some fine organs, the lovely Christie mansion and the nearby Cardinal Flahiff chapel (an older worship space, renovated to suit the needs of post-Vatican II liturgy) which provides an excellent setting for the week’s liturgical celebrations. This year’s event, The Easter Journey, focusses on the Triduum and the seasons that flow to and from it. Even the skill sessions (guitar, sight singing, cantor, organ, gesture and dance, leadership and music reading) will draw on music for the portion of the journey in focus for the particular day. This year, participants will follow two skill programs for the week. A highlight of the summer school experience is the individual attention offered by top-notch, accessible instructors over the course of the week. The integration and application of liturgical education within the music skill sessions has proved very popular and beneficial.

The weeklong summer school is offered in Toronto in alternate years. In the in-between years an abbreviated version, tailored to local needs, is offered to dioceses for whom the cost of travel to the Toronto school may be prohibitive. Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay have hosted the “travelling” summer school in the past, attracting well over a hundred participants each.

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Brief Book Reviews


Many Christian communities struggle with issues related to reconciliation: how we experience it, and how we celebrate it as individuals and as communities. Robert Schreiter lays some important foundations for reconciliation in the first part of this book. He discusses the state of reconciliation at the end of the twentieth century, outlines the phases in the reconciliation process and offers an overview of our Christian understanding of reconciliation. He then reflects on the scriptural stories of the resurrection and demonstrates their connection to human experiences of reconciliation. In the brief second part of the book he proposes some elements of a strategy for effecting reconciliation in concrete circumstances.

All pastoral ministers will find this book helpful in their ministry of reconciliation. Preachers will particularly find fresh inspiration in Schreiter's treatment of the resurrection stories. Highly recommended.

The Conversion Experience: a reflective process for RCIA participants and others, by Donald L. Gelpi (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1998); 230 pp., $14.95 US.

This book offers a reflective process for pastoral catechesis of adults. It is designed primarily for use in the implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults but may be used for adult education programs or for parish renewal. The author provides commentary on the dynamics of conversion and on the fundamentals of Christian faith and the sacraments in the context of exercises with suggestions for prayer, reflection and sharing. Each chapter contains helpful theological background and extensive questions for reflection. Skilled and experienced catechists will likely find some helpful ideas in this book. It is not a book for beginners.

God's Word is Alive!, by Alice L. Camille (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998); 398 pp., $19.95 US.

This book might best be described as a prayerful guide to the Sunday readings. The author draws on her knowledge of the scriptures and her experience as a catechist to invite the reader to ponder the Sunday Lectionary texts and make connections to daily living. For every Sunday of the three-year Lectionary cycle and for the major feasts of the liturgical year, Camille offers a brief non-exegetical commentary on each of the readings. She then offers one question for reflection for each scriptural text. Finally, she recommends an action response.

This book provides yet another resource to guide individuals and groups in their listening to the Word of God proclaimed in the Sunday assembly. The commentaries on the readings lead the user to hear the scripture texts in new ways. The reflection questions will be useful

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for personal preparation for the Sunday Eucharist, for homilists, for small faith-sharing groups and for those who lead the dismissal rites with the catechumens and elect. Recommended.


Many North American parishes are becoming increasingly multicultural. This poses some significant challenges for those who are responsible for preparing the Sunday liturgy and other annual celebrations of faith. For over twenty years, the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions in the United States has focused attention on the importance of appropriate cultural signs and symbols and the incorporation of languages other than English in the Sunday Eucharist. This book reflects the fruit of many years of study on inculturation in the United States. In the first part of this short document, the author presents important general principles which ought to guide every multicultural celebration. In the second part he outlines norms for the selection and preparation of liturgical ministers, issues related to verbal communication, and the choice of music. Helpful suggestions are also offered regarding art and environment for multicultural celebrations and pastoral sensitivity to popular devotions and religious customs.

This booklet makes a simple but important contribution to the ongoing dialogue on inculturation. As the conclusion to this document states, “these norms and guidelines are meant to be pastoral, descriptive and open-ended.” The norms and guidelines in this resource can be easily adapted to multicultural communities in Canada. Recommended.

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**The Last Word**

**Millennium Fever or Jubilee Joy?**

Marcel Gervais

I am not certain why it happens, but a date with three zeros drives some people to anxiety attacks. It happened in a small way in the year 1,000; now, for the year 2000 we have cases of full-blown madness. There are false prophets everywhere taking advantage of the date that is approaching. They strike fear into the hearts of anyone who would believe them. People prophesied all kinds of things when the year 1,000 approached, but in fact nothing happened. The sun

† Marcel A. Gervais, Archbishop of Ottawa is currently chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy.
rose and set on the first day of the year 1000 as on any other day.

God did not invent the calendar. We did. The numbering of days and years is our doing; God is not bound by our dates. To God, any date and every date is important. The year 2000 is no more and no less full of doom or glory than any other year in our calendar.

A group of three zeros suggests a thousand; this sends some people into orbit over the “thousand-year reign” of Christ. A passage from the Book of Revelation (20:1-6) says that there will be a “first resurrection” for those who died as martyrs. These will reign on earth with Christ for a thousand years.

The sacred author had great sympathy for the martyrs; he felt that they had to be compensated for their short earthly life. So, he proposed that a thousand-year reign would be instituted, wherein the martyrs could enjoy life on earth in peace with Christ.

A few things should be said about this passage:

• It is the one and only place in all of scripture that predicts an earthly time or place where Christ will reign. Jesus explicitly refutes the idea of having an earthly kingdom, even for a few years (Jn 18:36).

• It presumes that there will be one end for the martyrs and another for the rest of us. The Gospels tell us that the Lord will come at the same time for all people (Mt 24:27). The resurrection will not be staggered.

This passage from the Book of Revelation, therefore, is not to be taken literally. Besides, even if such a “thousand-year reign” should take place, there is absolutely nothing in these texts to suggest that it would begin in a year with three zeros.

We do know, however, that when Christ returns in glory the martyrs will have no need for a time of earthly recompense. Each earthly joy that they will have missed will be contained and expanded a thousand-fold in the joy of the return of Christ in glory.

With the year 2000 coming, we need to be on our guard against “false prophets”. Today it is fashionable for these wolves to be dressed in the sheep’s clothing of special devotion to Jesus and Mary. One faker presents herself as being the “secretary of Jesus”. Another hides under the sheepskin of Marian devotion. Don’t be taken in by such people. And for the love of God, don’t send them any money! They can prophesy the days of darkness when the whole earth will tremble with cold, but you will know they are fakes when they give you a list of groceries to buy to prepare for this time of terror. Do not be swayed.

The Gospels are very clear and they are the measure of truth. They say that no one knows the day or the hour (Mt 24:37ff; Mk 13:32). They point to the fact that this world will come to an end at any time. It could arrive by the time you read this sentence; or it could come 100,000 years from now. Earthquakes, famine, war, natural disasters are always around. And lurking everywhere are false prophets. The only thing our Lord advises is that we should always be watchful and alert so as not to be deceived. Every day is another chance for us to turn to the Lord.
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