

TIME FOR GOD?

It can be hard to find time for others in our hectic world, and it seems sometimes as though things are only getting busier. It can be the case that we let some relationships slide – friends we gradually lose contact with, or people in our community that we could make more time for but choose not to do so. We are all guilty of it to some extent. For many of us, there are legitimate reasons for this. Many people are working very long hours, trying to make mortgage repayments or hold down jobs. Or perhaps our time gets filled by taking the kids to sports events on the weekend. This is all part of life, but inevitably we get to a point where we need some “time-out”.

Unsurprisingly, we have witnessed a surge in interest in new-age spirituality, in mindfulness courses, and in holistic retreats. This is a sign, surely, of a growing awareness among people of the importance of creating space for oneself as well as others. In the course of caring for those around us, we risk neglecting our own needs.

It is the same with our relationship with God. We must make time for God in our lives. This third commandment in part reminds us of that. But “making holy the Sabbath” is about more than just going to Mass on Sundays, especially if it is done to merely socially conform. “Understanding the purpose of the third commandment is understanding what God wants for us. That is, like all of the commandments, the third one exists because God wishes to form us through it ... God gave us the third commandment so that we would ‘rest’, ‘celebrate’, and ‘gather.’ For these reasons God commands us to keep the Lord’s day holy” (James Keenan Commandments of Compassion 15). This three-fold mandate – to rest, to celebrate and to gather – captures the very essence of this commandment.

We are called to rest, to be gentle with ourselves, to play, and to find time for the people who are most important. Someone once told me to find the thing that truly makes me happy, and then go and do it as much as possible! It is good advice, and for me, that’s cycling up mountains. But whatever it may be, we must discover what best helps us to flourish, and then surround ourselves with that as much as possible.

SUNDAY MASS

But as Christians, the Sabbath is about celebration, the summit of which is the Eucharist. This is our celebration (and thanksgiving) of the Christ event; this brings us closer to God, and helps sustain our relationship with Him. This in turn brings us into communion, with God and with those around us. This “gathering”, however, also pushes us out into the world, and calls us to have a positively transforming effect on it. Thus, the Christian faith is a public faith. It embraces the world rather than shying away from it. The Eucharist must have a transformative effect in our lives.

There are challenges in all this of course. Some of those challenges are personal – I may need to change my lifestyle in order to live more authentically in communion with God and others. But there are social challenges also. What does this day of rest and reverence say to our busy world? Ours is a society of zero-hour contracts, of human trafficking for the labour and sex industries, of homelessness. Surely this day of Sabbath demands that we work more courageously for the oppressed and marginalized of our time and place. ■



Today's readings

Ecclesiasticus 27:30–28:7
Romans 14:7-9
Matthew 18:21-35

GOD'S WORD TODAY

Forgive us our trespasses ... : if we were to take this to mean forgive us our debts in the same measure as we forgive those who are in debt to us, we might appreciate better the seriousness of what we are actually saying each time we use the Lord's Prayer. We are actually asking the Lord to use our own attitude to others to determine the Lord's attitude to ourselves. Scary stuff, is it not?

Jesus' answer to Peter's question tells us that there should be no limit to our forgiving others, and the parable goes on to illustrate this. The sign of peace declares that we are indeed at peace with those with whom we celebrate the Eucharist.

17 September 2017 – 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time **Year A**

Psalter Week 4

SoulSpace

SERIES: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
IN A MODERN WORLD

Season colour: **GREEN**

In this series, **Suzanne Mulligan** looks at the commandments and their relevance for our world.



THIRD
COMMANDMENT
**KEEP HOLY
THE LORD'S
DAY**

“Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.” (Exodus 20:8)

The third commandment directs us in a very obvious way towards our relationship with God. If we think back to the definition of morality offered in the first of our articles, we see that morality is fundamentally about relationship – relationship with God, others, the world around us, and ourselves. As with all relationships, our relationship with God needs time, commitment, and effort. We can find ourselves very quickly neglecting it, or taking it for granted. This commandment reminds us to make space for God in our lives, to nurture and strengthen our bonds with Him, but also to allow space for rest, celebration, and community.

[continued on back page]

