

Carving out Sacred Time

Sunday, “the Lord’s Day,” has long-become just another day of the week for most people. Sure, it may be a “weekend day” and, therefore, not a “work day” for many or most. But, for most, it is not a day set aside to worship the Creator and Savior. What I observe on Sunday afternoons, driving to my parents for dinner, is that it is a day set aside for “yard work” or “recreation,” and, perhaps within those things, it is set aside for family.

There isn’t anything wrong with the yard work, family time and recreation. On the contrary, these are all good and worthwhile things. But the secular attitude undergirding everything creates the illusion that these things will just continue on in one form or other into infinity. Or, at least, living for now is the only sort of living happening.

Even for those of us devoted to the Sunday Mass, there is a temptation to make the Summer Season a completely “secular” season of the year. What I mean by this is that we can lose sight of the ultimate purpose of life in favor of whatever time and activity we can grasp in the here and now. Having a cold and dreary winter season certainly contributes to this impulse. But, I imagine that, wherever school goes out of session, this same attitude kicks in: *“We grab what we can while the grabbing is good!”*

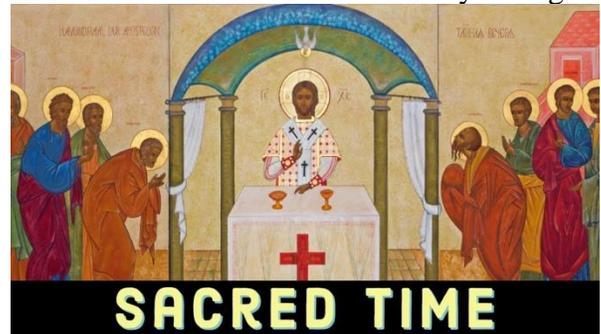
On the morning I am composing this reflection, I appealed to a Preface of the Eucharist Prayer for Daily Mass wherein we addressed God by saying, *“Our praise adds nothing to your greatness. But it profits us for salvation through Christ our Lord.”* The translation of the Latin word, (whatever it is), to the English word “profit” in this phrase reminds me of Jesus’ own words, *“What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but to lose his soul?”* (Mk 8:36)

Again, this reflection is not a condemnation of yard-work, family-time, or recreation: These things are all good in themselves. This is, rather, a challenge to the ever-pervasive/ever-invasive secular attitude whereby God and Faith are sequestered or bracketed off from life. Or, to put it another way,

we press the “pause” button on the pilgrim journey to God’s Kingdom.

When George W. Bush was proposing war in Iraq, I was a student in Washington D.C. and my professor, a theologian focused in the interface between the Church and liberal-political society, commented on the matter. He said of the Bush administration, *“They don’t understand what they are getting into over there. For those people taking the bus is an act of faith.”* What he meant by this is that culture, politics and society were absolutely saturated by the religious faith of Islam. And the administration would be making a huge mistake if they were approaching this society through the lens of Church-State separation.

While we reject the Islamic theology, there is something to be greatly admired in the way prayer and faith-consciousness saturates and pervades daily life and culture. And, I submit, we could recapture this in our own faith-culture if we could do something like agreeing to set aside Sunday as sacred. It’s very unlikely we would get the secular culture to agree to this. But, within a culture we re-create, one family at a time, it is possible to restore an ethos that once existed 60-or-more years ago.



We have been agonizing about re-evangelizing and being called to a “new evangelization.” But, I don’t see how these efforts can gain any traction unless we become agents of change in the culture and, especially, in the culture of the family. Re-acquiring an ethos of “Sacred Time”, and, in particular, “Sunday” could be a sort of evangelization undertaken without uttering a word. It would, instead, be a corporate action undertaken by a handful of families to bear witness to the truth: There is no life apart from the Lord of Life. All things are passing away. This life has been *“subject to futility”* (Romans 8:20). *“Here we have no lasting city but we seek the one that is to come,”* (Hebrews 13:14)