



IN THE MEANWHILE

How to Celebrate Sunday when Mass is Not an Option

In situations where the Christian Faithful are either deprived of Holy Mass or cannot attend for a serious reason (CCC n. 2183), it is important to remember that the third commandment: *Remember to keep holy the Lord's day* (cf. Deut. 5:12), remains intact and morally binding on all the faithful (CCC n. 2168-2188). Though a dispensation extended by a bishop may release the faithful from their obligation of attending Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation, it does not (nor could not) negate the divine imperative to keep Sunday "holy".

This leaves the faithful in a tricky situation. Normally, our Sundays are fundamentally and essentially sanctified - that is made "holy" - by our assistance in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and our sacramental reception of the Most Holy Eucharist. In cases where attending Mass is not an option, however, we need to think of alternative ways to observe and sanctify the Lord's day in an intentionally active way. Thankfully, our rich and glorious tradition provides some suggestions:

How to Celebrate Sunday without Attending Mass:

Establish a Home Altar:

1. Our homes are rightly called "domestic churches" (CCC n. 1666), and, thus they should have some resemblance thereto. Consider, therefore, establishing a home altar. A place solely reserved for praying. These home nooks and niches have been the norm for all of humanity, for both pagans and Christians alike. It could be a desk or a wall or some other reserved place. Central to the altar is the crucifix, which should have pride of place. Adorning the home altar with other religious icons/pictures/statues/or other blessed items is most proper;

Sunday Eve Preparations:

2. Like all great feasts, Sunday ought to begin on the night before (what German Catholics charmingly call "*Feierabend*"). Instead of scheduling Saturday evening as a 'night-out' or a chance to 'veg-out'; consider having a family meal together. One could also begin preparing for Sunday by completing all necessary chores: the washing and scrubbing of little ones, the laying out of Sunday 'fineries', last minute food preparations, and by reading (and discussing) as a family the Sunday Mass readings (cf. CCC n. 2653; 2205). Inform the family of the exact time when your Sunday prayers will begin. The Sunday activities ought to be disciplined and leisurely, not haphazard and slothful (cf. Code of Canon Law, can. 1248 § 2). As the evening progresses, the night should take on a fitting solemnity in preparation for Sunday;



The Lord's Day:

3. Rise early on Sunday, don your finest (CCC n. 1387), and gather the family together. At the appointed hour either view a live-streaming of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass or practice the ancient devotion of the 'dry Mass,' both of which should culminate with "spiritual communion" (see Alcuin Resource Page for information); and lastly,

Leisure, the Basis for Holiness:

4. The Church mandates that Sundays and other holy days ought to be days of authentic leisure or "rest from servile labor" (CCC n. 2042). Importantly, leisure is not idleness from activity or self-indulgent luxury, rather it is a contemplative attentiveness to, and subsequent celebration of, the beauty and goodness of our redeemed lives. Think lingering meals, meandering hikes, intimate conversations, the reading of some great (or even good) work of literature, and you get the idea. We aren't monks, but we are spiritual creatures called into communion with God and one another. She also warmly recommends that Sundays be consecrated by pious works of prayer and Christian charity (CCC n. 2186).

By taking these four steps our Sundays will be surely demarcated as "holy," even when attending Mass is not a legitimate option. So, feast and be merry, and leisurely enjoy your Sunday with your family!

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