

March 13, 2020

Keep the Sabbath Day

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As many of us, weeks ago, prepared our penance(s) for the penitential season of Lent, we did not envision an additional penance placed upon us in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic. As your shepherd, I dispensed the faithful from their Sunday Mass obligation, but I did not abrogate the holy day of Sunday itself. Each Sunday celebrates and deepens our spiritual communion as members of the Body of Christ.

With fortitude and with steel determination we should continue to hold sacred each Sunday even in the absence of physically participating in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Prudence should be our guide through these days as we avoid large gatherings, yet we must remember we are neither helpless nor hopeless.

The Lord Jesus still draws us close to his Most Sacred Heart and as fellow disciples we are invited to respond to his invitation in prayer and thanksgiving. There are numerous ways that we can celebrate the truth of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection: our salvation. We can participate in the television or online Mass (the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption live-streams the 10am Sunday Mass). We can pray the rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet, make a Holy Hour (or two), or embrace a whole host of prayers in the Church's spiritual treasury. Of course, being Sunday, we should refrain from servile work.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is fundamental to our faith and hope in eternal life with God. These days, especially on Sunday, may we remember and celebrate that you and I were created to do God's work. Each Sunday should awaken our remembrance of God's enduring love. Together we still can "keep the Sabbath day" (*Dt. 5:15*) in a spirit of gratitude and joy.

Together, we celebrate that we are one family in Christ and we lift up each other in prayer this penitential season. Entrusting you and your family to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, patroness of our beloved diocese, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Jeffrey M. Monforton
Bishop of Steubenville