

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (2020) – Year A

I would like to share with you a few reflections from Bishop Cantú in his letter to the faithful of our Diocese entitled: Work, Rest, and Solidarity.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this Labor Day weekend, on which we Americans have traditionally rested from work and spent time with family and friends, I wish to reflect with you about the Lord's Day and its focus on worship, rest, and solidarity.

We are now half of a year into the COVID 19 pandemic and may face another half-year of sheltering in place, distant from each other, in isolation from familiar networks and communities.

We have grieved with those millions of Americans, and others around the world, who have lost their jobs during this pandemic. While a job is important in helping us to provide for our families, in social networking, in helping us to build a sense of purpose...a job should never define us.

Work (as distinct from a job), on the other hand, expresses and even builds our character...Work is an important expression of who we are as human beings. And for us who are baptized, we recognize in our labor, both inside the home and outside of it...[as] a participation in God's creative work.

The work we do during this pandemic certainly requires a transition, a shift in perspective, in focus. In our families, we are called to tend to our family members—to work on building those relationships that are so important to us!

In this pandemic when we must be physically separate from others, we are called to reach out to them in perhaps new and creative ways.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy involve instructing, advising, consoling and comforting. One of the Corporal Works of Mercy is to visit the imprisoned. There are many who are “imprisoned” in their homes because of their age or health conditions.

We are mindful of and grateful for so many persons in our communities who risk their own health and safety by working for us—those “essential workers” in hospitals, fields, factories, grocery stores [and firefighters]. Let us not only be grateful for them because they keep food in our pantries—let us pray and advocate for their protection!

It has been a blessing during this pandemic that so many have been able to work from home. Those persons have been able to maintain their employment, contribute to society in many ways, and spend more time with family.

However, some of the negative consequences of working from home quickly became apparent. To some degree both work and family life have been compromised, particularly for parents of school age children.

It has affected people’s health, physical and mental...I do pray that our families are able to find a proper and healthy balance in their lives. And I invite us all to pray for children and adults whose home environment may expose them to danger, to the possibility of neglect or abuse, even to food [and housing] insecurity.

As multitasking at home has become part and parcel of our culture and lives, I wonder if it has affected our sense of the sacred and our commitment to keeping the Lord’s Day as a time of worship, rest, and of solidarity.

[I invite] us to reflect collectively on how to make time and space in our busy lives for the sacred—[as Christians we are better when we devote time and space to the sacred—for connecting with God and with the Body of Christ, the Church.

[In closing,] here are some practical suggestions for keeping the Lord's Day during this pandemic:

1. Set aside a specific time and even space for prayer;
2. Set aside times for family conversation, perhaps at a Sunday meal;
3. Make time to call friends and relatives to check in on them;
4. Connect with your parish, either virtually or in person, at Sunday Mass;
5. Set aside time for quiet meditation; just five minutes in the morning can make a big difference in how you respond to events through your day;
6. Pray before meals;
7. Make time for works of mercy; they are beneficial not only to those to whom we reach out, but to us, as well;
8. Find nourishment in reading and reflecting over the Scripture readings;

9. Keep faithful to two patterns, which are the foundation of the Eucharist: thanksgiving and intercession. Reflect on the blessings and experiences of the previous week, and pray for the needs of your Parish and Diocese and the needs of all who are oppressed and suffering throughout the world;

10. Finally, before the sacred time of the Lord's Day draws to a close, commit yourself to the particular mission, which God sets before you, to the work that is ours in union with the Risen Christ as he continually works to bring the redemption of the world to its fulfillment.

Yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Oscar Cantú

Bishop of San Jose.