

“Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you” (Jn 6:27). In today’s Gospel, Jesus begins his discourse on the Bread of Life. “First, he instructs them that they need to elevate their minds above physical bread, which sustains earthly life, to heavenly bread, which gives eternal life.”ⁱ

“Do not work for food that perishes.” This reminds us of the commandment: “Remember the sabbath day—keep it holy” (Ex 20:8). The commandment is nothing new. In fact, we follow the example that God gave us at the dawn of creation when he created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Resting does not imply inactivity. “By its nature, the creative act which founds the world is unceasing and God is always at work, as Jesus himself declares in speaking of the Sabbath precept: ‘My Father is working still, and I am working’ (Jn 5:17).” With a day of rest, God dwells on the good work of creation casting “upon it a gaze full of joyous delight.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Resting in the Lord and avoiding laboring for food that perishes, we are more open to cast our gaze on all that God has done for us. We gather in community to hear God’s holy Word proclaimed from Scripture and to worthily receive the Eucharist. Like the Lord, we may engage in some form of activity to build up the Kingdom of God. Corporal and spiritual works of mercy are ways in which we can extend God’s love to others. As we give of ourselves to help others, it is a joyous delight to the Lord, and we often feel refreshed and renewed.

Civil society has recognized a day of rest dating back to the early 4th century when Christianity was accepted under the Emperor Constantine. “On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed.” This enabled people to freely practice religion and gather in churches for Sunday worship.ⁱⁱⁱ

In modern times, governments have enacted Sunday Laws restricting work, banning the sale of alcohol, and promoting a day of worship or rest; however, these laws are fading away as society pushes for round the clock access to material goods. With a more secular approach, we see an increasingly materialistic culture that is hostile to Christianity and the joyful gaze on our Creator.

“Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.” Jesus offers sound advice. When we lose perspective on what is most important, it is often helpful to go back to the beginning. “The early Christians ‘devoted themselves to the breaking of bread and the prayers,’ (Acts 2:42) and in this way they formed a community united by the teaching of the Apostles. Thus ‘they recognized’ that their Risen Lord, who had ascended into heaven, came into their midst anew in that Eucharistic community of the Church and by means of it. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church from the beginning expressed and confirmed her identity through the Eucharist.”^{iv}

We need to work at our faith. God can work miracles in our lives if we give him a chance. In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.” We must yield our own will to the divine will. Truly, we must put aside the work of the world for that which endures and prepares us for eternal life.

ⁱ Martin, Francis; Wright, William M. IV. The Gospel of John. Pg. 120.

ⁱⁱ Dies Domini #11.

ⁱⁱⁱ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_law

^{iv} Dominum et Vivificantem #62.