



Parent Pages

Preparing the environment of the Domestic Church*

*The term "Domestic Church" refers to the family, the smallest body of gathered believers in Christ. Though recovered only recently, the term dates back to the first century AD. The Greek word *ecclesiola* referred to "little church." The early Church understood that the home was fertile ground for discipleship, sanctification, and holiness.

The Liturgical Season of Easter

Each year the Church ponders and enjoys anew the whole of salvation history through the lens of Jesus Christ who sits at its center. Beginning in Advent, we recall the prophets who spoke God's message of hope to a people who recognized the darkness that surrounded them. Christmas marks a time of great celebration as we rejoice in the mystery of the Incarnation, the self-emptying of the Son of God who became man, humbling himself to be born as a tiny baby. In Ordinary Time we recall the words and actions of Jesus who walked about among his sheep, revealing the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. This entire Cycle of Christmas serves as a prelude to the great Cycle of Easter because it is through the Paschal Mystery that the great work of redemption was accomplished. At Mass we sing, "We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your resurrection, until you come again." We have reached the heart of the entire liturgical year! "He is risen, Alleluia!"

"The Great Sunday"

The season of Easter lasts for fifty days, from Easter Sunday to Pentecost (May 31, 2020). This time is celebrated as a as one joyful feast day, or as one 'great Sunday'. In other words, it could be said that the season of Easter marks the year in the same way that Sunday marks the week. This season of fifty days is a "week of weeks" or 7x7 days, with one additional day to give Easter eight Sundays, a hint at eternity. So how do we live a "Great Sunday?" Perhaps it is best to start by examining the weekly Sunday celebration which comes from the Jewish celebration of the Sabbath day.



The Sabbath

Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed. On the seventh day God completed the work he had been doing; he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken.

God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation. (Genesis 2:1-3)

All time belongs to God, as does all that exists. The Sabbath is a sign, a reminder, a memorial of the covenant God made with all of creation from the beginning. Part of loving God is taking time out of

our week to honor him and to follow the example recorded in the beginning of the Scriptures when God, himself, rested. While the Christian people have moved their celebration of the day of rest to the “first day” or “eighth day” as a reminder of Christ’s Resurrection, the practice of resting on this day has not changed. God knows our need for work and for rest and honoring the Lord’s Day provides a regular, weekly time to enjoy God’s many gifts and to give him thanks. “On the day of Sabbath, we are to enjoy creation free from all duty except that of praising God” (*The History of the Kingdom of God: Liturgy and the Building of the Kingdom*, p. 8).

Sunday Liturgy

Each Sunday, the Church throughout the world gathers to give thanks by celebrating the Eucharist, the great prayer of Thanksgiving. The necessity of participating in Sunday Eucharist is often known as our “obligation” not so much because God needs us to gather but that we need to be part of this celebration! The Eucharist unites the People of God and stands as a sign of the day in which all will gather in union, worshiping God fully. However, we are living in a unique time in which the obligation and even the opportunity to participate in the Eucharist, has been suspended. While dedicated priests and clergy throughout the world continue to offer this great sacrifice of praise in isolation and, through uniting ourselves to them, we continue participate from a distance, our Sunday celebration is to extend from the liturgy and encompass our entire day. How then, in this moment in history, are we to continue to keep the Sabbath holy, especially during each day of this “Great Sunday” of Easter?

Celebrating the “Great Sunday” of Easter

While the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy is the greatest prayer of the Church, there are many other forms of prayer which allow for a regular, consistent, and deep awareness of God’s presence and love. Prayer is the practice of listening, receiving, enjoying, and responding to the One who knows us by name. In the season of Easter, we have fifty days to sing Alleluia, to praise God for the myriad of gifts with which he surrounds us, and to live his Kingdom on earth. Perhaps one of the following suggestions will assist you and your family to establish or add to a practice of keeping Sunday holy and honoring the entire season of Easter as the “Great Sunday,” a time set aside for worship and praise of the One who has given us all that we need.

- Sing a favorite Alleluia song each day or see how many songs you can think of which include at least one Alleluia!
- Take time outside, giving thanks to God for the many gifts with which he has filled creation.
- Enjoy an hour of silence by turning off or setting aside technological devices, taking time to recall special events with your family including a vacation, someone’s birth, or how a particular tradition began.
- Gather for a family meal that includes a special way of honoring Sunday by using a lit candle, enjoying a special song, taking time for each person to thank God for a particular gift, etc.
- Read a Scripture passage together as a family. Read slowly, allowing God time to speak, pondering his Word together.
- St. Paul invites us to “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thes 5:17). Over the centuries, the prayer of the Tax Collector in Luke 18:13 has grown into **The Jesus Prayer**. The Tax Collector prayed,

“O God, be merciful to me a sinner.” In the Eastern Churches, in particular, the repetition of this prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,” is encouraged as a regular practice which keeps one’s focus on God throughout the day. Other short prayers including “Come, Holy Spirit,” or “O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me” provide alternatives to The Jesus Prayer.

- When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, Jesus responded with **The Lord’s Prayer**. This prayer permeates our liturgy today. It is part of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours as well as the celebration of the Eucharist and any additional Sacramental Rites which take place during the context of the Mass.
 - Pray the Our Father in the morning and at night.
 - Place one line of the Our Father on your prayer table each day in order to ponder just one line at a time.
 - Look up the Our Father in the Bible and see if there are notes which direct you to other Scriptural passages where Jesus says more about an aspect of the prayer.

