

Reclaim the Sabbath

“Keep my sabbaths, for that is to be the sign between you and me throughout the generations, to show that it is I, the Lord, who make you holy.”

~ Exodus 31:13

The Third of the Ten Commandments states, “Remember the Sabbath day – keep it holy” (Ex 20:8). Today, many of us understand this commandment to mean to be sure to go to Mass. Taking another look at the word “holy” gives us more insight into what might be expected of us.

ho·ly

adj. ho·li·er, ho·li·est

1. Belonging to, derived from, or associated with a divine power; sacred.

(Source: American Heritage Dictionary)

The word holy means “belonging to ... a divine power.” How interesting, too, that, according to Wikipedia, “the English word holy dates back to at least the 11th century with the Old English word halig, an adjective derived from hal, meaning “whole,” and used to mean, “uninjured, sound, healthy, entire, complete.” When we are told to keep the Sabbath holy it means that we are to give, or completely dedicate, that day to God. Yes, this does include going to Mass, and it also means eliminating the distractions and busyness on that day that pull us away from our relationship with God.

Has your Sabbath gotten away from you? Has it become just another day you fill with errands, assignments and requirements? It’s easy to do. Our culture is focused on

production: working, doing and buying. In fact, sometimes, we might actually look to Sunday as the day we get everything done that we couldn't do during our busy week.

So how do you reclaim the Sabbath and dedicate yourselves to it? You can start by laying the ground rules. Talk as a family about what you do on Sundays and what is keeping you from giving your focus to God fully. Take the time to discuss how you can honor God and follow his commandment if you give yourself the time to do it. Of course, going to Mass will be at the top of the list, but how can your family keep the Sabbath holy the entire day?

Here are some ways to get started:

1. Mark the Day: As a family, be intentional about when Sabbath starts and ends for you. For some, it starts on Saturday night and carries through to the following evening. Maybe Sabbath is Sunday morning to evening. Be specific and consistent and mark that time as sacred.

2. Joyful Work: Dedicating your Sabbath to God doesn't mean making it completely devoid of any type of work. Rather, focus on doing work that glorifies God. Is there an activity that truly invigorates you – a bike ride, cooking meals together or giving your time to a local soup kitchen? Choose something that brings wholeness and joy to your lives and honors your relationship with God.

3. Be Present: It takes a lot of time to make something new an integrated part of your life. It also takes conscious effort and teamwork. Make a list or mark your calendar to remind yourself of your dedication. Hold each other accountable and gently remind each other of your intentions.

Practicing Sabbath is something your family will need to make time to do over and over. But by setting aside this day, you will be rewarded with a deeper, more holy, relationship with yourself, your family and God.