

From Fr. Gilles A. Surprenant – Family Life Chaplain – Diocesan Centre for Marriage, Life, & Family

Don't Worry About Immediate Results – Just Try To Observe the Lord's Day of Rest!

THE SABBATH VIGIL – PREPARING THE LORD'S DAY TOGETHER

There is such manipulation from culture pressurizing us to frantic activity 24/7 that we need to help each other to enjoy the rest God offers: to remember our own name, why we are alive, and how to open ourselves to God's blessings. Our Father wants us to put aside work and worries once a week for a whole day or even for 36 hours straight, to catch our breath, to breathe freely again, to rest; so He can bring us into the joy of the Trinity.

We can put aside work and worries by anticipating the Sunday Rest and doing in advance whatever we can to free up the Lord's Day from chores. Some make Friday supper and evening a time to plan ahead the Lord's Day and tell each other what they would need and like to do on the Sunday in order to enjoy rest in the Lord: to spend time with Dad or Mom, to do sports, to get a nap, to go for a walk, to read a novel, to go for a movie together, to do sports or another activity together... and they discuss how and in what order they can help each other accomplish what they need and hope to enjoy on the Lord's Day in order to enter into the Lord's rest.

(This young family's first attempts to observe the Lord's Day of rest at Becket were a start. They had mixed results with the Sunday, but after a family move, were inspired to try the Saturday – the Sabbath – like our Jewish brothers and sisters. Then they broke through and it worked like a charm for them all.)

Our observance of the Sabbath (or Pray and Play Day as the children call it) has developed as we have gone along. We enjoy lots of cuddling, reading, resting and listening to beautiful music together. We have taught our children to respect one another's need for peace and quiet, and have helped them to find ways of playing that are restful to them and respectful to others in the family.

We take family walks or play games (cooperative games or non-competitive are best – as the pleasure is in the playing and not in the outcome as winner or loser). We prepare meals ahead of time if possible or make them very simple affairs (soups, sandwiches or frozen lasagna) where all can enjoy sharing food preparation. We tidy up together at a leisurely pace. We avoid TV and videos except for a small collection of Christian values videos (Veggie Tales, Joseph or Prince of Egypt, Sound of Music, A Dog of Flanders etc, that we may watch together or the children can choose if the parents need to nap).

We listen to Classical music or Christian contemporary music (we dance around the house). We generally switch off popular culture during the Sabbath. We don't answer the telephone. The children do not have friends over, nor do they have any outside activities to attend during the Sabbath. We don't shop, do laundry or clean the house. We may do a little gardening for exercise: but never with the focus of completing a task that needs doing. Even our reading is limited to wholesome (and often Christian) fiction or non-fiction. We avoid catalogues and flyers as well as newspapers – anything that is task or outcome related.

We have told our extended families and friends that we will not be available from Friday evening until Saturday evening (we will sometimes plan ahead to get together Saturday evening for dinner) for family events or phone calls. We know we will find many challenges in keeping the Sabbath holy as our family grows. There will be birthday parties missed, concerts, and courses and other seemingly wonderful opportunities. But we are sure that God will continue to guide us in embracing this very much needed day of rest from the world of work and of outside expectations.

It is a day to be restored and rejuvenated by God's love and our gift to one another as family. The results of giving this time to God have been so far beyond our wildest expectations; we are in awe. The Sabbath is truly the Crown of God, and worth the effort to protect and cherish.

This family even found their children eager to go to Sunday Mass – because it made their family rest last longer, and because they felt God's love and peace there more than before. Be assured that your every attempt to observe the Lord's Day as a day of rest will result in some blessing from the Lord. It doesn't matter how successful you think your day was.

Sabbath Vigil for a Young Family

Begin this family prayer at the end of the day (Friday or Saturday) before a leisurely evening.

Leader (Father or Eldest child): Come in peace, Crown of God.

All repeat: Come in peace, Crown of God.

Mother: Come with joy and cheerfulness among your faithful people.
Like a gentle touch, the Sabbath comes – wiping away fear, sadness
and memories of pain.

Father: Do not give yourself over to sadness and do not worry.
A joyful heart is life itself. Joy is what makes your life long.
Care for your self, lift up your heart and chase sorrow far away.

As the Mother lights the candles,

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe,
Who has made us holy by your laws
And asked us to kindle the Sabbath lights.

Father: Light and rejoicing to God's chosen people.
Sabbath; Soother of sorrows, Healer of broken hearts,
Banish despair! Here is hope come!

Mother: And now bless the God of all,
Who everywhere works great wonders;
Who fosters our growth from the moment we are conceived,
And deals with us according to his mercy.
May he give us gladness of heart and may there be peace in our days.
May he entrust to us his mercy and may he save us in his time.

Leader: Come in peace, Crown of God.

All repeat: Come in peace, Crown of God.

Father: Come with joy and cheerfulness among your faithful people. Amen.

This family ritual will help you create a “cathedral in time” and open you and your children to God’s love and – making your Sunday Worship a more meaningful and powerful connection with the Father in Jesus – “opening time” for the Holy Spirit to “breathe the life of the Holy Trinity” into each heart.

P.S.: This Family Liturgy for a Sabbath Vigil was taken from **The Spiritual Life Institute**, a mixed eremitical community of monks in the Carmelite tradition at <http://www.spirituallifeinstitute.org/index.html>

A Christian Sabbath Vigil

Sabbath Reflection, Lights, and Prayer of Praise

“What we are depends on what the Sabbath is to us. The Sabbath is a sanctuary which we build, a sanctuary in time. When all work is brought to a standstill, the candles are lit. It is the woman who ushers in the joy and sets up the most exquisite symbol, light, to dominate the atmosphere. The Sabbath comes like a caress, wiping away fear, sorrow, and somber memories. It is already night when joy begins, when a beautifying surplus of soul visits our mortal bones and lingers on.”

(Rabbi Abraham Heschel)

The Lord’s Day belongs to Him – He wants us to give it back to Him to remember his love for us and find our rest in Him; find refuge from the troubles of the world and burdens of this earthly existence.

Leader: *(As candles are lit.)*

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us by your commandments and commanded us to kindle the Sabbath lights.

All: *Light and rejoicing to Israel. Sabbath, soother of sorrows, comfort of downtrodden Israel, healing the hearts that were broken. Banish despair! Here is Hope come!*

Leader & All: *The Liturgy of the Hours – especially Evening Prayer and Night Prayer*
<https://divineoffice.org/> or <http://www.ibreviary.org/en/> or <http://www.universalis.com/>

Where and when possible, multiply the opportunities for participation: Leader, Cantor, Reader, alternating “choirs” for reciting the psalm(s), etc.

Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

In a chapel or church setting, the Blessed Sacrament may be exposed as usual, a brief few minutes of silence, Benediction as usual, the Diving Praises, and a period of silent adoration; which could extend through the night, as by the monks of the Spiritual Life Institute. (Cf. www.spirituallifeinstitute.org)

Variations – *Sabbath themes: wakefulness, stillness, rest, joy, thankfulness, light, radiant presence of God, trust, faith, Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Light, comfort in sorrow and pain, trouble and distress, carving out a refuge in time for a soul-filling encounter with the Lord in the cusp between the week ending and the new one coming, and seasonal variations in liturgy.*

One can develop variations on the above Sabbath Reflection, Lights, and Prayer of Praise with the addition of readings from the Old Testament (Jewish Scriptures) such as:

*Sir 30:21-24; 50:22-24; Rev 22:5; Ps 35:19; 2 Chr 36:21; Ps 67:33; Ps 103:1; Is 43:18;
Ex 15:14,17; Ps 42:2; Ps 83:9,12; Ps 26:4-5; Ps 83:2; Ps 72:14; Is 54:1,4; Is 62:1,2-5;
Lk 8:16-18; Jer 17:21-22; Mt 11:28; Is 9:2-3; Ps 106:10; Ps 115:7; Ps 80:7; Ps 60:3; Is 2:5; Gen 1:1-5; Song
of Songs (various verses); Ps 17:29; Jn 1:4; Ps 9:1; Ps 26:1; 1 Jn 1:5-7; Ps 96:11; Ex 31:12-13; Ez 20:12; Is
56:6; Ps 42:3; Ps 88:16; Ps 49:2; Ex 16:4-5, 6-7, 13-15, 21-26, 29-30, 31; Jn 6:32, 35, 49, 54, 57; and so on.*

There's just not enough hours in the day.

Technology was supposed to free us. Instead, the opposite has happened.

DONNA NEBENZAHL

The Gazette

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It's called role overload, and we're all too familiar with it. That's when your day is so full - getting kids out to school, rushing through a few chores, fighting traffic to work, the increasingly stressful workday, hurrying home to feed the family, overseeing homework, going to a meeting or checking in on an elderly parent, doing more chores, catching the news, then heading to bed so you can rise and do it all over again - that nothing feels good. Simply put, according to the principal investigator of a Health Canada study, *Work-Life Conflict in Canada in the Millennium: a Status Report*, it means having too much to do in a given amount of time. Or, as the report says, "when the prescribed activities of multiple roles are too great to perform the roles adequately or comfortably."

The study outlines the worst-case scenario: almost 60 per cent of Canadians who are employed outside the home cannot balance work and family demands. Carleton University professor Linda Duxbury, an expert in work-family conflict, led the team whose research findings, conducted in 2001, were published in October. It's a strong study, using 31,571 Canadian employees who work in medium and large companies, 46 per cent in the public sector, 33 per cent in the not-for-profit sector and 20 per cent in the private sector. Among the respondents, 46 per cent work in managerial and professional positions, while 54 per cent work in clerical, administrative, retail and production. As the study shows, the stresses are high - and growing. The majority of employees - 58 per cent - report high levels of role overload, and another 30 per cent report moderate levels.

More troubling is the increase in these stats - 11 per cent since 1991 - caused in part, the study suggests, by the increased amount of time respondents in the 2001 sample spend with work and family. Not to mention organizations that still reward long hours at the office rather than performance and - an event many are now familiar with - the downsizing that has taken place in many companies (which the researchers aptly refer to as "organizational anorexia").

But there's another culprit, and this one's insidious, but pretty obvious to anyone with eyes or ears. That's the proliferation of information and communications technology in our daily lives. It seems apparent now the happy predictions technology would free us from the workplace and give us more leisure time were a load of bunk. In fact, the opposite has happened. "Comparisons done using 1991 and 2001 samples suggest that time in work has increased over the past decade," researchers write. "Whereas one in 10 respondents in 1991 worked 50 or more hours per week, one in four does so now. ... This increase in time in work was observed for all groups and all sectors."

As if that wasn't bad enough, it turns out we careful, ready-to-please Canadians are working more at the expense of our families. "Three times as many Canadians give priority to work at the expense of their family," the study points out. It's not a great leap to realize that this is no way to run a business, or to work for one. That's because employees with high role overload are less satisfied with their jobs, less committed to them and more likely to want to leave. As a result, they're more likely to take time off because of physical and mental-health problems. And that's not all. The companies lose as well because of increased absenteeism (3 1/2 times more from employees with high role overload), and because they're more likely to have problems with employee turnover and retention. Clearly, our workplaces need some readjustment. And it should start with reducing employee workloads. Next week: Why we should care about work-life conflict.

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