

THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

Every Sunday Is The Eighth Day

The Christian Church re-invented the Sabbath on the first day of the week; but it was always understood to be a symbol of a new, eighth day (as in the Seven Days of Creation) on which the resting God arose from rest, and inaugurated his new creation.

What D'you Mean, The "Resting God"?

A good question, Theophilus. If God were able to get tired it would make sense. Isaiah tells us (40:28) *He does not grow tired or weary*. So we have to think, not that God needs to rest, but that he chooses to. What does "rest" mean in such circumstances? It means the ability to find fulfilment, not in doing something, but in simply being.

Does God Rest On The Eighth Day?

On the Eighth Day, which is Easter, God raises Jesus from the grave; and of this deed St Paul says: *You can tell how extraordinarily great is the power that he has exercised for us who believe: which is like his power at work in Christ, the power he exercised by raising him from the dead*. So God does not rest on the Eighth Day, but works, exercising tremendous and extraordinary power.

Should We Rest On The Eighth Day?

A trick question, Theophilus! We've answered it in various ways over the years. Oliver Cromwell wouldn't let the British go for a walk on a Sunday (unless it was on the way to Chapel) and the Lord's Day Observance Society wanted to close anything you had to pay to get into. But we have a relaxed attitude, and therefore we end up going to work and shopping and doing all manner of tiring and upsetting things. In this we are sad losers, who have forgotten how to live well. We forget that the exercise of power, for God, is effortless, because unlike us he has infinities of power to call on. So his capacity to work and rest at the same time is symbolised, even in the Book of Genesis, by the way in which his work of Creation is carried out (*God said, Let there be light, and there was light*). Effortless, see? As you might suppose, this whole story was written by priests, whose aim was to use a half-truth to convince us of a whole one - viz., that everybody human needs a rest, and that this

is a message from God. So God is "shown" resting on the seventh day. Giving good example.

What Does God Look Like, Resting?

Another excellent question; and it points us forwards to the greater one: *what does God look like, working?* The answer will instruct us how to behave on the Eighth Day. God's work on Easter Day exercised extraordinary power, but, as ever, *effortlessly*. Therefore we should think of a sort of working which is more like an exercise of freedom. There's all the difference in the world between the miserable slog we go in for to earn a living, which partakes of the obedience of slaves (that is, people who have been sold to someone else) and the sort of work which expresses who we are, freely and joyously engaged in because it so completely expresses our being. The Church knew this distinction, and so it made its law, that on Sundays we should abstain from *servile* work (*servile* means *slavish*). I noticed the other day that the book of Deuteronomy does not relate the Sabbath rest to God's resting after Creation at all. Instead, it says (Deut 5:15): *Remember that you were once a slave in Egypt; and the Lord your God brought you out of there with mighty hand and outstretched arm; this is why the Lord your God has commanded you to keep the Sabbath day*. I think I like this reason for the Sabbath much better than the seventh-day one. On the Sabbath day you will rest *because God does not want you to be a slave*. That's a far better reason, because it's based on God's desire for us to share in his life, which is tirelessly, joyously creative. On this eighth day of Easter, we look forward to the day when this will be true of us. Fr

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