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Friday's Gospel: Resting by Placing God at the Center

Gospel for Friday in the 15th
Week of Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 12:1-8*)

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath.”

He said to them, “Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law how on the sabbath the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath.”

Commentary

In today’s Gospel passage Jesus tells us that the precept to rest on the

Sabbath is not a mere compliance with legal rules but that these rules are subordinated to a greater precept: honoring God.

The Pharisees confront Jesus over the question of the Sabbath. Jesus, by his divine authority, gives the definitive interpretation of the Law. God instructed the Jewish people to respect the Sabbath and refrain from working on that day. Over time, this divine precept became more and more complicated and turned into a rigid set of rules: 39 tasks were prohibited on the Sabbath.

But Jesus teaches us here the true meaning of the Sabbath: to honor God on a day dedicated to the Lord that reminds us that our life belongs to God and should be directed to Him.

Following this same Jewish tradition, Christians moved the Sabbath to Sunday, since it is the day on which

the central event of our salvation occurred: Christ's resurrection. Respecting Sunday as a day of rest reminds us of the centrality of Christ in our lives.

Pope Francis reminded us: "Sunday is not the day to forget about the other days, but to remember them, to bless them and give thanks for our life. Life is precious. It is not easy, sometimes it is painful, but it is precious" (*Homily*, 9 May 2018).

Saint Josemaría said: "Rest means recuperation: to gain strength, form ideals and make plans. In other words, it means a change of occupation, so that you can come back later with a new impetus to your daily job" (*Furrow*, 514).

We need to rest in order to refocus our head and heart on the most important reality in our life: striving to love God in our daily lives. Therefore, when Jesus rebukes the

Pharisees, he does so because their heart has strayed from the true purpose of rest, which is to honor God. By complying with a series of rules, the Pharisees divert the precept towards their own efforts.

You and I too want God to be the center of our lives. Sunday directs our eyes to God, who is the one who can truly make us happy, and reminds us that we must put God at the center of all our daily endeavors.

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