

Column – The Lord’s Day in 2024

Something precious and vital has been lost in American society over the last 50 years. The almost universal custom of keeping one day in seven special, the Lord’s Day, has virtually disappeared, at least in many parts of our country.

It was not so when I was growing up; churches were seldom locked and well attended. Once on the way to church in the family station wagon we spied a man mowing his grass. So rare and odd this sight, we turned and stared.

In those days, at least in our community, well over half the population were in church on the Lord’s Day. More than that, there were certain prescribed things you did and did not do after the morning service.

Once home you ate lunch, usually a rather large family meal. I understand now why my mother, if the service did not start precisely on time, would look at her watch and say under her breathe, “Let’s get the show on the road.” No doubt she was thinking of what she had do to get the meal on the table.

After lunch, there was no working in the garden, but you could sit on the porch and read the newspaper or go fishing (that was relaxation, not work).

Sometimes there was a ride in the country. Often, we would pass a white, framed church where African-Americans worshiped. In the summertime, the windows would be open with the sound of fervent, heart-filled praise going forth. Invariably, someone in the car would say dryly, “I see Mt. Moriah – or whatever the name of the church was – is still ‘holding forth’.

On occasion we would stop at someone’s house. The ‘visiting’ that would follow would often be done on the front porch. Not so with children; they were shewed off and told to go and play.

In the evening, many would return to church for a second service. Then, it was home, a light meal and time to go to bed.

Yes, something precious and vital has been lost, but how so? Well, for one thing, the old order

I have described represented God's order. At the time of the French Revolution, the atheistic revolutionaries, in an attempt to eliminate the Lord's Day and its association with the resurrection, put in place a ten-day week. It did not work. After 12 years of experimentation, the old seven-day week was restored with the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte.

We humans, it seems, were made for a sabbath, one day out of seven to recharge our spiritual batteries. A sign out front of a church read, "Seven days without God makes one weak." A lousy pun? Perhaps. The words are nevertheless true.

More than that, neglecting to gather together on the Lord's Day seems to have been a 1st century problem before it was a 21st century one. The writer of Hebrews admonishes his readers: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." His words still hold.

Keeping the Lord's Day special may well be an old-fashioned virtue that needs to make a

comeback in our harried world. Why not resolve to do something counter-cultural this Sunday -- go to church in the morning and take a drive in the country in the afternoon?

O GOD, who makest us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of thy Son our Lord; Vouchsafe us this day such blessing through our worship of thee, that the days to come may be spent in thy service; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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