



## ***A Day of Rest***

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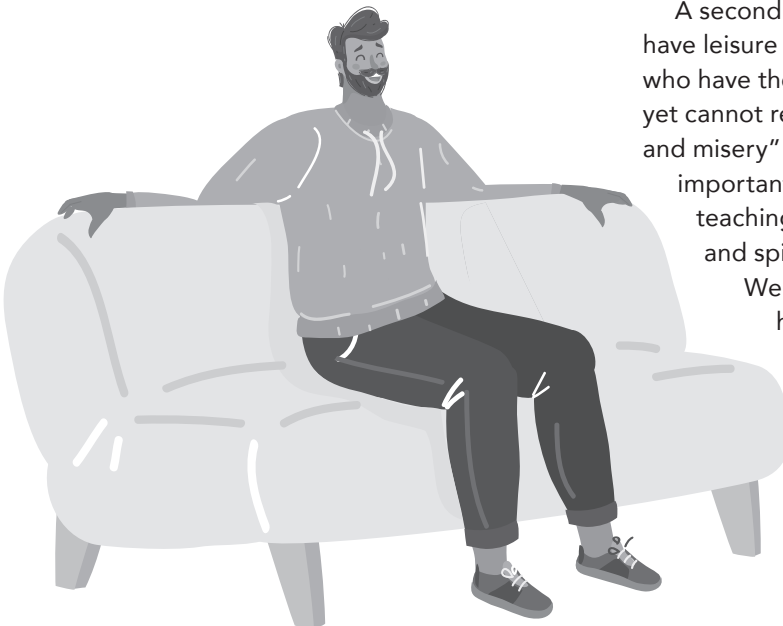
**Q**uestions about Sunday's day of rest are among the most common found in our mailbag. *What kind of activity is permitted on a Sunday? How much activity is too much activity? What does "servile work" mean? What are my responsibilities as a parent to my minor children? Should I insist on limits to their activities?* The list seems to be endless.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives important direction and context that

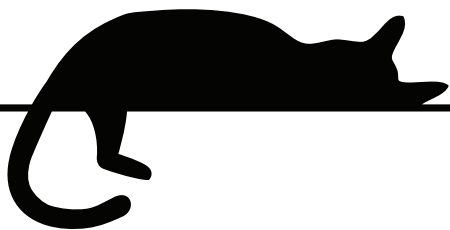
are essential for guidance. It teaches that "on Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are to refrain from engaging in work or activities that hinder the worship owed to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, the performance of the works of mercy, and the appropriate relaxation of mind and body. Family needs or important social service can legitimately excuse from the obligation of Sunday rest" (CCC 2185).

A second essential is that "Christians who have leisure should be mindful of their brethren who have the same needs and the same rights yet cannot rest from work because of poverty and misery" (CCC 2186). This context is important to fully understand and apply the teaching about the Lord's day into our life and spiritual practice.

We know the directive to "keep holy the Sabbath" is anchored in our spiritual tradition, and we understand there is a lived reality of the tradition. For example, Christians traditionally keep Sunday holy, not the Sabbath that Jews keep from Friday night until Saturday evening.



***One “size” does not fit all. In fact, your spiritual practice will not remain constant but will change with the circumstances of your life.***



As part of our developing tradition, we also understand that, at one time in the not-too-distant past, many Christians would be categorized as men and women who experienced poverty and misery. Most Christians once were poor and unable to determine when they would work, how they would work, what kind of work they would do, or how they might organize their day or week. Most Christians were not part of the landed aristocracy but were tied to the land in servile work for the landowner. This historical reality helps us understand the guidance in the CCC.

The prohibition against servile work on Sunday was aimed directly at landowners, those people who were able to control work and production. As Christians they were prohibited from requiring their workers to engage in work on Sundays and holy days. This was the only way ordinary people would be able to enjoy any kind of rest and respite from daily toil. In a sense, the ban speaks more to the question of power than it does to work.

Today, most Christians are no longer tied to the land, nor is servile labor part of their work life. They are generally free to decide on their own about work and rest. What is important is the CCC's direction for the “appropriate relaxation of mind and body” along with “proper worship.” The emphasis has changed as the reality of living has developed and evolved.

In today's religious practice, discernment is

more important—and more difficult to apply—than a ban. In discerning a practice to follow, we have to determine how to apply the value of a concept or teaching. People with the scrupulous condition are inclined to choose a prohibitive, clearly defined expectation. Of course, a variety of self-styled experts are quite willing to list directives to follow. But that “easy way” is most often not the best way.

As tempting as it might be to identify an expert and follow his or her direction, a more mature, integrative, and healthier approach is to think through and decide to apply the spiritual practice that works best for you. One “size” does not fit all. In fact, your spiritual practice will not remain constant but will change with the circumstances of your life. What may be useful and appropriate at one point may not necessarily be the best way at another point.

I will not provide you with a list of activities that are acceptable or a list of activities that are prohibited because no listing could be truthful or complete. I will, however, give you helpful direction: Be generous with your choices and as nonrestrictive as possible. Another way to look at it is to choose to be celebratory and grateful. Enjoy life, people, experiences. Engage in life.

Most especially, never restrict or overly discipline your life in the name of God. The Lord does not require or demand such a response from you. It does not give honor to God and does not make the day holy. In the Christian tradition, Sunday is the Lord's day, the time to celebrate living and all of life. ☼

# Will You Let Him Enter?

**T**his was a first. I had never had a catechist take a group that I was part of outside of the classroom for a lesson. Today, however, we had no ordinary catechist. He was a friend... and tonight he was our substitute teacher.

As we walked from the classroom to the church, my curiosity grew. Where are we going? I thought, *Is he taking us to the church to pray? What will he say? How did he come to so believe in God that he spends his free time being a catechist—or at least subbing for one?* As my thoughts wandered, we stopped at a statue of Christ on the cross that was illuminated by spotlights.

“Take some time to look at Christ Jesus on the cross,” he finally said. “What do you see? What do you feel? What thoughts come to mind when you gaze at this passionate scene?”

I thought to myself, *What do I see?* I see sheer anguish, nails violently piercing his hands and feet, blood streaming down his body. Then I see his eyes. They look upward, at peace. *What do you feel?* Well, I guess I feel confused. His body says one thing, but his eyes say another. I feel disturbed by this horrific death—and afraid because I understand we’re all capable of the kind of cruelty inflicted on our Lord. *My thoughts?* I don’t understand why anyone would choose to die like this. I heard that Jesus willingly allowed himself to be whipped, stripped naked, mocked, spit upon, nailed to a cross,



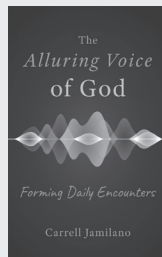
and die in seeming disgrace. All for us. How can he love us this much?

My thoughts were suddenly interrupted. *Knock. Knock. Knock.* I looked up and saw my friend’s hand lifted high, knocking on the cross as one would tap on a door. “Do you hear that?” he asked the class. “That is Christ, our God, knocking on your heart.

He is always knocking on our hearts. Why? Because he loves us. He wants to be near us, heal us, transform us. He wants to speak to us. He doesn’t want to barge in and force us to open our hearts to him. That’s not his way. He is a God of peace, healing, and great love. So, he keeps knocking.” *Knock. Knock. Knock.* “Will you answer his call? Will you let him enter? Will you open that door to him? Will you allow him to be a part of your life, let him live in your heart? It’s your choice.”

Until that evening, I had yet to meet someone who was truly on fire for God. That night, I left inspired.

The first step to a meaningful relationship with God is simply answering God’s call when he knocks on our heart, letting the life-changing conversation begin. ✨



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# Mailbox

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**Q.** *I have been told that we can sin in our dreams. How can this be true since there is no consent? I have awakened a couple of times when I was horrified that I could have had such a dream. I was unaware that I had a subconscious desire for such a thing to happen.*

**A.** You cannot sin in your dreams. The symbols and the stories that your dreams reveal are an undisciplined collection of random thoughts, actions, experiences, and people. The free-flowing experience of dreaming is necessary for our healthy mental living, but we are not responsible for how the story is told.

## Announcement

Due to increased production and distribution costs and the popularity of digital delivery options, the print edition of *Scrupulous Anonymous* is being mailed only to subscribers in the United States, beginning this month, January 2022. To subscribe free of charge, visit [scrupulousanonymous.org](http://scrupulousanonymous.org).

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**Q.** *Is the phrase, "Oh my God" a sin? If I say it, am I using the name of the Lord in vain?*

**A.** No, it is not a sin, it is an exclamation. It may be an exclamation of praise. It may be an exclamation of surprise. It may be many things, but it is not and cannot be a sin. I see it more as a reflection of a faithful person exclaiming about an event or experience in life.



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