

Homily: March 7, 2021

Stress, burnout, depression are familiar words. They describe the psychological price many Americans pay for living in our complex society. For those who suffer these anxieties which may lead to drug and alcohol abuse, the weekly celebration of Sunday as a holy day can have a healing effect.

We head in the 1st reading from the Old Testament the commandment: *“Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.”* The Sabbath was a sacred weekly holy day because after six days of creative work God rested from work. Selling animals and changing money in the Temple were not in themselves wrong. They were commercial activities necessary for the support of the Temple worship. But these activities were interfering with the time for worship and disrupting the worship celebration itself. Jesus condemned the transaction of business in the sacred area of the Temple and was invoking the commandment of keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest. So, both the Old Testament law and the example of Jesus insists that there must be a time and place in our lives reserved solely for God and worship.

There is wisdom in this teaching; and it is this, make in the image and likeness of God we are human beings, not machines or beasts of burden. As human beings we have physical, psychological, and spiritual needs that cannot be neglected without damage to ourselves and our society. By providing time for rest and worship, Sunday enables us to care properly for our body, mind, and spirit.

Attending to our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs is especially important in our large impersonal society because all of us can easily be reduced to becoming things---like cogs in an economic wheel or digits in a computer.

In our highly technological atmosphere, we may tend to think of ourselves only as a means to an end; we forget our human needs allowing our work, or career to consume us. This is happening already as demonstrated in the increasing numbers of people complaining of too much stress, or burnout, the rise in the drug and alcohol addictions, and the high divorce rate. The less we can communicate civilly to one another, the more we are in danger of developing a violent disregard for the sanctity of human life and a flagrant disregard for the norms governing our society. This is demonstrated by the continuing high number of abortions, the rise in racial discrimination, and the rampant violence brought about by easy access to handguns.

As a nation we have committed trillions of dollars to build complex, technologically advanced weapons and machines whose only purpose is to bring about mass destruction. Yet, at the same time, we ignore the millions of human beings suffering from hunger, poverty, illness, inadequate education. In short, despite all our technological wizardry we are becoming dehumanized, less human, and blind to the helpless ones among us.

It doesn't have to be this way. We can bring the potential for good to the technological world we inhabit. Technology is not bad---we all benefit from it---the danger is that it is controlling us, rather than be it. Perhaps the place to start is by returning to the understanding of Sunday as God's precious gift. Sunday as a day for rest, for healing and communion with God, our loved ones, ourselves.

Jesus says, "*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.*" Sunday is the Lords' gift to us. It flows from God's inexhaustible love for us and carries us to the fullness of life. In Sunday's peace we discover Christ's healing power and wisdom, and the truth of the words of today's psalm "*The law of the Lord is perfect, it refreshes my soul*" [Ps 19].

Fr. Bill