

PENTECOST Today

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Photo: Madonna

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Renewing the grace of Pentecost in the life and mission of the church.

Chairman's Corner

by Fr. Patsy Iaquina



Naming our hope for the new millennium

We begin the Great Jubilee Year 2000 with the first issue of our publication under its new name, *Pentecost Today*. It is appropriate for us to mark the beginning of the Jubilee and the New Millennium with such a change because it signifies the belief of the National Service Committee that we are at a threshold in human history, a point of new beginnings, a point of change. We, with the whole church, celebrate the crossing of this threshold into a new era filled with hope.

The new name of our publication does not merely mark a special occasion; it is also a statement of faith. We believe that the outpouring of the grace of Pentecost which we call baptism in the Holy Spirit is in fact a special work of God for this era of human history. As the Spirit has been active in every age—guiding humanity to fulfill its potential as the image and likeness of God—so now the Spirit guides us to address the challenges and opportunities of a new millennium.

These challenges and opportunities are indeed daunting. Human development has brought us the technology to put a man on the moon and to send a spacecraft beyond the limits of our solar system. It has split the atom and unleashed its awesome—and fearsome—energy. It has given us the means to communicate instantaneously with any point on the globe, showing the boundaries between nations to be the artificial divisions they are. Medical and social sciences have provided some understanding of the intricacies

of the human body and mind, as well as their connections with the soul. Yet these great achievements have at times been used by one group to wage war against another, to gain unfair economic advantage, or to devastate the earth's resources, resulting in the distortion of humanity's dignity as image of God and stewards of God's creation.

In spite of their negative effects, our faith does not teach that technology and science, art and literature, or economic and political structures are to be denounced as the work of evil. Rather, our faith asserts that human development over the ages is in fact the fruit of God's Spirit among us. Our challenge is to insure that all human development brings the race as a whole, and each human person in particular, closer to our full identity as image and likeness of God. To do this, we have been given the Spirit of God.

As the first disciples of Jesus crossed the threshold of the Upper Room certain that the Spirit they had received empowered them to do all that Jesus had done, may we be confident as we cross this threshold that we are empowered to renew the face of the earth. May we be bold as we embrace both the challenges and opportunities of this new era in the power of the Holy Spirit. May we be convinced that we are indeed experiencing Pentecost today! ♦

Fr. Patsy Iaquina is chairman of the National Service Committee. He is pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Bluefield, West Virginia.

We are at a threshold in human history, a point of new beginnings.

PENTECOST Today

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For Your Information

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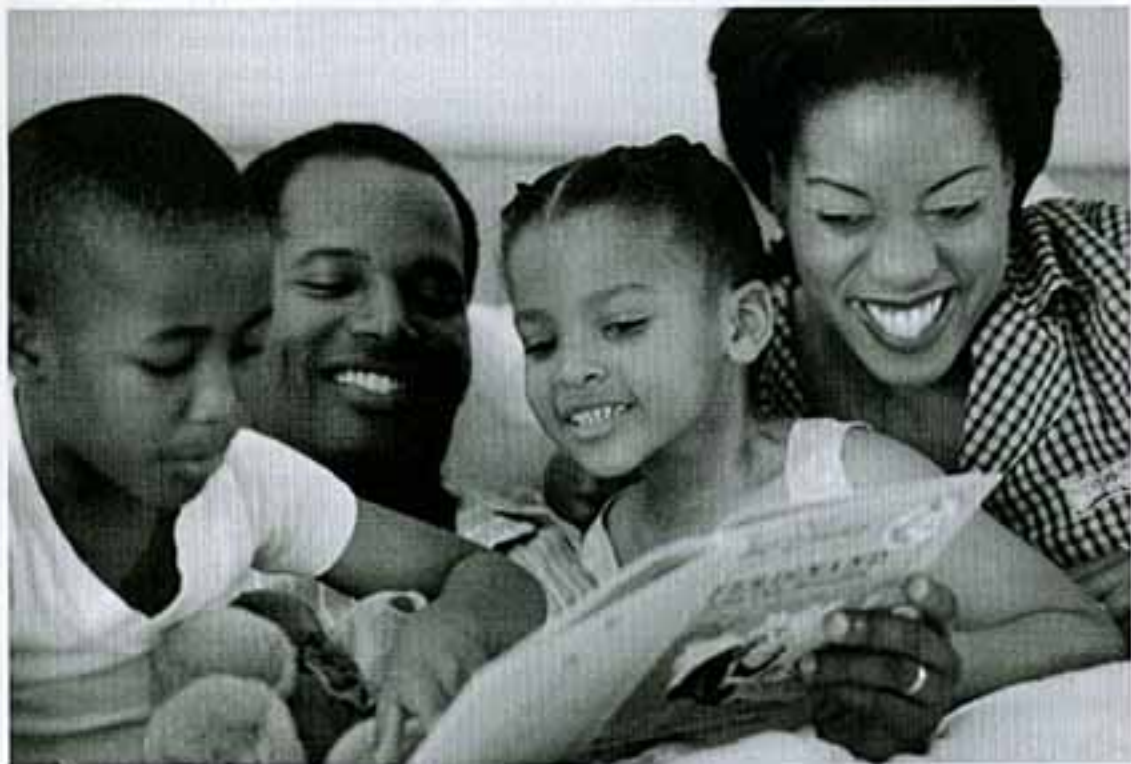
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Discovering the Gift of the Sabbath

by Fr. Rich Simon

Priests are asked the most amazing questions: everything from, "What time is the midnight Mass?" to, "If God is so good, why am I so miserable?" In Charismatic Renewal some particularly tough questions are asked in the give-and-take of grass roots ecumenism. When someone eyes my Roman collar and begins by saying, "Brother..." I know I'm in for it! They ask a shopping list of questions that they think will stump me. "If the Bible says, 'Call no man father,' why do Catholics call priests father? If the Bible allows no graven images, why do the Catholics have statues? And, If the Sabbath is Saturday, why do Catholics worship on Sunday?" There are about twenty more questions on the list dealing with the eating of pork, tithing, the saints and purgatory.

Sunday is the fulfillment of the Sabbath.

It should be spent joyfully and prayerfully with our families, friends and spiritual communities.

We should strive to live with a rhythm and order in our daily lives that reflects our confidence in God's perfect providence.

that we have a new relationship with the law. That relationship is made clear by the Lord Jesus himself when he says, "I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it" (Matt. 5:17). He fulfilled the law once and for all in his death and resurrection and we fulfill it continually as we live in his name. We cannot then ignore the law nor even just observe it. We are challenged to fulfill it.

For example, we do not simply avoid adultery. We fulfill the sixth commandment by striving for that intimacy and friendship with our spouses that mirrors the love Christ has for the church. We don't just refrain from stealing. We are called to sacrificial generosity. There is however, one commandment more neglected in our time than all others: Keep holy the Sabbath. Just as we are bound to fulfill all the commandments, so are we obligated to fulfill this one. It is not an optional commandment.

Sunday has become a day of shopping, meetings, travel, sports events, household chores and general catch-up for all those things not done in the week. Read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraphs 2184 to 2186. Sunday is the fulfillment of the Sabbath. It is the Lord's Day, not the Mall's Day, not the School's Day, nor the Day of the Big Game! It should be spent joyfully and prayerfully with our families, friends and spiritual communities.

In the Scriptures, we are repeatedly commanded to rest. This is not extraneous. It is a center piece of the law of Moses, and its fulfillment must be a centerpiece of our relationship to the law. Sabbath rest was the hallmark of the people of God in the Old Covenant. Why? Because slaves had no rest. The people of Israel were free.

We, the new Israel, have allowed ourselves to become slaves to consumerism. "Shop till you drop!" One thinks of the letter to the Hebrews in which we read that the disobedient former slaves dropped in the desert and their bones bleached until a new generation was raised up, one which was faithful to the Lord and capable of entering the Lord's rest. Read Psalm 95.

To work constantly is idolatry, even to work compulsively in the church. In effect we are saying that God cannot do it without us. To work without rest is to deny that we are saved by his grace, that God is incapable of doing it without me. He can't pull off the bake sale, the seminar, the choir rehearsal, etc., unless I'm there to do it for him. Poor God, helpless without me! What arrogance! Be still and know that he is God. In other words, sit down, be silent and first seek the Lord that he might "build the house," no matter what it is!

If, for legitimate reasons, as explained in the Catechism, we cannot observe rest on Sunday, we must find another way to fulfill the law of Sabbath rest. We should strive to live with a rhythm and order in our daily lives that reflects our confidence in God's perfect providence. Our lives as believers should not reflect slavery but our prayerful intimacy with the Lord. We must spend sufficient time and rest with our spouses and our children. Have a family night. Maybe even a little family prayer and Bible or Catechism study. Unplug the phone, get a decent movie at the video store, turn off the pager, make the popcorn and enjoy the Promised Land for a little while. It is part of the sacramental commitment of marriage and it glorifies God.

The Jubilee Year was the ultimate Sabbath in which debts were remitted and slaves were freed. Have you been feeling like a slave recently? Let us rededicate ourselves to worthy celebration of the Sabbath as our observance of the Holy Year. Perhaps then our society, enslaved to consumerism and shallow, passive entertainment, will see in us the freedom of the children of God. ♦

A priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Fr. Rich Simon is pastor of St. Thomas of Canterbury Parish in uptown Chicago and teaches classical Greek and Latin at



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At first, one is tempted to dismiss the whole topic and the questioner, but they are important questions. They all boil down to one basic question: What is the relationship of the follower of Jesus to the law of Moses, and for that matter, to biblical law in general? Too often my generation's answer was to quote St. Augustine: "Love God and do what you will!"

We would have done better to quote St. Paul who said in his letter to the Galatians that the law was our "baby sitter" (my translation of the Greek word *paidagogos*) until faith in Christ came (Gal. 3:24, 25). St. Paul says

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