

9th Sunday of the Year B
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Lectionary 86:

- **Deut 5:15** – Remember that you too were once slaves in the land of Egypt, and the LORD, your God, brought you out from there with a strong hand and outstretched arm. That is why the LORD, your God, has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.
- **Ps 81:3-4, 5-6, 7-8A, 10-11AB** – In distress you called and I rescued you; R. Sing joyfully to God our strength.
- **2 Cor 4:8** – We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained; perplexed, but not driven to despair
- **Mark 2:27** – Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”
- <https://catholicreadings.org/ninth-sunday-in-ordinary-time-year-b/>

Possible preaching themes:

- God has delivered us into lives of freedom.
 - The liberation of God is not only a call upon our lives to practice justice, love mercy, and walk humbly.
 - It is also a reminder that we cannot save ourselves and our salvation is directly linked to the Sabbath.
 - By observing the Sabbath we recognize the continuing presence of God in our lives and trust its provenance and deliverance today even when we regularly rest for spiritual and physical recuperation.
- Do not confuse following Jesus with rubrics and meeting the expectations of others.
 - The Pharisees misunderstand that ritual adherence is not the content of faithfulness, but a portal to living in Christ without boundary.
 - Flexibility and openness in Christ are not threats to obedience toward God, but markers of grasping the wide love of God.

Scientific resources:

- **Archaeologists discover human burials as sources for understanding superstitious and magical practices of ancient peoples:**
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/25/science/archaeology-ancient-rome-tomb.html>
 - <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/antiquity/article/magical-practices-a-nonnormative-roman-imperial-cremation-at-sagalassos/0559636D95DF5D5CEACACE733F758D1E>

- **Sunflower seedlings sprout longer stems in the dark but heartier overall plant composition in the light:**
 - <https://stemeducation.nd.edu/resources/scientific-phenomena/april-phenomenon>
 - <https://www.cannagardening.com/effect-light-spectrum-plant-development>

Homily outline using both resources: We can trust and act upon the gift of God's freedom

- We might think that observing the Sabbath as Christians means Sundays off from work and going to Church.
 - Sabbath, however, is more than a reference to the 7th day of rest after creation.
 - Observing the Sabbath connects us back to God liberating the Israelites and giving them reason to trust in God apart from their own work and efforts to free themselves.
- It might be illuminating to compare observing the Sabbath to plants and their relationship to sunlight:
 - We may already know what photosynthesis is (if not, [click here for a short video](#) to watch).
 - Most of us may not know, however, that it is not only possible to grow seedlings indoors and in the dark
 - but that it actually possible to grow [a taller sunflower seedling indoors and in darkness,](#)
 - than a sunflower seedling grown outdoors and in the sunlight.
 - The problem, however, is that the impressive initial height of the seedling grown inside and in the darkness is not as sturdy as the seedling grown outdoors with consistent light.
- The light of God is a consistent gift in our lives.
 - We might be able to achieve more worldly success if we work on our Christian equivalent of the Sabbath
 - or even altogether ignore rituals surrounding Sunday and the expressions of faith in which it rests
 - But if we take that path our growth in life shielded from or reimagined without Sabbath will be flimsy:
 - maybe tall, but not spiritually hearty.
- Committing to a Christian understanding of Sabbath observance, of course, is much more than going to Mass or fulfilling other ritual obligations presumed necessary for being a "good Catholic."
 - In Mark, the Pharisees are quick to criticize Jesus for feeding his disciples and healing on the Sabbath.

- Yet Jesus counters their accusations of these ritual violations by framing his actions as actually fulfilling the desires of God.
- Jesus sharply corrects the Pharisees, reminding them that the will and law of God is to do good and to save life.
- We should not treat Sunday observance like a superstition we keep or any other aspect of churchly life.
 - Archaeologists recently discovered all kinds of twisted, bent, and reshaped nails surrounding a body at a burial site in Turkey.
 - They believe the nails were used like magical charms to keep the corpse and its evil spirit in place.
 - For us Christians, it is important not to treat Sunday observance or any other aspect like magical rituals or incantations to keep us on the right path.
 - Even from a humanistic perspective, there is evidence that acting on superstitious beliefs can have a [negative impact](#) on our social well-being.
 - From a religious perspective, fulfilling ritual expectations such as Sunday observances as some kind of sacred insurance policy can also have a negative impact on our religious well-being.
- The ancient gift of Sabbath observance is an opportunity to remember the open, creative, liberating, and flexible goodness of Jesus.
 - Even in the face of petty accusations
 - and more serious punishment from those he came to save like being nailed on a cross
 - Jesus understood that true and sturdy faith is more than going through the motions of holiness.
 - It is tapping into the constant light of God and maturing our entire selves toward it in all that we do,
 - whether we continue treasured traditions
 - or innovate fresh ways of being faithful.
 - St. Paul reminds us that we are [“children of the light and children of the day.”](#)
 - One litmus test that we are authentically living in the light of a Sabbath spirituality, and not simply fulfilling some Sunday ritual, is that we work for the liberation of others.
 - This weds us to the original spirit of God’s Sabbath gift of liberation to the Israelites and keeps us on the path of exercising a true and sturdy faith.

Tags: botany, light, magic, Sabbath, superstition