

UNDERSTANDING THE CATHOLIC MASS

(Researched and compiled by Bernie Ramis for the Roman Catholic Churches of Vernon)

Delivered on August 1 & 2, 2026

III. Understanding Sacred Time (Worshipping God and Restoring the Spirit)

(For additional context: This talk was delivered during the long weekend for the BC Civic statutory holiday.)

Whether we realize it or not, whenever we pause for a holiday, we are actually tapping into an ancient, profound idea: Sacred Time.

We live in linear, sequential time measured by workdays, weekends, months, years. The ancient Greeks called this *chronos*. The pattern we see with holidays is in the form of a break from this *chronos*... an unplugging, or stopping work. However, early Christians understood time through a different lens: as *kairos*. *Kairos* is God's appointed, sacred time. For Christians, true rest is dynamic: it is an intentional entry into the holy and transcendent.

The word "holiday" itself comes directly from the Old English word *hāligdæg* (*hālig* meaning "holy" and *dæg* meaning "day"). Work stopped not for rest's sake, but to make the day holy. This pattern was established at the very beginning of creation. We often gloss over the creation account in Genesis, reading that God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh. But if we read that closely with the verses before and the verses after, here's what we'll find:

"God looked at everything he had made, and found it **very good**." (Genesis 1:31). "On the seventh day God **completed** the work he had been doing; **he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken**." (Genesis 2:2)

God did not rest because He was exhausted. He rested because His creation was complete and it was perfect... it was very good. And then Genesis further tells us that "God **blessed** the seventh day and **made it holy**"... meaning, **He set it apart. He sanctified it. He sanctified time itself.**

But set apart for what? Or rather, For whom? We find the answer in Exodus chapter 20. God specifically commanded "Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath **to the LORD your God**."

The commandment does not simply say "do not work"; it specifies *whom* the day is for: it is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.¹

Gathering for Mass on Sunday is not a mere recommendation or spiritual suggestion; it is the central obligation and highest privilege of the Christian life². When we gather for Mass on Sunday, the Lord's Day³, we fulfill the true spirit of Sacred Time. Mass is where *chronos* intersects with *kairos*.

Our spirit finds true restoration through the holy liturgy as we are nourished through the Word of God and through the Holy Eucharist⁴. Worshipping God in the Mass places us directly into Our Creator's renewing, holy

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, 2172.

² *Ibid*, 2180.

³ *Ibid*, 1166.

⁴ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*, 3rd Ed., 28.

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hands. Attending Mass anchors our week in the Resurrection and equips us to sanctify the world around us.

(Note: The text in purple was not delivered during the talk itself due to time constraints.)

Beyond the weekly rhythm of the Lord's Day, the Catholic Church further sanctifies the entire calendar year through the Liturgical Seasons, turning the passage of annual time into a continuous journey through the mysteries of Christ's life⁵. Rather than moving through a flat, repetitive cycle, the Church guides the faithful through a sacred narrative composed of six distinct seasons⁶:

1. **Advent:** A period of expectant waiting, preparation, and penance leading up to the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord and reflecting on Christ's second coming.
2. **Christmas:** A joyful season celebrating the Incarnation—the Word made flesh—beginning on Christmas Eve and culminating in the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.
3. **Lent:** A 40-day solemn period of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, preparing our hearts to accompany Christ through His passion, death, and resurrection.
4. **The Paschal Triduum:** The three holy days (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday/Easter Vigil) that form the apex of the liturgical year, commemorating the Institution of the Eucharist, the Passion, and the Death of our Lord.
5. **Easter:** A 50-day season of profound joy and exultation celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, concluding on the Feast of Pentecost.
6. **Ordinary Time:** Two stretches of multiple weeks focused on the growth, teachings, and public ministry of Jesus, calling believers to deepen their daily discipleship.

Every single week, God grants us a holiday, a holy day, to restore our spirits as we are fed by His Word and the Bread of Life. We are invited to enter a procession that has been going on since the beginning of creation, a purposeful pilgrimage drawing us deeper into the heart of our God.

So yes, take a holiday. And more importantly, rejoice and make it a holy day.

⁵ *Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC)*, 102.

⁶ CCC, 1163-1171.