

Dear Friends,

“Without the gift of the Lord, without the Lord’s day, we cannot live.”<sup>1</sup>  
These are the words of Christians from Abitene in present day Tunisia, when they were caught celebrating the forbidden Sunday Eucharist. They were brought before a judge who asked them why they would worship even though to do so was a capital offense. Could you imagine what you would do if it were illegal today to go to Mass and to worship? Perhaps the Church would thrive underground as it did in Abitene when Christians willingly sacrificed their lives in order to celebrate the Eucharist.

Thanks be to God we do not live in a country that makes it illegal to worship God on Sunday. In fact we are allowed to participate in the Eucharistic celebration every single day of our lives. However, in an age of individualism and secularism is it possible for us to say, “Without the gift of the Lord, without the Lords’ day, we cannot live?” Frequently I hear people talk about their relationship with God being so personal, so individual that they do not need to go to Mass, they do not need to worship at Mass, their lives do not depend upon the Eucharist. In our secular society, Sunday has become a day of leisure, which is also very important. We do not have to look too hard to see, however, that our culture seems to be losing its sense of the sacred.

I understand, of course, that if you’re reading this letter, you received the bulletin at Mass. You have that attitude that says the Sunday Mass is important, maybe even vital to your life. That is wonderful! However, there is further work to be done. We are also given the task of being good stewards of how we worship as a community. This means there is a vitality of our communal life that needs our attention.

For this reason, I have asked the leadership of our parish to focus time at meetings addressing how we can build up our faith community. One member of the Pastoral Council recently asked if our situation here at St.

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<sup>1</sup> Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI: St. Stephens’ Cathedral, Vienna, Sunday, 9 September 2007.

Catherine of Genoa Parish is unique, or is it true that every parish in the country has a problem of people refusing to worship. Of course our situation is not unique, but that does not mean that we should just accept the sin of ignoring the sacred obligation to worship as a faith community.

In his visit to Austria Pope Benedict XVI said, "Therefore Sunday is also the Church's weekly feast of creation – the feast of thanksgiving and joy over God's creation. At a time when creation seems to be endangered in so many ways through human activity, we should consciously advert to this dimension of Sunday too."<sup>2</sup>

It is time for us to turn our attention (advert) toward the sanctity of the Eucharistic celebration. Is the Mass simply the fulfillment of an obligation, the avoidance of sin? Or, is our attitude one that says, "Without the gift of the Lord, without the Lord's day, we cannot live?"

I will be writing more on this topic in the weeks to come. Hopefully, we will begin to see a profound renewal of how we worship as a faith community.

In joyful hope,  
Fr. Tim Seigel

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid