

Worship: Work or Rest?

For many of us, summer is vacation time; although, for some, summer is the most busy business season of all. At any rate, we all need a time of rest from time to time, whether or not we know it, or acknowledge it.

Vacation as going somewhere else for several days to relax is a relatively recent phenomenon, though. In Holy Scripture, a weekly day of rest, or "Sabbath" is mandated; it is, in fact, commanded by God. Whether this day could be considered a weekly "vacation", though, would be a matter of definition.

Literally speaking, the word "vacation" means "emptying out". The idea is that by going away, one can have an "empty" time, void of the concerns of everyday life. The "rest" Holy Scripture teaches, however, is anything but emptiness. Although the Sabbath does involve taking a break from one's regular work, it most certainly does not involve emptiness. Rather, the Commandment of God is to "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy"; and Holy Scripture speaks of the Sabbath as "a solemn assembly" - in other words, the point of the Sabbath is not so much not to do anything at all as it is to gather for worship!

It might seem strange to some that worship should be thought of as "rest". But in light of the faith Holy Scripture teaches, it is the most natural thing of all. For to the faith Holy Scripture teaches, life with God is not so much doing good for Him as it is to receive good from Him! The heart of the Christian faith is the salvation God has won for sinners in the life and death of His Son, which He gives to sinners, as He comes to His Church in her worship, and gives Himself to us, with all that is His.

As such, the heart of true and truly Christian worship is the Word of God of His salvation, with which He declares us and makes us to be His own, on account of what He Himself has done for our salvation, and the festive meal of salvation, in which the Son of God gives His body and blood to us, for real, with bread and wine, and makes Himself one with us, and us with Him. Christian worship is to receive good from God, the highest good of all, His salvation!

Christian worship is rest in God; not in our thinking and thoughts about Him, but in God Himself, who comes to us and gives Himself to us. It is the beginning of the eternal rest we shall enjoy with Him in the world to come, in the fullness of His goodness and His glory. It allows us to vacate ourselves of ourselves and our own and be filled, instead, with that which is His.

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