

COME AWAY AND REST AWHILE: WHAT BLUE LAWS SIGNIFIED

The phrase “Blue Laws” may not mean much to people today, especially if you are younger than 50 years old. But for those of us old enough to remember, you may have made a mad dash to the corner grocery store on Saturday evening to pick up a gallon of milk before closing time. For our family, it was the Dairy Superette on the corner of Cretin Ave. and St. Clair. Why? Because if we didn’t get to the store quickly, we had to wait until Monday for our favorite drink! The stores were all closed on Sunday. The **Blue Laws** regulated those businesses that could be open and those that must be closed on Sundays. Today it seems as if it is incredibly easy to fall into an attitude about work and busyness that leaves little or no room for simply enjoying some “down” time. Jesus said in Mark 6:31: “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile.”

“How are things going?” “Pretty well, thanks—it’s awfully busy” is often my quasi-automated response, usually given without even really thinking. It is like a relentless mantra with which we urge each other on, creating a personal version of the hamsters on the spinning wheel. If we all stay busy— if we just keep moving in this never-ending dance— none of us will notice what is actually happening to us. Or perhaps we really like being too busy? Does being perpetually busy represent our great escape from the necessity of our spiritual engagement with our lives? The ancient Roman Latin poet **Ovid** (43 BC-17AD) may have hit the nail on the head in his poem entitled “The Cures for Love.” He writes—“*Qui finem quaeris amoris, cedit amor rebus: res age, tutus eris.*” (*Remedia Amoris* I, 143) Loosely translated— “You who are seeking an end of love, love yields to business: be busy (occupied) and you will be safe.” In other words, if you just stay busy enough, you’ll be protected from the demands of love. Truth be told, Ovid was married three times before his thirtieth birthday, so perhaps that explains his sentiments! But it absolutely true that staying busy— however we define it— is seen as a remedy for avoiding self-reflection, prayer and facing the deeper realities, even the problems of our life. It becomes a convenient excuse.

On July 1, a new Minnesota law allowed Sunday liquor sales for the first time on more than a century. Though limited to the hours between 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., the law represents just one more nail in the coffin of any semblance that Sunday is different from Saturday, or Monday through Friday for that matter. While it is true that we were just one of twelve states to ban Sunday sales, it is the principle that is at stake. While this one particular change is not overly significant considering how many businesses are open on Sunday’s, it is the cumulative effect that has eroded our sense of the Sabbath. My biggest concern is upon Sunday as a day set apart for the worship of God and of family and relaxation. Sporting tournaments begin earlier and earlier on Sunday mornings, sometimes even sponsored by Catholic schools. “Gee, we’re sorry, but it’s about the limited gymnasium time,” we are told. “There are so many teams and so we have no choice but to start at 10:00 a.m.” There is **always** a choice.

You may be surprised to learn that liquor store owners are hardly thrilled about the new laws. It is just one more day of work for them, with little evidence to indicate that people will purchase more volume. They simply now have seven opportunities to purchase instead of six. The same principle is at stake with car sales on Sundays. It will negatively affect family-owned and independent stores, as the “big box” chains will undercut the prices. It is counterintuitive to think that this will increase overall liquor sales in any significant way, compared to the cost of keeping on the lights, paying employees, and stripping away any sense of a day away from work. This has deleterious effects that accumulate piecemeal over time. Does anyone around my age believe that Sundays “feel” anything like they used to in our society, compared to a generation ago?

When we are “forced” to slow down from the frenetic pace of daily life, we open up new horizons. Have you ever forgotten your phone after you were already in the car headed somewhere? Did you panic? Truth be told, I have! What if I miss a call? What about the emergency line—if I missed an anointing call? But it reminds me of how tied I am to technology. So too with our ability to buy whatever we want on Sundays.

Will it really negatively affect us to step back on Sundays from the usual patterns to which we have grown accustomed? We so often find refuge in convenience, and while not evil *per se*, it can easily become our primary source of refuge. Then Jesus Christ cannot occupy the place in our lives both that he desires and that our discipleship demands.

- I will be attending a Mass on Friday at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, site of the **Hmong American National Catholic Association** convention. I wanted to support our fellow Cathedral parishioners at **St. Vincent's Campus**, and express my appreciation to Fr. Becker and the zealous priests at St. John Vianney Seminary for their extraordinary pastoral care on Sundays at St. Vincent's.
- In a light moment surfing the net, I noticed a pop-up for an online quiz– “Can we Guess Your Highest Level of Education?” I took the bait and though it turned out to be a longer quiz than I had anticipated, it was fun. It covered literature, science, history, poetry and geography, but thankfully, no math!! Google the name of the quiz and see www.offbeat.topix.com for more information.
- I visited New Ulm recently to attend the final vows of **Sr. Mary Joseph** of the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus. This religious community will begin its presence here at the Cathedral in the fall. We have **lots of work** to do to transform 244 Dayton Ave. into a convent by the end of 2017 and have been doing a detailed study of the building and drawing up floor plans, etc. in order to be prepared. We hope to do as much of the work as possible with **volunteer labor**, including dry wall, flooring and painting. My handyman skills are pretty much limited to dusting and vacuuming!
- It was “heart-warming” to witness **Rod Carew** throwing out the first pitch at a recent Twins game, six months after his heart and kidney transplant surgery. On the receiving end of his ceremonial pitch was none other than **Tony Oliva!** The Twins hall of fame hitter has become an advocate for organ donation, and is the recipient of the organs of a former NFL player who died at the age of 29. Carew wore the #29 Twins pinstripe jersey.
- I am pleased that the Twins had two players named to the MLB All-Star Game, **Miguel Sano** (3B) and **Ervin Santana** (P). Both deserve the honor. The club has shown significant improvement this year at the halfway point, and young players such as Max Kepler and Eddie Rosario show great promise. They are threatening to make me look like a fool for my pre-season prediction. So be it!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector