

Statements made by the Roman Catholic Church about the Sabbath

“Most Christians assume that Sunday is the biblically approved day of worship. The Catholic Church protests that it transferred Christian worship from the biblical Sabbath (Saturday) to Sunday, and that to try to argue that the change was made in the Bible is both dishonest and a denial of Catholic authority. If Protestantism wants to base its teachings only on the Bible, it should worship on Saturday.” — Rome’s Challenge immaculateheart.com/maryonline Dec 2003.

“Is not every Christian obliged to sanctify Sunday and to abstain on that day from unnecessary servile work? Is not the observance of this law among the most prominent of our sacred duties? But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.” — James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers* (1917 edition), p. 72-73 (16th Edition, p 111; 88th Edition, p. 89).

“For example, nowhere in the Bible do we find that Christ or the Apostles ordered that the Sabbath be changed from Saturday to Sunday. We have the commandment of God given to Moses to keep holy the Sabbath day, that is the 7th day of the week, Saturday. Today most Christians keep Sunday because it has been revealed to us by the [Roman Catholic] church outside the Bible.” — *Catholic Virginian*, October 3, 1947, p. 9, article “To Tell You the Truth.”

Who Made Sunday Holy?

“Written by the finger of God on two tables of stone, this Divine code (ten commandments) was received from the Almighty by Moses amid the thunders of Mount Sinai...Christ resumed these Commandments in the double precept of charity--love of God and of the neighbour; He proclaimed them as binding under the New Law in Matthew 19 and in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5)...The (Catholic) Church, on the other hand, after changing the day of rest from the Jewish Sabbath, or seventh day of the week, to the first, made the Third Commandment refer to Sunday as the day to be kept holy as the Lord’s Day...He (God) claims one day out of the seven as a memorial to Himself, and this must be kept holy...” — *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. 4, “The Ten Commandments”, 1908 edition by Robert Appleton Company; and 1999 Online edition by Kevin Knight, Imprimatur, John M. Farley, Archbishop of New York.

“Question: How prove you that the church had power to command feasts and holydays?
“Answer: By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of and therefore they fondly contradict themselves by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same church.
“Question: Have you any other way of proving that the church has power to institute festivals of precept?
“Answer: Had she not such power, she could not a done that in which all modern religionists agree with her; -she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day of the week, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.” — Stephen Keenan, *A Doctrinal Catechism On the Obedience Due to the Church*, 3rd edition, Chapter 2, p. 174 (Imprimatur, John Cardinal McCloskey, Archbishop of New York).

“Perhaps the boldest thing, the most revolutionary change the Church ever did, happened in the first century. The holy day, the Sabbath, was changed from Saturday to Sunday. ‘The day of the Lord’ was chosen, not from any direction noted in the Scriptures, but from the (Catholic) Church’s sense of its own power...People who think that the Scriptures should be the sole authority, should logically become 7th Day Adventists, and keep Saturday holy.” — *St. Catherine Church Sentinel*, Algonac, Michigan, May 21, 1995.

“Nowhere in the Bible is it stated that worship should be changed from Saturday to Sunday...Now the Church...instituted, by God’s authority, Sunday as the day of worship. This same Church, by the same divine authority, taught the doctrine of Purgatory long before the Bible was made. We have, therefore, the same authority for Purgatory as we have for Sunday.” — Martin J. Scott, *Things Catholics Are Asked About*, 1927 edition, p. 136.

“Question - Which is the Sabbath day?
“Answer - Saturday is the Sabbath day.
“Question - Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?
“Answer - We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 364), transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.” — Rev. Peter Geiermann, C.S.S.R., *The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, p. 50, 3rd edition, 1957.

“Is Saturday the seventh day according to the Bible and the Ten Commandments? I answer yes. Is Sunday the first day of the week and did the Church change the seventh day - Saturday - for Sunday, the first day? I answer yes. Did Christ change the day? I answer *no!*”
“Faithfully yours, J. Card. Gibbons.” — James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, Md. (1877-1921), in a signed letter.

“Question. - How prove you that the Church hath power to command feasts and holy days?
“Answer. - By the very act of changing Sabbath into Sunday which Protestants allow of; and therefore they fondly contradict themselves, by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same Church.
“Question. - How prove you that?
“Answer. - Because by keeping Sunday, they acknowledge the Church’s power to ordain feasts, and to command them under sin: and by not keeping the rest by her commanded, they again deny, in fact, the same power.” — An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine, composed by Henry Tuberville, p. 58.

“Some theologians have held that God likewise directly determined the Sunday as the day of worship in the New Law, that He Himself has explicitly substituted the Sunday for the Sabbath. But this theory is now entirely abandoned. It is now commonly held that God simply gave His Church the power to set aside whatever day or days she would deem suitable as Holy Days. The (Roman Catholic) Church chose Sunday, the first day of the week, and in the course of time added other days as holy days.” — John Laux, *A Course in Religion for Catholic High Schools and Academies*, 1936 edition, vol. 1, p. 51.

“Question. What warrant have you for keeping Sunday preferably to the ancient sabbath which was Saturday?

“Answer. We have for it the authority of the Catholic church and apostolic tradition.

“Question. Does the Scripture anywhere command the Sunday to be kept for the Sabbath?

“Answer. The Scripture commands us to hear the church (St.Matt.18:17; St. Luke 10:16), and to hold fast the traditions of the apostles. 2 Thess 2:15. But the Scripture does not in particular mention this change of the Sabbath.

“St John speaks of the Lord’s day (Rev 1:10) but he does not tell us what day of the week that was, much less does he tell us what day was to take the place of the Sabbath ordained in the commandments. St.Luke speaks of the disciples meeting together to break bread on the first day of the week. Acts 20:7. And St. Paul (1 Cor.16:2) orders that on the first day of the week the Corinthians should lay in store what they designated to bestow in charity on the faithful in Judea: but neither the one or the other tells us that this first day of the week was to be henceforth a day of worship, and the Christian Sabbath; so that truly the best authority we have for this ancient custom is the testimony of the church. And therefore those who pretend to be such religious observers of Sunday, whilst they take no notice of other festivals ordained by the same church authority, show that they act more by humor, than by religion; since Sundays and holidays all stand upon the same foundation, namely the ordinance of the (Roman Catholic) church.” — Catholic Christian Instructed, 17th edition, p. 272-273.

“Protestantism, in discarding the authority of the (Roman Catholic) Church, has no good reasons for its Sunday theory, and ought logically to keep Saturday as the Sabbath.” — John Gilmary Shea, *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, January 1883.

“The Catholic church for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday...The Protestant World at its birth found the Christian Sabbath too strongly entrenched to run counter to its existence; it was therefore placed under the necessity of acquiescing in the arrangement, thus implying the (Catholic) Church’s right to change the day, for over three hundred years. The Christian Sabbath is therefore *to this day*, the acknowledged offspring of the Catholic Church as spouse of the Holy Ghost, without a word of remonstrance from the Protestant World.” — James Cardinal Gibbons in the *Catholic Mirror*, September 23, 1883.

Whose Day of Worship is Sunday?

“They [the Protestants] deem it their duty to keep the Sunday holy. Why? Because the Catholic Church tells them to do so. They have no other reason...The observance of Sunday thus comes to be an ecclesiastical law entirely distinct from the divine law of Sabbath observance...The author of the Sunday law...is the Catholic Church.” — *Ecclesiastical Review*, February 1914.

“The Sunday...is purely a creation of the Catholic Church.” — *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, January 1883.

“Sunday...is the law of the Catholic Church alone...” — *American Sentinel (Catholic)*, June 1893.

“Sunday is a Catholic institution and its claim to observance can be defended only on Catholic principles...From beginning to end of Scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly public worship from the last day of the week to the first.” — *Catholic Press*, Sydney, Australia, August 1900.

“It is well to remind the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and all other Christians, that the Bible does not support them anywhere in their observance of Sunday. Sunday is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and those who observe the day observe a commandment of the Catholic Church.” — Priest Brady, in an address reported in *The News*, Elizabeth, New Jersey, March 18, 1903.

Who Do We Reverence and Pay Homage to by Keeping Sunday Holy?

“From this we may understand how great is the authority of the church in interpreting or explaining to us the commandments of God - an authority which is acknowledged by the universal practice of the whole Christian world, even of those sects which profess to take the holy Scriptures as their sole rule of faith, since they observe as the day of rest not the seventh day of the week demanded by the Bible, but the first day. Which we know is to be kept holy, only from the tradition and teaching of the Catholic church.” — Henry Gibson, *Catechism Made Easy*, #2, 9th edition, vol. 1, p. 341-342.

“It was the Catholic church which...has transferred this rest to Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord. Therefore the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the (Catholic) church.” — Monsignor Louis Segur, *Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today*, p. 213.

“Sunday is our mark or authority...the church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact.” — *Catholic Record of London*, Ontario, September 1, 1923.

“Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change (Saturday Sabbath to Sunday) was her act...And the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical authority in religious things.” — H.F. Thomas, Chancellor of Cardinal Gibbons.

“I have repeatedly offered \$1,000 to anyone who can prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. There is no such law in the Bible. It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone. The Bible says, ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’ The Catholic Church says: ‘No. By my divine power I abolish the Sabbath day and command you to keep holy the first day of the week.’ And lo! The entire civilized world bows down in a reverent obedience to the command of the holy Catholic Church.” — father T. Enright, C.S.S.R. of the Redemptorist College, Kansas City, in a lecture at Hartford, Kansas, February 18, 1884, printed in *History of the Sabbath*, p. 802.

“Protestants...accept Sunday rather than Saturday as the day for public worship after the Catholic Church made the change...But the Protestant mind does not seem to realize that...In observing the Sunday, they are accepting the authority of the spokesman for the church, the Pope.” — *Our Sunday Visitor*, February 15, 1950.

Conclusion and the Challenge.

"The (Roman Catholic) Church changed the observance of the Sabbath to Sunday by right of the divine, infallible authority given to her by her founder, Jesus Christ. The Protestant claiming the Bible to be the only guide of faith, has no warrant for observing Sunday." — *The Catholic Universe Bulletin*, August 14, 1942, p. 4.

"Sunday is founded, not of scripture, but on tradition, and is distinctly a Catholic institution. As there is no scripture for the transfer of the day of rest from the last to the first day of the week, Protestants ought to keep their Sabbath on Saturday and thus leave Catholics in full possession of Sunday." — *Catholic Record*, September 17, 1893.

"Regarding the change from the observance of the Jewish Sabbath to the Christian Sunday, I wish to draw your attention to the facts:

"1) That Protestants, who accept the Bible as the only rule of faith and religion, should by all means go back to the observance of the Sabbath. The fact that they do not, but on the contrary observe the Sunday, stultifies them in the eyes of every thinking man.

"2) We Catholics do not accept the Bible as the only rule of faith. Besides the Bible we have the living Church, the authority of the Church, as a rule to guide us. We say, this Church, instituted by Christ to teach and guide man through life, has the right to change the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament and hence, we accept her change of the Sabbath to Sunday. We frankly say, yes, the Church made this change, made this law, as she made many other laws, for instance, the Friday abstinence, the unmarried priesthood, the laws concerning mixed marriages, the regulation of Catholic marriages and a thousand other laws...

"It is always somewhat laughable, to see the Protestant churches, in pulpit and legislation, demand the observance of Sunday, of which there is nothing in their Bible." — Peter R. Kraemer, *Catholic Church Extension Magazine, USA* (1975), Chicago, Illinois, "Under the blessing of the Pope Pius XI".

"I am going to propose a very plain and serious question to those who follow 'the Bible and the Bible only' to give their most earnest attention. It is this: Why don't you keep holy the Sabbath day?..."

"The command of the Almighty God stands clearly written in the Bible in these words: 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work.' Exodus 20:8-10..."

"You will answer me, perhaps, that you do keep the Sabbath; for that you abstain from all worldly business and diligently go to church, and say your prayers, and read your Bible at home every Sunday of your lives..."

"But Sunday is not the Sabbath day. Sunday is the first day of the week: the Sabbath day is the seventh day of the week. Almighty God did not give a commandment that men should keep holy one day in seven; but He named His own day, and said distinctly: 'Thou shalt keep holy the seventh day'; and He assigned a reason for choosing this day rather than any other - a reason which belongs only to the seventh day of the week, and cannot be applied to the rest. He says, 'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it', Exodus 20:11, Genesis 2:1-3. Almighty God ordered that all men should rest from their labor on the seventh day, because He too had rested on that day: He did not rest on Sunday, but on Saturday. On Sunday, which is the first day of the week, He began the work of creation; He did not finish it. It was on Saturday that He 'ended His work which he had made: and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.' Genesis 2:2-3..."

"Nothing can be more plain and easy to understand than all this; there is nobody who attempts to deny it. It is acknowledged by everybody that the day which Almighty God appointed to be kept holy was Saturday, not Sunday. Why do you then keep holy the Sunday and not Saturday?"

"You will tell me that Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath, but that the Christian Sabbath has been changed to Sunday. Changed! But by whom? Who has the authority to change an express commandment of Almighty God? When God has spoken and said, 'Thou shalt keep holy the seventh day', who shall dare to say, 'Nay, thou mayest work and do all manner of worldly business on the seventh day: but thou shalt keep holy the first day in its stead?' This is a most important question, which I know not how you answer..."

"You are a Protestant, and you profess to go by the Bible and the Bible only; and yet, in so important a manner as the observance of one day in seven as the holy day, you go against the plain letter of the Bible, and put another day in the place of that day which the Bible has commanded. The command to keep holy the seventh day is one of the Ten Commandments; you believe that the other nine are still binding. Who gave you authority to tamper with the fourth? If you are consistent with your own principles, if you really follow the Bible, and the Bible only you ought to be able to produce some portion of the New Testament in which this fourth commandment is expressly altered." Excerpts from "Why Don't You Keep Holy the Sabbath Day?", pages 3-15 in *The Clifton Tract*, vol. 4, published by the Roman Catholic Church 1869.

"The arguments...are firmly grounded on the word of God, and having been closely studied with the Bible in hand, leave no escape for the conscientious Protestant except the abandonment of Sunday worship and the return to Saturday, commanded by their teacher, the Bible, or, unwilling to abandon the tradition of the Catholic Church, which enjoins the keeping of Sunday, and which they have accepted in direct opposition to their teacher, the Bible, consistently accept her (the Catholic Church) in all her teachings. Reason and common sense demand the acceptance of one or the other of these alternatives: either Protestantism and the keeping holy of Saturday, or Catholicism and the keeping holy of Sunday. Compromise is impossible." — James Cardinal Gibbons, in *Catholic Mirror*, December 23, 1893.