

Homily based on the readings from January 20, 2026 (1 Samuel 16.1-13; Mark 2.23-28)

*The Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.* There are not many instances in Holy Scripture where Jesus obviously employs sarcasm, but this situation might well be one of them. As we all know, Jesus is not merely some wandering philosopher, but “the Only Begotten Son of God,” “the Alpha and the Omega,” “the firstborn of all creation”; he is “the King of kings and Lord of lords” to whom “[a]ll power in heaven and on earth has been given.” To say that he is *also* lord of the sabbath is entirely accurate, but possibly the most absurd understatement in the history of the universe. Christ, of course, knows exactly who he is – and precisely how ridiculous it is that he has to respond to this type of complaint.

From our own perspective, nearly two thousand years later, it seems ludicrous that anyone would even bring up this issue. How could any group of people, regardless of their religious background, have the

audacity to tell God himself what he is allowed to do on *Saturdays* – let alone any day of the week? We need to be careful, though, not to give ourselves too much credit for not succumbing to this type of error. In this day and age, while we tend not to focus excessively on the Third Commandment, there are other circumstances where we attempt to impose artificial limitations on what the Lord can and cannot do.

In my own experience, the most common situations where people cross this line relate to the question of who is in heaven and who is not. On the one hand, there is a grave temptation for Catholics to assume that only members of our own Church can possibly be saved. While it is true that salvation can only come through Jesus Christ, it is also the case that Christ is never limited by his own sacraments. He can extend his mercy to anyone he wants – at any time, at any place, in any manner he chooses. It is not our place to decide that anybody else – either an individual or a group – has failed to “made the cut.”

We need to be just as careful, though, not to make the opposite mistake. Due to an excess of kindness, it is tempting to make statements about who *has* made it to heaven. In my line of work, I read a large number of obituaries – many of which start with a sentence to the effect that “heaven gained a new angel today.” First of all, as I am sure we all know, human beings do not become *angels* after we die – any more than we become elephants or koala bears. More importantly, though, it is simply not our place to make any sort of judgment – either positive or negative – about anyone’s final status. The only exception to this rule is Church’s process for beatification and canonization, which takes *years* of meticulous inquiry to determine that individuals of *incredible* sanctity – such as Pope John Paul and Mother Teresa – have actually made it to heaven. For more than 99.9 percent of all human beings, we simply do not know where they wind up after they die – because that is God’s concern, rather than our own.

The principle that Jesus is “lord even of the sabbath” is essentially a reminder to all of us to “stay in our own lane.” We need to remember

that God is God and we are *not*. It is *never* our place to tell him what to do or how to do it. Our job is simply to obey his will and to follow his example, offering his immeasurable and unconditional love to any of our brothers and sisters who are open to receiving it.