

PARENTING

May children rest on the Sabbath?

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Scripture says the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Yet some Catholics believe that sports teams, schools and other organizations providing children's activities think the Sabbath actually was made for them. And these Catholics complain that these groups are treating Sunday like any other day.

Take Anne Tubbs, a middle-school catechist at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Mendon, who knows firsthand the challenges of keeping Sunday a day of family worship. She noted that a soccer coach told one of her three teenage daughters to choose between committing to practice and/or games on Sundays, or quitting the team. Tubbs said she and her husband, Scott, decided to let their daughter keep playing by rearranging the family's weekend schedule to accommodate more Saturday-afternoon Masses of Anticipation.

Having to change the family's schedule for the sake of a sports team didn't make Tubbs too happy. Such juggling comes with the territory, however, when three daughters play sports throughout the year on seven different teams, she said. Society simply doesn't consider the Sabbath a complete day of rest anymore, she said.

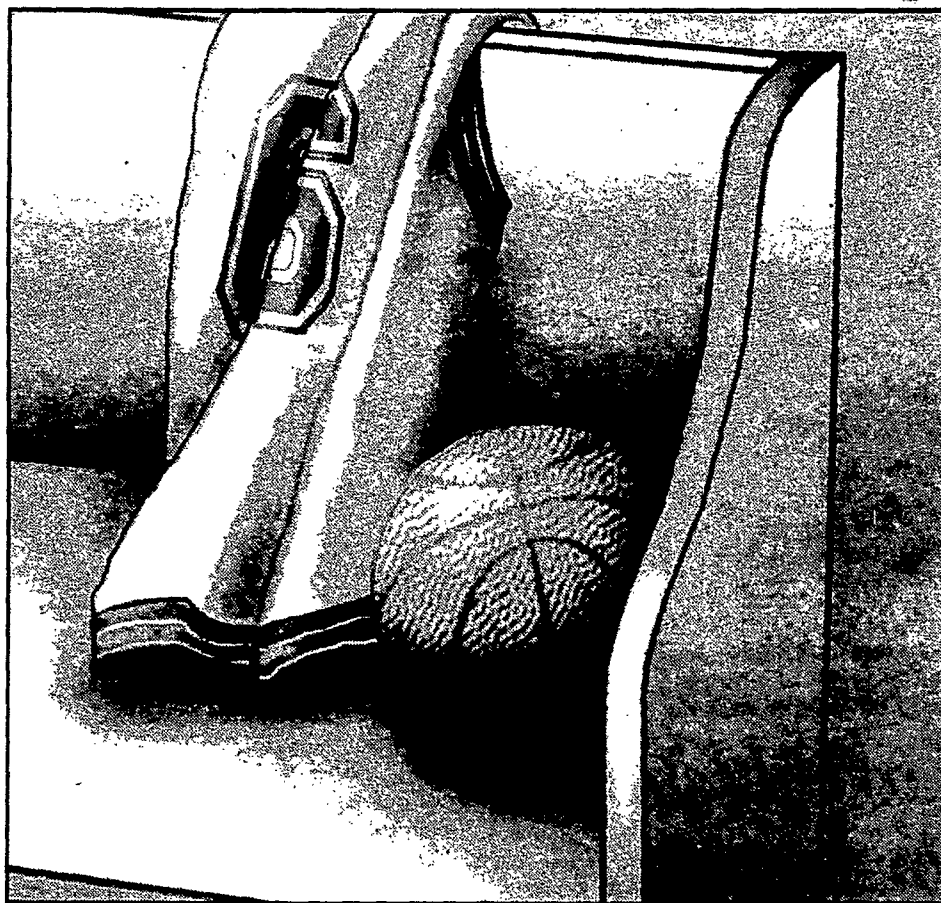
"It drives me nuts," she added.

Interestingly, Tubbs and her husband serve as co-commissioners of the Honeoye Falls-Lima Young Girls' Softball League, which only plays its games on Monday through Thursday nights. The couple also encourages their league coaches to not schedule practices on Sundays, especially Sunday mornings. In part, that's because Tubbs has lost some of her Sunday-morning religious-education students to such competing events as ski meets.

"I don't believe that people take religion as seriously as they used to," she said. "Less and less people are going to church, and that's too bad."

St. Catherine's is one of three Pittsford-Mendon churches that is attempting to change how the secular world sees Sunday mornings. Since June, 2000, St. Catherine's, St. Louis and Transfiguration churches in Pittsford have been promoting a worship policy that asks any groups that work with young people to refrain from scheduling activities before 1 p.m. on Sunday. Additionally, the churches have asked groups to not penalize young people who are unable to participate in activities on Sunday mornings because they are at church at that time.

Families today have so little time together as it is that it's important that Sunday be kept as a special day for family members to link with God and one another, according to Peter Spinelli, coordinator of the Pittsford-Mendon Catholic Communities Steering Committee. The committee oversees joint planning efforts by the three



parishes. Spinelli said he's heard a number of anecdotes about coaches urging children to forego church for some other activity. Similarly, Father James A. Schwartz, pastor of St. Louis, said he's heard his share of horror stories as well.

"I've heard of instances where a coach told a child, 'You miss practice on Sunday morning, you will not start on Tuesday night.'"

Spinelli said both parents and the groups that work with their children must see the Sabbath as sacred or its value may be lost to the next generation.

"If we don't make a point of finding a time (to worship), then we may never find it," he said.

On that note, St. Catherine's pastor, Father F. James Lawlor, observed that "life is just getting so hectic for little 10-year-olds ... life is just going so fast. There's never a time when anybody takes a day of rest."

Spinelli said his committee sent out letters to various teams and youth organizations a little more than one year ago asking them to consider refraining from interfering with Sunday worship time. Some organizations responded positively, while others didn't bother to respond at all, he said. He added that the parishes reiterated their desire for community support in bulletin announcements in January.

Spinelli expressed particular frustration with the Catholic Youth Organization of Catholic Family Center, which has occasionally scheduled games on Sunday mornings. He sent a letter to CYO leaders and officials at the Diocese of Rochester

in January after learning that a St. Catherine's CYO basketball team was slated to play another parish team on a Sunday morning at Aquinas Institute in Rochester.

"Our concern should be obvious," the letter stated. "How can we expect voluntary compliance from secular organizations if our own CYO schedules games in violation of both its own policy and ours."

CYO officials told the *Catholic Courier* that they generally refrain from scheduling any events on Sunday mornings. Due to a lack of gymnasium space, however Sunday morning games can become a necessity from time to time, according to Ivan Matthew, CYO's program manager. Some teams don't have gyms at their parishes, he said, and those that do sometimes find themselves competing for gym time against parish activities. He added that CYO never slates any Sunday morning activities for children in grades five and six, and also doesn't schedule games on school nights.

"If it was up to me, I'd like to have all the games on Saturday," Matthew said, adding that more than 80 percent of CYO activities take place on Saturdays. Meanwhile, Deborah Cummings Brown, CYO's department director, said some families attend CYO games on Sundays before or after Mass, making the organization's games a part of their overall Sunday church experience.

Both Tubbs and Spinelli said they understood the difficulty of finding adequate playing time and space for children's teams. But Spinelli said CYO and other youth organizations simply should consider cutting back the number of games or activities they offer, rather than creating family conflicts over worship time. He added that Catholic parents also may have to consider whether they are helping to create the problem by allowing children to pursue activities that routinely interfere with worship time.

"Sure there's not enough time in the week," he said. "Sure there's not enough facilities. But at the end of the day, are you going to put basketball first or God first?"

Family Events

● MAR. 23, 24 — Maple sugaring techniques from early Haudenosaunee & 1790s projects to present, Gunning Nature Center, 6492 Gullick Rd., Naples, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., pancakes served 9 a.m.-2 p.m.; \$5 adults, \$3 seniors & college students with ID, \$2 students K-12; 585/374-6160.

● MAR. 23, 24 — Performance: "And Then They Came for Me: Remembering the World of Anne Frank" for ages 9-16 and their families; uses videotaped testimonies from Holocaust survivors & scenes performed by live actors; Nextstage, Geva Theatre, 75 Woodbury Blvd., Rochester; Sat. 11 a.m. & 2 p.m., Sun. 1 & 4 p.m.; \$12 adults, \$9 children 12 & under; also Mar. 30, 31, Apr. 6, 7, 13; 585/232-4382.

● SUN, MAR. 31 — Fun Family Flicks: "Charlotte's Web"; Dryden Theatre, George Eastman House, 900 East Ave., Rochester; 2 p.m.; \$5 adults, \$2 children, \$8 families (one adult and up to four children); 585/271-3361, ext. 218.

● APR. 1-5, 8-11 — Tryouts: Monroe County Youth Travel Hockey, Lakeshore Hockey Arena, 125 Ling Rd., Rochester; Apr. 1-5, ages 6-10; Apr. 8-11, ages 11-18; 5-8 p.m.; \$25-\$45; www.moyt.net; 585/663-8580, ext. 5.

● APR. 3, 9 — Days for Tots for preschoolers, Wed., April 3, Toon Knight Puppets, 9-10 a.m.; Tues., April 9, Rick Lyon Puppets perform "The Three Little Pigs," 9-10 a.m.; 10-11 a.m., Strong Museum, One Manhattan Sq., Rochester; \$6 adults, \$5 children, under 12 months free; advance ticket purchase required; 585/263-2701, ext. 314.

● MON, APR. 15 — Registration deadline for Ten Star All Star Summer Basketball Camp for boys and girls ages 10-13; Roberts Wesleyan College, 2301 Westside Dr., North Chili; call 704/568-6801.

● THRU APR. 21 — Exhibit: "Go Figure!" for children ages 2-7 and adults to make connections between math and everyday life; bilingual; third floor, Rochester Museum & Science Center, 657 East Ave., Rochester; 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; \$7 adults, \$6 college students & seniors, \$5 children 3-18, under 3 free; 585/271-4552, ext. 342, or www.rmc.org.

● THRU JUNE 16 — Exhibit: Edgerton Model Train Exhibit, free tours; Edgerton Community Center, 41 Backus St. at Phelps St., Rochester; Tuesdays 7-8 p.m., Sundays 1-2:30 p.m.; 585/428-6769.

● SATURDAYS — Star shows: "Awesome Stars!" for children ages 6-11, 1 p.m.; "The Sky Tonight," 3 p.m.; Strassburgh Planetarium, 657 East Ave., Rochester; \$4 adults, \$3 college students with ID, \$2.50 children thru grade 12 & senior citizens; 585/271-1880.

● ONGOING — Exhibit: "AdventureZone"; technology's magic interprets the underwater world of Lake Ontario; Elaine Wilson Hall, 1st floor, Rochester Museum & Science Center, 657 East Ave., Rochester; 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; \$7 adults, \$6 college students & seniors, \$5 children 3-18, under 3 free; 585/271-4552.

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