

SUNDAY SPORT

Camberwell Referendum

The Camberwell City Council has decided to hold a referendum concerning the use of its reserves for sporting activities on Sundays. Voting is by post and not obligatory.

This matter is a contentious question and strong views are held on both sides. It is fair to say, at the outset, that no one holds Sunday as sacred as the Catholic. It is in a very special sense, God's day, and we all realize our obligation of His Commandment which commands us to keep holy His Sabbath. In order to emphasize its importance, the Catholic Church in her own Precepts gives it pride of place—number one priority—to hear Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.

Hence our position is clear. God is acknowledged and receives from us our worship and adoration as each Sunday dawns. Often this is done at great personal inconvenience, distance, weather, health, work or business. No Catholic worthy of the name misses Mass. We give God first place. It is His Day and undoubtedly He wants us to be happy and contented. To turn His Day into a day of gloom and pharisaical piety constitutes a poor idea of God—of His Love, His Kindness, His Mercy. Yet there are some, and they are active over this referendum, who, thanks to their puritanical background, think upon these lines. They do not rise early on Sundays—often breakfast and lunch become one meal after a morning's sloth and idleness, and then as the day draws to a close, they may or may not attend divine service at their ease.

It is a misconception of bible reading to interpret the Sabbath day of rest as a day of idleness. It is a day of rest from the type of work we do throughout the week, a rest from servile work in order to more effectively worship God and honour Him in all our activities of the day. The "wowsers" makes it a day of gloom and sloth, we make it a day of worship and joy in action.

Unfortunately there is a third class. They have little or no idea of God, or

if they have, seldom go out of their way to acknowledge Him. For them Sunday is just a holiday—the day they have off from work; in recent times, with Saturdays thrown in, an opportunity for a workless weekend.

Catholics try to avoid both extremes—day of gloom or a day off from work. Having reverently acknowledged it as God's day, having given Him, the first fruits of the day in worship and adoration, they feel free to spend the later hours of it in innocent recreation and relaxation. Provided such activities are not sinful in themselves, they cannot offend God or become sinful because they are enjoyed on a Sunday. If motoring, golfing, swimming, hiking are approved, why frown on activities more suited to younger people—tennis, cricket, football. Noise is only a red herring. In themselves, they are not noisy games, and in reality do not attract crowds large enough to be embarrassing. "Organized" is also another bugbear in the minds of the diehards. What game is worth its salt if it is not organized—even darts and ludo require an opponent. Otherwise we would all be condemned to play patience, if the use of playing cards could be tolerated.

Today is the age of youth. We can have healthy youth or the reverse—the bodge and the widge. Here is a recent survey of mischievous or at least dangerous idleness:—

BOX HILL: Between thirty and forty youths wandering aimlessly near the station. Smaller groups standing idly about.

ESSENDON: More than twenty-five groups, ranging from four to ten in number, mainly loitering around milk bars and shopping centres.

COBURG: More than a hundred youths in vicinity of Coburg Lake and Sydney Road milk bars. Brawls not uncommon. A youth lost an eye in an incident recently.

MULGRAVE: Mobs are already a reality and violence has been used.

SANDRINGHAM: In newer areas police have to move on mobs.

This list is by no means exhaustive and presents only a small sample of the actual facts. Other councils could be named in whose areas behaviour is perhaps worse.

Let's face it. We adults, in the main, have our Sunday recreation. We garden or golf or motor or read. But what we do is of our own choice. What right have we to sit in judgement on the type of recreation our youth should enjoy?

Let them have their innocent game. Let them enjoy themselves where they can so easily be controlled if indeed they need it.

Our municipal councillors should wake up to the fact that this city is under many strong and potentially dangerous pressures—the pressures of our own difficult time, the pressures of forced growth by migration and many others.

People with the outlook of 1880 should no longer be allowed to tie down the community's safety valves.

Other organizations have been very busy organizing a "No" vote. In Camberwell we have never had a chance to show our own strength. We could change the whole outlook if we are sufficiently enthusiastic. Voting is not compulsory as far as the Council is concerned, but every one of us should treat it as a "must."

If every Catholic votes "Yes" and makes certain of forwarding the ballot paper in time—post it no later than, Sunday 31st May—we may save the day—from gloom.

With the kind permission of Father Adrian Martin P.P. we have reproduced this excellent statement from "Lepanto" the parish magazine of Our Lady of Victories' Parish.