

## The Eighth Day



Have you ever noticed that your baptismal font has eight sides? Did you know that all traditional baptismal fonts have eight sides? The eight sides are a symbol for a crucial theological teaching that the early Church cherished. Their knowledge gave them the passionate hope in the coming of Christ – bringing God’s kingdom here on earth. We seem to have lost that level of passion – perhaps because the average, everyday Christian doesn’t possess the same knowledge that the early Christians did.

Christians chose to gather on Sunday – the first day of the week – because, according to the Gospels, Jesus had risen from the dead on this day thus Sunday was most

importantly a commemoration of the resurrection. The Eucharist that Christians shared on this day was a memorial of the past (the supper shared by Jesus and his disciples), a celebration of the present (gathered today as a community of believers), and a hope for the future (a foretaste of the banquet in God’s kingdom). Christians therefore called this day “The Lord’s Day” in reference to the Jewish expression “the day of the Lord” which would be the day at the end of the present age when God’s kingdom would arrive fully on earth. Christians used the term to refer to the fact that Sunday was a symbolic anticipation of the age to come when Christ would be Lord of all, just as he was already Lord in the Church. Christians began to refer to Sunday as the “eighth day”. This is because, in Jewish thought, the number seven symbolized perfection so the idea of an eighth day symbolized something even greater – the final golden age when God’s kingdom would be completely fulfilled on earth and Jesus’ reign would last forever. This thinking derives from Psalm 90.4 which says a thousand years was like a single day in the sight of the Lord. Christians imagined this to mean that this world would last for six days (i.e. 6000 years), followed by a seventh day, 1000 years when Jesus would reign as Messiah, and then an eighth day, the final golden age I mentioned. Therefore, in giving this name to Sunday, Christians were envisioning it as a symbolic foretaste of that end time to which they looked forward in joyous hope. (FYI...fasting and kneeling for prayer on a Sunday were forbidden in the early Church as they were thought to be incompatible with its joyful character as a foretaste of the kingdom of God.) And so, baptismal fonts are eight-sided in reference to both Jesus’ resurrection (which started the age of God’s kingdom here on earth) and to that final golden age (the “eighth day”) when God’s kingdom will be fully here on earth in all of its glory and perfection.