

There's an interesting fact about Franciscan University of Steubenville that I'm not sure many people know.

There are rarely, very rarely, Saturday-night-counts-as-Sunday vigil masses offered on campus.

Back nearly 40 years ago, Franciscan was known more for something else – that is, it was voted one of the top party schools in the country.

On top of this dubious distinction, enrollment was dropping. Dormitories were empty. And overall, the place was falling apart.

And along comes a new President, Father Michael Scanlon; and the student body submits the following petition from the students: stop offering masses, we don't want to go; if you're going to offer mass, do it only in the evening so we can sleep in and party the night before; give us co-ed dorms, since we're already making that happen on our own; and a few other things.

What did Fr. Michael do? First, he implemented only morning masses. Second, he required all students to belong to a household. The mandatory household requirement is no longer in effect; but I was a member of a household. Most of the people I know who went to Steubenville were members of households.

Households are groups of men or women who pray together, attend masses together, have a devotion to a particular saint, and once a week – on Saturday night – the entire household gets together and has a prayer service, usually lasting an hour or two, to welcome the Lord's Day – Sunday. Then the entire group goes to dinner, and maybe some other event on or off campus.

After forty years of this, very few people remember Franciscan University as a party school.

In today's first reading, after creating man and woman, God creates the Sabbath. I want to be clear on this – God didn't just create night and day, and designate one of those days as the Sabbath. God created the Sabbath. Hence, it is more than a social construct that says we should honor the Sabbath.

In the Gospel, we hear about the difference between man-made rules, and God-made rules. The Sabbath isn't just an obstacle to making extra money; or an excuse to miss a soccer game. The Sabbath is something created by God for mankind.

Ignoring the Sabbath isn't just bad for us when it comes to spiritual things – it's bad for us physically, too. Some times, I think that we as twenty-first century people are busier on the Sabbath than we are on other days of the week.

But let us reflect on how we honor the Sabbath, created by God ... created for us. How do we use this gift from God for our spiritual and physical benefit? Or how do we dishonor the Sabbath? And with a little prayer, ask God to enlighten us on how we may better honor the Sabbath in the coming months and years of our lives.ⁱ