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New from Journey Films:

*SABBATH*

Award-winning filmmaker **Martin Doblmeier** explores what the revolutionary concept of a day of rest can mean for a burned-out world.

Released to PBS stations nationwide via American Public Television

June 1, 2023.

In his new film *SABBATH*, award-winning filmmaker Martin Doblmeier explores the religious, secular, psychological, and sociological implications of a weekly day of rest for a “profoundly burned-out world.” The wide-ranging two-hour documentary delves into the history and practice of an ancient concept that is rooted in the biblical story of creation.

Practicing Sabbath may be a remedy for what ails the modern world—whether it’s a 24-hour religious observance, or a secular respite from the nonstop pace. “Two-thirds of Americans say that they're working more than 40 hours week,” says Notre Dame sociologist Tricia Bruce. “We work more in order to sustain the same level of living,”

Internist Dr. Sigve Tonstad notes that the increased use of prescription medications for acid reflex and mood disorders indicates just how stressed-out society is.

“Our world now runs 24/7 with little distinction given to the day or the hour.

Sabbath challenges us to set aside time for the sacred, to set sacred time apart from ordinary time and do it regularly,” says Doblmeier. “It has been an important and life-guiding practice across the ages and it's needed now more than ever.”

“Sabbath is not simply a pious teaching,” says theologian Norman Wirzba, of Duke Divinity School and author of *Living the Sabbath*. “What’s at stake is the very meaning of life.” Rabbi David Seidenberg adds, “The Sabbath is made to teach humanity something.”

Doblmeier and the Journey Films team traveled coast-to-coast exploring Sabbath beliefs and practice, meeting authors – both secular and religious, monks, theologians, clergy, farmers, physicians, and practitioners young and more senior. He shows the profound beauty of the practice across traditions, the principles of justice that undergird it, and the potential it offers for healing the world:

• **Judaism**: “Shabbat is the Jewish cathedral,” says Susannah Heschel, professor at Dartmouth College, referring to the metaphor used by her father, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel in his classic *The Sabbath*.“Sabbath arrives with sunset, we don't make it arrive.”

• **Pandemic and the Sabbath**: One chapter in the film focuses on the challenges posed by COVID-19 to public gatherings for Sabbath worship. “Catholic worship is very communitarian,” says popular TV personality Robert Barron, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Winona-Rochester. “That form of worship is not something that can be done through a camera.”

• **Sabbath and the environment**: The Sabbath principle of not taking too much from the soil is modeled at Princeton Theological Seminary’s Farminary, which integrates theological education with small-scale agriculture. “Our exhaustion and the exhaustion of the broader creation are two sides of the same coin,” says director and author Nate Stucky.

• **Seventh-day Adventists**: For Rev. Michael Mickens, pastor of South Jackson SDA Church in Jackson, Mississippi, keeping the Sabbath means practicing righteousness, justice, and compassion towards those in need, principles reflected in the church’s ministries that includes a health clinic open on their Saturday Sabbath.

• **Sabbath and Justice**: “In the day of Shabbat one is living in potentially radical equality with the people around you,” says eco-theologian Rabbi David Seidenberg. This is amplified in the Jewish observance of a Sabbath year: “In the Shmita year, one is doing that to an even greater degree. The rule is that all debts are forgiven.”

• **Latino Catholics**: Sunday Mass at downtown Los Angeles’s Our Lady Queen of Angels parish is a vibrant Sabbath observance and community gathering. For a largely immigrant congregation, community organizer Joseph Tomás McKellar says that Pope Francis’s words are important “If you have the right to work you also have the right to rest.”

• **Islam**: Muslims do not speak in terms of Sabbath. However, the Friday Jummah Prayer, offers an opportunity to pause, rest, reflect. Imam Khalid Latif, Executive Director of the Islamic Center at NYU quotes the Koran: “Indeed in the remembrance of God, hearts find rest.”

• **Unplugging**: A form of a secular Sabbath, the Unplugging movement encourages disconnecting from devices for a 24-hour period to take time for self-care, family, and friends. But Judith Shulevitz, author of *The Sabbath World*, adds one thing missing is that “we all have to do this at the same time. If we don’t, we’ll never be able to relax. We don’t trust that our coworker is unplugging too.”

• **Romantic Sabbath**: Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau and poet William Wordsworth advocated a poetic ideal of cultural and personal Sabbath.

Doblmeier looks into the fascinating history of Sabbath, from its biblical origins to the present day. Sunday closing laws, preventing stores and other commercial enterprises from operating on the Sabbath, go back to the early founding of America. Those “Blue Laws” were supported in the early 20th century by the nascent labor union movement, “a surprisingly religious story that does converge around Sabbath,” according to American religious historian Thomas Kidd. Closing laws (which did not extend to those who celebrate Sabbath on Saturday), are largely gone, but still exist in towns such as Bergen, New Jersey, where the mayor says that Sunday closures allow the town “one day when we can catch our breath and relax."

The Journey Films site (www.journeyfilms.com) offers extensive Education and Outreach materials to facilitate presentations, conversations and discussions about ***SABBATH*** in churches, schools and organizations.

ABOUT JOURNEY FILMS: Journey Films was founded in 1983 by award-winning filmmaker Martin Doblmeier as a television and film production company specializing in religion, faith and spirituality. Journey Films has produced more than 30 documentary films that have aired on PBS, ABC, NBC, the BBC and on broadcast outlets around the world, including *BONHOEFFER, BACKS AGAINST THE WALL*: *The Howard Thurman Story, REVOLUTION OF THE HEART: The Dorothy Day Story, and SPIRITUAL AUDACITY: The Abraham Joshua Heschel Stor*y. Journey’s films have been translated into more than a dozen languages. In all, Journey Films have won three regional Emmy Awards, eight Gabriel Awards for the nation’s best film on a topic of religion, three Gold Awards at the US International Film and Television Festival, the Sun Valley Film Festival and many others.

ABOUT MARTIN DOBLMEIER: Martin holds degrees in Religious Studies, Broadcast Journalism and three honorary degrees in Fine Arts and Humane Letters. Since 1983 he has produced and directed more than 30 films focused on religion, faith and spirituality. Martin combines a lifelong interest in religion with a passion for storytelling. Over the years he has traveled on location to more than fifty countries to profile numerous religious leaders, spiritual communities, heads of state and Nobel Laureates. His films explore how belief can lead individuals to extraordinary acts, how spirituality creates and sustains communities, and how faith is lived in extraordinary ways.