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Editorial

Not an 'ordinary Sunday'.....

Since everything in our human life span has a beginning and an end it is obvious that our weekly, monthly or yearly calendar is as old as time itself.

For some of us it is Sunday that marks the end of a week, while for others Sunday (or "the Lord's day", as it is called in the Christian context), is looked upon as the beginning of the new week.

- Did you know that for 150 years the Swiss have marked the third Sunday in September as a special Sunday? It might surprise many non-Swiss to learn that the Swiss have traditionally (and by federal consent) re-

served this Sunday for the specific purpose of 'prayer and penance'. And now in our 'modern times' this tradition is becoming more and more of a problem for our country of origin.

- With the decline of the acceptance and practice of Christian spirituality this 'Sunday of prayer and penance' has lost its meaning in the mostly affluent life style of most Swiss in recent years. As I and maybe you can remember it was no trouble to observe the "Eidgenössische Buss- und Bet-tag" in traditional ways during the time of the second world war. But now, in affluent times, what should the Swiss pray for, why do penance, such an ancient practice? Why forgo some sporting event on the third Sunday in September as

decreed by some Cantonal authorities? Why celebrate this so-called "Bettag" as a "car-less" Sunday?

- Well a lot of Swiss may be relieved to know that for the past few years the term 'penance' has been dropped from the requirements of the third Sunday in September and now it is simply called the 'federal day of prayer', or 'Eidgenössischer Bettag'.

Prayer comes in differing forms and you may know it as 'prayer of petition' (asking for something), or 'prayer of praise' (to give glory to God), or 'prayer of thanksgiving', the prayer most suited to the third Sunday of September in Switzerland.

- Prayer in whatever form stems from 'man's recognition' that we all are 'fallible' and that we recognise a higher and supreme being called God.

- Even if some people in modern Switzerland can find no sense in a country wide 'Sunday of prayer' it is still a reminder that 'times' have been different, that maybe a 'Thanksgiving Sunday' is still appropriate in our day. This year's celebration of 150 years of the modern Swiss state alone provides reason for thanksgiving prayer. To live in peace with fellow citizens of differing ethnic origin, language and culture, and to be able to live in a country with the purest of democratic principles is surely reason for thanksgiving prayers. Swiss people with religious convictions will thankfully remember the historic peace maker 'Bruder Klaus von Flüe', while most Swiss would gratefully acknowledge the memory of the wartime General Guisan or the provider of the 'plan of survival', federal Councillor, Professor Wahlen.

- Modern achievements in science and technology have the ability to blind us to the need for God and of prayer in our lives. So it is understandable that the Swiss are struggling with the 'demands of the third Sunday in September'. But let us remember that the human characteristics of 'modern man' have not kept pace with all the 'progress of our times' and that human interaction is much the same as it was when the 'Bettag' was first introduced. The difficulties of 'living together' of differing ethnic peoples are manifest in many countries around the world,

SWISS SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

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VICE PRESIDENT: Bert Flühler, 1 Bettina Rd. Hamilton, Ph. (07) 855-4308

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DELEGATES TO THE SWISS ABROAD CONFERENCE IN SWITZERLAND

DELEGATE: Heinz Leuenberger, 33 Russell Terrace, Putaruru, Ph/Fax (07) 883-8537

DEPUTY DELEGATE: Marie-Therese Melville-Schöpfer, P.O Box 79-294, Royal Heights, Auckland 1230, Ph. (09) 833-4029

COORDINATOR IN NZ FOR THE SWISS ABROAD YOUTH EXCHANGE SCHEME

Mrs. Nicole Helsdon, 58 A Marellen Drive, Red Beach / Orewa, Ph. (09) 426-0927

EDITOR: Rinaldo Rust, 242 Te Pahu Rd. R.D.5. Hamilton, Ph/Fax (07) 871-9946

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