

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



A REAL SUMMER VACATION...

Now that we have entered into the month of July, many of us will be taking a vacation. It is a good thing to do if possible. I have a priest friend who never takes a vacation. When I mention that I go to the shore during the summer, he will invariably say, "Well the things of the flesh!" Of course, he says that tongue in cheek. There was one pastor who said to his associate priests, "You know, I never take a vacation-I don't need one!" To which the other priests replied, "But we need a vacation from you!"

As I said, a vacation can be beneficial. One of my first pastors, Monsignor Connors would say, "After a few days away, the place starts to look better to you." Well what he meant by that comment is that a retreat or a rest period can help lend perspective on life and all its activity. It seems that in our American culture today, leisure time is becoming a precious commodity. In fact, several years ago a poll was taken that indicated that the amount of time that Americans take for leisure and rest has diminished.

Perhaps some of our technology has to do with that. Even when we're supposedly "relaxing," many of us are receiving text messages, phone calls and news updates every few minutes. Sure, these calls and bulletins might be important but they can erode any sort of "down time" that we have. The result is that we are in a constant "hyper" state and can't really "decompress." Vacation is a time to unwind and calm our spirits. It might take us some time to do that owing to the frenetic pace of life currently.

A vacation could be a time where we could possibly "reconnect" with nature and the beauty of God's creation all around us. During the summer at the Jersey Shore, I always like to go up to the beach at night and view the moon and the stars. The sky is always brighter and more brilliant there. Maybe some of us love to see soaring mountains, wooded trails, lovely flowers or a sunset. Summer vacation is a perfect time to do that.

Summertime is also a chance for us to have some good, clean fun. Father Hargrove, a wonderful priest, now deceased, used to say: "It's fun to be good and it's good to have fun!" I suppose everybody has their own definition of what "fun" is. A couple of years ago down at the Jersey Shore, one of the priests convinced me to go deep sea fishing with him for about five hours off Long Beach island. The only thing I caught that afternoon was a case of sea sickness!

Well, you don't have to go fishing to have fun. You can find fun in simple ways whether that be swimming, hiking, cooking a meal, touring a historic place or reading a good book. A vacation does not have to be expensive but it should be fun.

Finally, a vacation does not mean a holiday away from God and the Church! Wherever we are, we should try to get to Mass on Sunday. "Getting away from it all" does not mean getting away from God. Sometimes it is not easy to find a Catholic Church when we are away. Still, most of the time, a church is not that far and all we have to do is a little bit of investigating.

My wish for you and your families is that you all might have a truly wonderful, relaxing and safe summer. May the Lord especially watch over your leisure time and make it productive for eternity!

Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome