

FOR THE GOOD OF THE HOUSEHOLD

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SUMMER VACATIONS

The wonderful season of summer is upon us. Children are out of school and will be home to challenge the ingenuity of parents. And, so, to challenge the children, vacations are planned. When I was a child, summers seemed to last a long time. Now, they appear to come and go rather rapidly.

There was a lot of imagination that went on during the summer for us kids. Most of our parents could not take vacations and, of course, we had jobs such as delivering newspapers and mowing lawns. But, then, we planned our own activities for our spare time, such as an annual neighborhood carnival. Adults came and pretended to be entertained. We made money in the process. I marvel at parents that still take the time to encourage their sons and daughters to take advantage of summer to be kids. (There, actually, are some.)

As a young priest, I enjoyed spending time at Higgins Lake, especially on my 20-foot O'Day sailboat. Each summer, five sets of parishioners would take their families camping to one of the state parks. I would join them, spending the day in their company. But, instead of sleeping in a tent, I would wade out into the lake to my sailboat anchored off shore and spend the night there (in quiet). Frequently during the day while the five men went fishing, I entertained the rest with sailboat rides. There, gathered around the boat were the five wives, 16 kids, and me (the only man). Being a priest, they all called me "Father." That must have turned more than a few heads of others on the beach!

While my parents were not able to take me on vacations, I took them after becoming a priest and owning a car. We took two trips each year. My father never drove, but they enjoyed traveling. They did not care where, as long as they went. It was an experience for me. Our lodgings were usually Howard Johnson's. That way, the rooms always had the same layout. Not knowing English, my mother ordered her meals by how good the picture on the menu looked. My father insisted on leaving the spoon in the cup while he took a sip, embarrassing me. With a smile on my face and speaking in Slovak so no one else in the restaurant could understand, I reminded him to take out the spoon so that he would not poke out his eye. His response was simple. He had not yet finished stirring. I finally concluded that we are paying for the meal and he could drink his coffee any way that he wanted.

My priests and deacons are kind to me and express their concern for my health. Consequently, I am asked if I will get away during the summer. At this point of my life, I would prefer staying home and doing some reading. However, even my summers appear like work. In August, I will be going to Slovakia to be the celebrant of the marriage of a cousin twice removed. (That is a legal term.) While it will be enjoyable, it will be work. As for traveling, I just soon not fly. Air travel was once classy and enjoyable. People dressed up as one would when being with others in social settings. Now, they seem to board the plane in their pajamas, carrying with them what appear to be their life's belongings. It is not the same. We have become gypsies.

The most important thing for us Christians to remember, when taking summer vacations, is that it is supposed to be a time away from regular daily routine but not from God. We would not want God to take a vacation from us. Neither should we want to take a vacation from him. Mass needs to be included in our planning, if at all possible. And, of course, even when eating in a restaurant, remember to make the sign of the cross before you eat.