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## VACATION TIME

As I write these musings, I am sitting on the deck of my beach cottage at Sandbridge overlooking the ocean. I'm always amazed how peaceful the ocean can be at times, and how turbulent at other times. The ocean seems to reflect human existence, with waves that refresh and waves that knock a person down. I have been coming to Sandbridge now for 34 years with family members and clergy friends. For four years, we rented cottages at the beach. Then, with three others, I purchased a house, semi-oceanfront for \$24,000. Those were the days when property values were low because of excessive damage from previous storms. Over time I became the sole owner of that cottage, 2749 Sandfiddler Road in Sandbridge, and eventually a second story was added.

I like to go to Sandbridge during the summer months because I find it most relaxing, a change in pace from the hectic schedule of the fall and spring. Every morning I like to walk my three children (four-legged ones) on the beach around 6 a.m. Believe it or not, for someone who loves the beach, I seldom actually go into the water for a swim. I get my enjoyment simply watching God's energy and beauty in the never-ending motion of the waves.

Mine might be called a semi-working vacation. I keep up with the mail so that it doesn't pile up and undo the benefits of relaxation. I love to read at the beach. Every week I get flooded with periodicals, magazines, Catholic newspapers and of course tons of junk mail.

Last week, I read an interesting article in the latest *America* (August 6). Archbishop John Quinn, now retired, gives a critique on the next Synod 2001 on the "Role of the Bishop." He contends that the working document has some striking omissions on the duties and responsibilities of the bishop. Archbishop Quinn states that greater attention should be given to the human dimension in the life of the bishop and to the responsibility for balance in his life, which includes time for "leisure, friendship, diversion and rest as well as study and prayer and consultation." I have reflected on these observations much during the past few weeks.

Every one of my days is usually caught up in busy-ness. I love my Episcopal ministry because I enjoy being among people, affirming and supporting them and taking their concerns seriously. I need to take serious my regular admonitions to our priests to "Be good to yourself and don't feel guilty in doing so." The need to relax, to take time for oneself and those important persons in our lives is true for all of us. That explains why we hunger for spirituality, time for contemplation and just time to be without having to be doing something.

I have finished reading the first six chapters of our diocesan history, *Commonwealth Catholicism* by Father Gerald P. Fogarty, Jesuit scholar who teaches at the University of Virginia. Our history is a fascinating story of Catholicism at its beginning in the Colonial days, the slow growth of the church around the time of the Civil War and the development of the diocese with its interesting personalities, up to the time of the Second Vatican Council. Father Fogarty has a wonderful writing style which makes our history come alive as we reflect on the leadership and sacrifices of so many who contributed to what we are as church today.

My vacation schedule often takes me in and out of Sandbridge. The Youth Convention in Lynchburg in the middle of July was as always a rewarding experience. The Boy Scout Jamboree at Fort A.P. Hill in late July was both an inspiring as well as wet experience. A week later I spent three days in Memphis for the meeting of the National Council of Pax Christi USA; I serve as Bishop-President of Pax Christi. On the following weekend I was on the missions offering Mass at St. Peter the Apostle Church in Lake Gaston and St. Richard's in Emporia. St. Peter's is one of our newest parishes located right next to the North Carolina border. Since its founding in 1995, the parish now has two weekend Masses. Lake Gaston is fed by the Roanoke River. It is 35 miles in length and much of the lake is actually in North Carolina. The folks living around the north shore, whether in Virginia or North Carolina, attend Mass at St. Peter's.

This past weekend I traveled to St. Andrew's Church on Chincoteague Island. Chincoteague is in Accomack County on the Eastern Shore, just a few miles from the Maryland border. In 1974, when the Diocese of Arlington was established, the Eastern Shore of Virginia and far southwest Virginia were added to the new Diocese of Richmond. Many tourists, more than at Sandbridge, come to Chincoteague Island during the summer months. The parish on Chincoteague Island has four weekend Masses all celebrated by Father Louis Benoit, the pastor. I went to St. Andrew's Parish to review their proposed plans to build a hall and expand the Church. I also wanted to see the adjoining property that they would like to acquire. As I renewed friendships and gathered with people for Mass, I was quickly reminded that I had not been to Chincoteague for 11 years.

This week I met with 14 of our seminarians who were here at Sandbridge for their annual summer get-together. I was most impressed with the quality of these young men who are preparing to commit their lives to priestly service. We can certainly be proud of them and should pray for them to grow and persevere in their priestly vocation.

I love coming to Sandbridge every summer. It provides a change of pace, a change of scenery, a chance to be with family and friends and a time for leisure, rest, prayers and reading.

I suggest that we all make good use of the remaining days in August. Remember, if you are good and caring for yourself, you will do the same for those around you.

+ Walter F. Sullivan  
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