**Summertime faith**

Many families take the summer off — from everything. When school gets out, so does church, so do prayers before meals, so does practicing the faith.

I can understand part of the reason. It is easier to keep a schedule during the school months. There is a time to rise in the morning, a time for breakfast, a time to catch the bus, a time for homework, a time for bed. When the summer finally comes around, there is less pressure to keep to a schedule. People tend to stay up later, visit more, and sleep later. That is fine. It is part of the re-creation that is needed at certain times of the year.

If I could make a suggestion, perhaps summer could be a time to try different faith experiences. You could combine a trip to beach with a visit to a new site for Sunday Mass. Chances are you could find a church with a later starting time or you could go on a Saturday night. What about a summer plan of visiting different churches in your area? God does not take the summer off in loving us, so we need to keep up the effort in living our faith.

Another part of the difficulty in living our faith is that “faith” is such a difficult word to understand. We can understand other words because we can visualize them in our minds. When someone says, “popsicle,” you might even start to taste the frozen juice sliding across your lips and onto your tongue. If you have an exceptional imagination, a mental picture of a popsicle could make your teeth ache with the cold. Visualizing faith is much more difficult, but not impossible.

Faith is the smile that cannot be contained because you are sure that God is alive. Faith is worship and adoration that is as serious and determined as burrowing out of a collapsed building. You see a small splinter of light from the surface and you do everything in your power to reach it. Faith is knowing not only that the beauty of God surrounds us, but that it envelopes us totally; even to the level of the cells that make up our body. Faith is life, with all its joys and sorrows.

Life does not stop in the summertime and neither should our faith. In fact, maybe this summer we can set out to deepen our faith. We can try a new experience of prayer. Perhaps we could try “Prayer of Quiet.” After saying all we need to say to God, we give God the opportunity to communicate with us. It is very challenging because the summer also brings its share of distractions. If we try it at the beach, we might have to deal with biting insects or blowing sand. If we try it on the top of a mountain, we might meet a whole set of other distractions, including our tiredness.

The point is to keep on trying. God will bless our efforts because God, too, knows the attractions of summer. I’m sure that Jesus, as a young boy, dreamed of summer afternoons and how far he could wander in the hills of Galilee before he had to turn back for home.

Summertime experiences of fun, exploration, and travel can be natural accelerants to faith. It just takes a little imagination — and faith — and God will be closer than ever.

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