

# Refresh yourself - spiritually, too

It's summertime and you just want to get away. We all know that feeling. But getting away from work and the daily grind should not mean taking a break from your faith.

But why not use your vacation to shake up your spiritual practices a little? If it's good to dust off the cobwebs in our home, it's even better to sweep clean your heart and soul.

To start with: Relax. No, really - relax. Breathe deeply, especially if you can get away to the countryside or down the ocean, where the air might be a little clearer. The phrase "stop and smell the roses" makes a lot of sense.

Put down the smart phone or the tablet - unless you're reading this on your phone or tablet, then wait until you get done reading this. It may be hard to break the habit of constantly checking email and Facebook, but do yourself a favor and try to step back from technology - a little, if you can't give it up altogether. For example, use the maps app to find a new restaurant to try, but once you're there, put the phone away and enjoy spending meal time with your family, with fewer distractions.

If you're going away, find a Catholic shrine nearby to check out something new and different, instead of just another museum or amusement park. Find a Catholic parish near your destination so you can make sure you get to Sunday Mass.

Take a little time after Mass to ask yourself: How welcoming was the parish to you as a visitor? How welcoming is your own parish to visitors and newcomers?

It's always interesting to pick up a bulletin at a different parish. What ministries are the focus of the parish? What kinds of things are the parishioners involved in that you might want to try when you return to your home parish?

If you choose a staycation, try some new ideas to reset your spiritual password. At your parish church, sit in a different pew than you normally sit. If you usually sit in the back, try the front. Instead of the ambo side, try to the choir side. Even try a different Mass time! Or visit a different parish for Mass and make some new friends at that church. This is another opportunity to see how welcoming that parish is

compared to yours. And ask yourself whether you are open to visitors in your church.

Take time for spiritual reading on your break. Sure, bring along your favorite novels – especially those “beach reads” through which you can fly quickly. However, add some spiritual reading to your list. Matthew Kelly’s “Resisting Happiness” aims to help you start choosing happiness for yourself, instead of sabotaging it. “Messy and Foolish: How to Make a Mess, Be a Fool, and Evangelize the World” by Matthew Warner is a quick read that “will inspire you to quit the lesser pursuits of your life and accept nothing less than the joyful, adventure-filled, contagious life God intends you to live.” That’s a pretty bold promise from a book jacket, but “Messy and Foolish” is a short enough read that you can go back over it from time to time. (Disclosure: Warner is founder and CEO of FlockNote, a digital partner of Catholic Review Media.)

“Getting away from it all” doesn’t have to mean getting away from God.

Summertime – and vacations in general at any time of year – are meant to help you recharge your batteries. Like a good night’s rest, a vacation can aid your overall health. When we are healthy in body, mind and spirit, we can accomplish great things. God created us in goodness, and he wants us to be happy, healthy and holy.