

NO VACATION FROM GOD.... Every summer I have the good fortune to go on vacation with four very fine priests of the Archdiocese of New York, Fr. John Higgins, Fr. Joe Fallon, Fr. Richard Veras, and Fr. Robert Dillon( most of you remember him!). We all “chip in” and rent a house together on the Jersey Shore which is a block away from the ocean. Well, one year, when I was bringing my luggage into the house and I had a Mass vestment on a hangar. The man we were renting the house from said, “Oh Father, you won’t need these robes now-you are on vacation!” Well, I told him that every day on vacation we priests offered Mass. We did not take a “vacation” from the Lord! He said that he meant no offense but did not realize that a priest should offer Mass every day even at the beach. Now that we have reached the month of July, many of us are going on vacation; a well deserved time of rest and relaxation. As we all know, a vacation provides many added opportunities for leisure and free time. It gives us a chance to “slow down,” have some fun and experience the beauty of nature. But for some people, vacation may be more stressful than staying home. Consider the traffic jams on our highways, impatient crowds at amusements and attractions and the overall expenses that a “modern vacation” entails. Someone once said, “The two best days of a vacation are the day you leave and the day you come back!” Hopefully, that is not the case for us. What are some things to remember as we head off for our well deserved holidays? For one, we should make Sunday Mass a priority even during our vacation. “Getting away from it all” does not mean getting away from God. As Catholics we have an obligation to go to church on the Lord’s day. Sometimes when we are away from home, it is difficult to discover a church that is conveniently located. However, with a little planning and ingenuity we can find a Catholic church and attend Mass on our vacation. The late Holy Father Pope John Paul II reminded us some years back in his letter *Dies Domini*: “Do not be afraid to give your time to Christ! Let us open our time to Christ that He may cast light upon it and give it direction.” So a good vacation will include Mass on Sundays. Secondly, a holiday can provide us with time to pray and to contemplate the Lord in the beauty of nature. A good priest friend that I knew, Fr. Donatus Goetz O.F.M. Cap, used to tell me that he would often go down to the ocean to pray because he felt very close to the Lord there. In reflecting upon the splendor of God’s creation before him his spirit was lifted. So vacation can be a time to grow closer to God spiritually as we slow our pace and relax a bit. Modern men and women need to rediscover the value of silence and that communication with the Lord that more than any other created thing or experience refreshes the mind and heart! As we make our plans, confirm our reservations, buy our tickets and pack our bags this summer let us remember to include God in our itinerary. Certainly if we do so, we shall return to our jobs and our duties truly restored.... sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Jerome