

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH GRAFHAM

'THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK'

19th August 2020

'*We're all going on a summer holiday*' - probably most of us are old enough to remember the song by Cliff Richard and The Shadows. Looking at the pictures of packed beaches and overcrowded beauty spots it seems that many people are indeed going on their summer holiday even though they may not be able to travel abroad as usual.

I'm going to be taking some time off over the next couple of weeks so I found myself thinking about the origin and nature of holidays. One of the definitions of 'holiday' is a day set apart by custom or law on which normal activities are suspended or reduced. Historically the only days people had a respite from their usual work was on Sundays or one of the major feast days of the Church - a Holy Day. Even then the animals would still have needed to be fed, water fetched and so on. Over time 'holy day' became 'holyday' and eventually 'holiday'. I find it ironic that, in these days of political correctness, Christmas is sometimes replaced by Winter Holiday! I had thought that 'vacation' was a word imported from America. Then I recalled that the Law Courts and the Universities have always had vacations. I discovered that in the Prologue to the *Wyfe's Tale*, Chaucer wrote 'He hadde leyser and vacacioun From ootherly worldly occupacioun'. However in these cases vacation refers to a cessation of normal activity. Today we might in this context talk about being 'on leave'. Vacation in the sense of our modern holiday appears for the first time in 1878 in an American text.

Today we often go on holiday to rest, or at least to be refreshed by a different sort of activity from normal. These days people seem to take shorter but more frequent holidays. Perhaps this is a reflection of the inability of many of us to stop during the course of our everyday lives. Yet the rise of the 'short break' is, possibly, in its own way still an acknowledgment of our need for sabbath rest which we no longer seem able to manage every week.

You might like to spend some time this week thinking about what holidays mean to you, how you choose to spend them, where and with whom. Perhaps enjoy and give thanks for some special memories.

Possibly if you are not going to be able to go away this year, now might be the time to reflect on your need still to take a break from your normal daily routine. How might you achieve it? How might you use the time and space you create?

Maybe even allow yourself a proper old fashioned holiday - a holy day. A day with God. A day of quiet, of prayer and of reflection.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote:

The holiest of all holidays are those
Kept by ourselves in silence and apart.

Whatever you choose to do, may you be refreshed by it.

As I mentioned, I am shortly going to be on holiday, (on leave, on vacation or even just taking some time off !) so I won't be writing 'Thought for the Week' for the next two Wednesdays. However I was recently given a collection of translations and re-writings of Psalm 23 so I am asking Jill to send one of these out each week instead. I often find that reading a familiar passage in a different translation or perhaps a paraphrase of it means that a different word or turn of phrase gives me a new insight or opens up a fresh line of thought. I hope you will find these versions of that much loved psalm helpful and thought-provoking.

With my love and prayers

Camilla

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