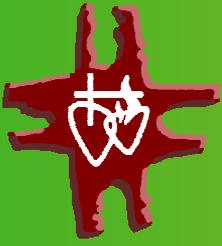


Congregation of the Sacred Hearts  
of Jesus and Mary



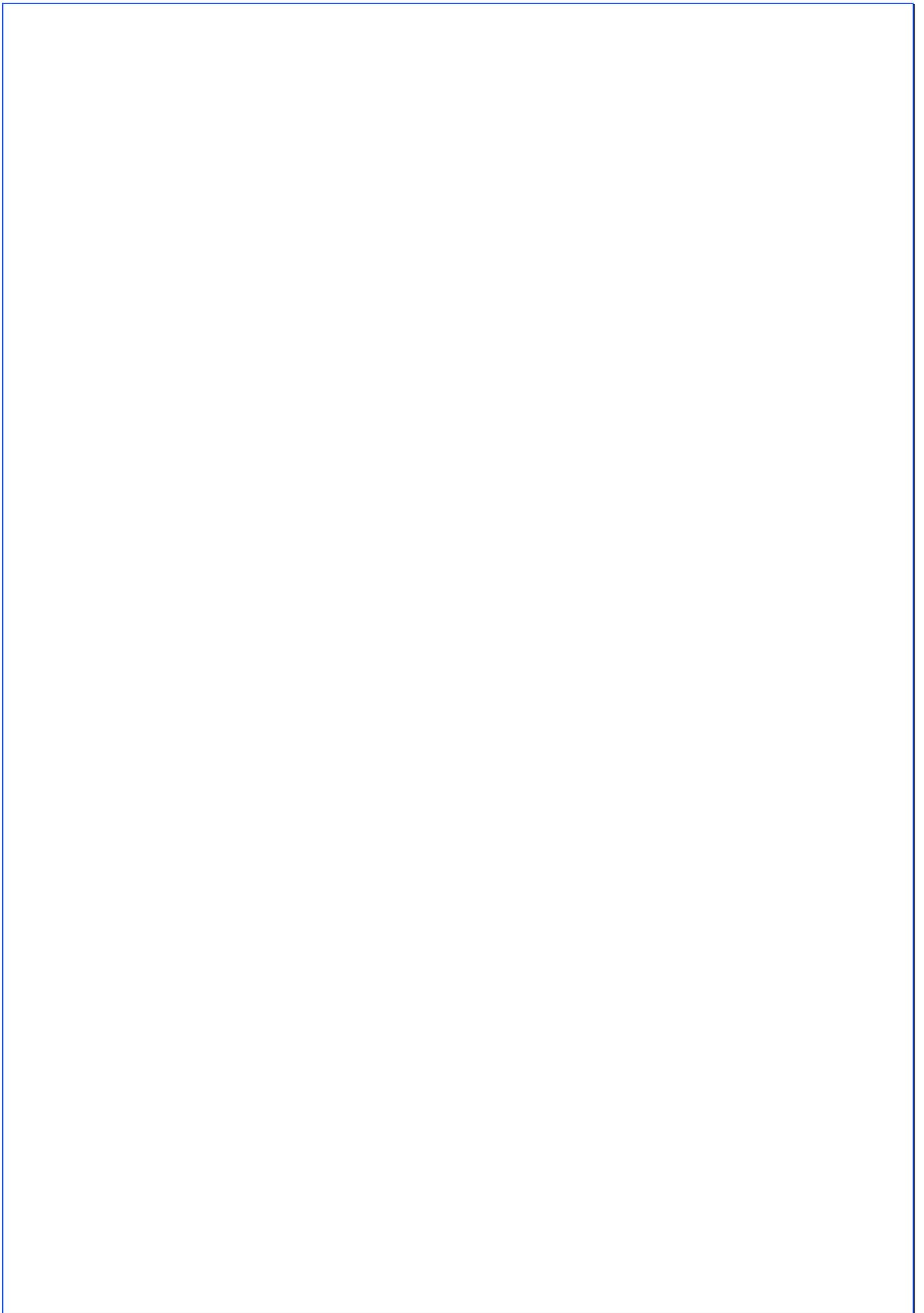
May 2011

23

# Com-Union

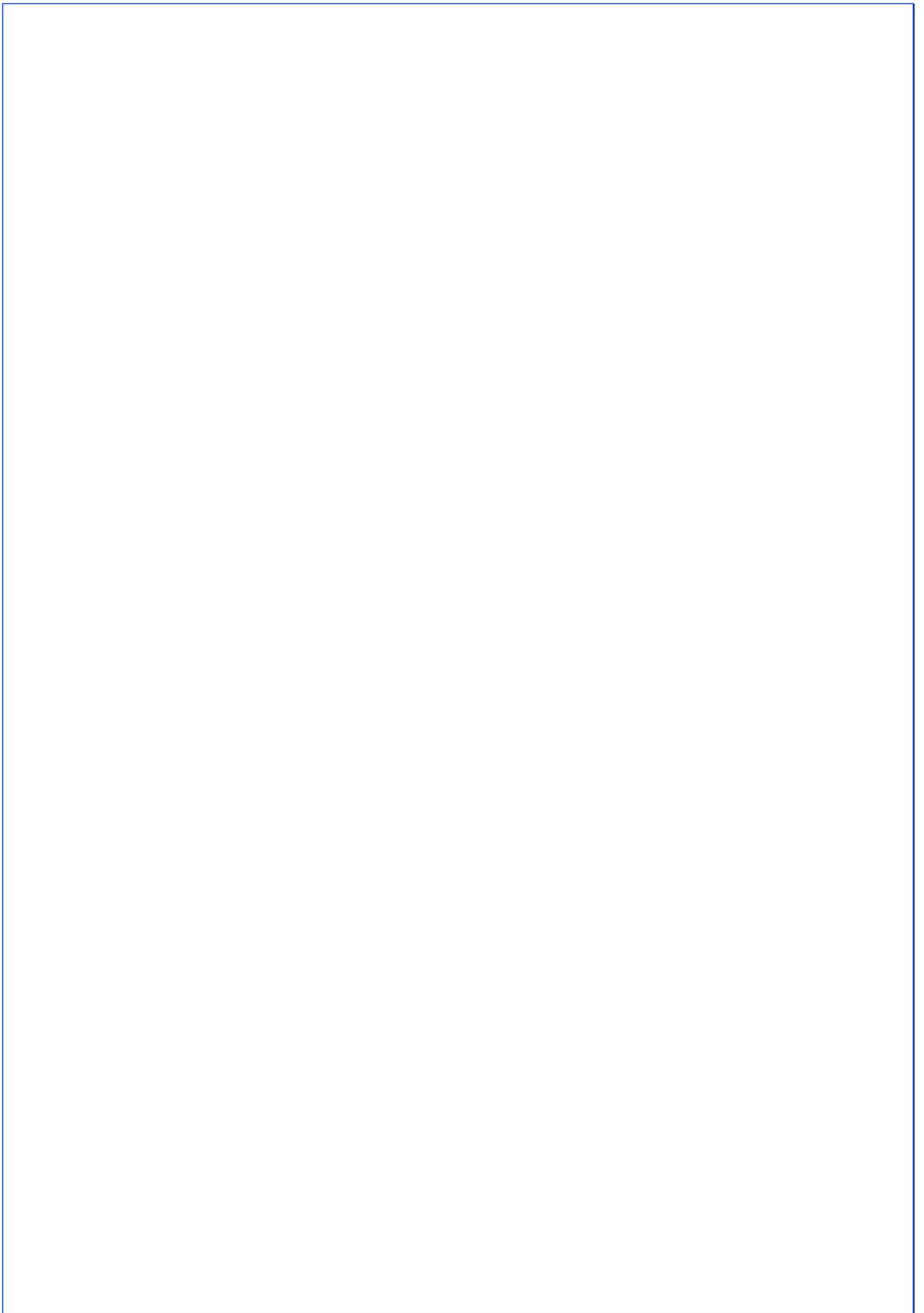


**Leisure, free time  
in religious life**



# Table of contents

<b>INTRODUCTION: LEISURE, FREE TIME IN RELIGIOUS LIFE</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Rosa María Ferreiro ss.cc. and Javier Álvarez-Ossorio ss.cc.</i>	
<b>“JOY OF BELIEVING! JOY OF PLAYING!”</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Bertrand Cherrier ss.cc.</i>	
<b>“...DO EVERYTHING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD” (1 COR 10:31)</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Jacek Filipiuk ss.cc.</i>	
<b>LEISURE, FREE TIME IN RELIGIOUS LIFE</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Paul Zacccone ss.cc.</i>	
<b>VACATION TIME FOR AFRICAN SISTERS</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Lula Georgine ss.cc.</i>	
<b>THE COSTAL ROUTE FROM TEMUCO TO VALDIVIA: ON TWO WHEELS</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Matías Álvaro Valenzuela Damilano ss.cc.</i>	
<b>TELEVISION, INTERNET, MUSIC AND FREE TIME IN RELIGIOUS LIFE</b>	<b>18</b>
<i>Isaac García Guerrero ss.cc.</i>	
<b>LEISURE AND VACATION: TIMES TO RECREATE OURSELVES AND ENHANCE PERSONAL GROWTH</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Lorgia Carrión ss.cc.</i>	
<b>LEISURE AND RECREATION IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>Aurora Laguarda ss.cc.</i>	
<b>SHARING AMONG SS.CC. BROTHERS HOW DO I USUALLY USE MY FREE TIME?</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>LEISURE TIME, REST IS A NECESSITY</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Radosław Zięzio ss.cc.</i>	
<b>TIME FOR REST: SCARCE AND FLEETING</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Alberto Toutin ss.cc.</i>	



## ***Introduction:***

# **Leisure, free time in religious life**

*May 2011*

Dear Sisters and Brothers;

As one can see from the thread through the reading of the articles in this issue of ComUnion, the theme of leisure and free time gives us plenty to talk about but at the same time resists a clear definition of its contours.

What is free time in an apostolic religious life such as ours? The difference between “free time” and “busy time” does not correspond to a change of identity, as if the guiding focus of one’s life changes when one has some leisure time. Nor is “free time” similar to time when “I feel free”, since we trust that what we do in the normal rhythm of our activities is a blessed way of realizing our freedom as sons and daughters of God in a way that befits religious life. In the end it is not clear whether or not “free time” begins immediately after “work” responsibilities end, as sometimes our apostolic work stretches over time without any perceptible limits. And, on the other hand, our community life (with its cadence of common prayer time and community time) is not, strictly speaking, part of what many would consider as “leisure”.

In spite of this blurriness, the issue is very relevant and opens a special window on the truth of our lives. In the articles that you may read in this issue, you will become more familiar with the tastes and interests of many of our brothers and sisters, what they like and what makes them happy, and their desires and aspirations. Some, also, humbly recognize without censure how in their “free time” (understood as a time when the external controls proper to religious life are diluted) they have become entangled in dubious and contradictory activities. It is good to recognize this, if it helps one to question and reorient oneself.

We hope you enjoy reading this. Indeed, a good way to use “free time” is reading publications, such as ComUnion, that speak about the life of the Congregation. Or is this not “free time” but part of our fraternal obligation?

Affectionately in the SS.CC.,



Rosa Mª Ferreiro ss.cc.  
*Superior General*



Javier Álvarez-Ossorio ss.cc.  
*Superior General*



## “Joy of Believing! Joy of Playing!”

Bertrand Cherrier ss.cc.



Since childhood, sport has been my veritable “daily bread.” Coming from a large family (I’m the fifth of six children), my earliest memories are of my brothers and my sister playing in the garden or on the playground of the nursery school. With a father who was a football player and a mother who was a gymnast, it was inevitable that the whole family very often found itself in a stadium or a gymnasium. So it was no surprise that all of us played some kind of sport. The oldest of the boys was somewhat outstanding. He participated in the Munich Olympics and qualified for the semi-finals in the 200 meter and the final of the 4x100 relay. Two years later he was champion of Europe in Rome with the same relay team. My sister and one of my brothers were also champions of France in track and field (200 m and 250 m hurdles). I and two of my other brothers preferred team sports and so football was our game of choice. Every weekend, we were in some stadium to play with our friends. At the time, soccer matches were often held on Sunday morning, at the same time as Mass! So very early I could see the problems of coexistence between sports and religion. I quickly understood the opposition between them (catechism class on Thursday was also during practice...). My Father, a great fan of the round ball, was overjoyed when early on I became a full member of a team that won the amateur championship of France. My mother, who was catechist in the parish, was concerned when I deserted my group of altar boys and lost my title as champion of incensing forever! A precocious confrontation between the “joy of playing” and the “joy of believing”? What do you do when soccer and faith are both equally important in your life? How does a young person make a connection between the homily of a priest who says that **“the first will be last and the last first”** and the pep talk of coach who tells you before a championship, **“the first are the winners and the last are the losers.”** How do you make a connection between what a priest says at half-time of the Mass, **“If someone strikes you on the cheek, give him the other as well”** and the coach who says in the locker room at half-time, **“Don’t let it go, if someone hits you, hit back. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”**

That dialectic is still with me today. Being a child of these two schools, the school of faith and the school of sport, I still have questions about how the two can possibly fit together. When I was studying at the Jesuit Centre Sevres in Paris, I took as the topic of my paper for the licentiate this same problematic. Writing an essay on play, reflection on sport and its place in society helped me situate myself and make some clearer choices as regards sports and education. My regular reading on the subject confirmed that and allowed me to form some convictions which I try to share in the educational project where I work today. Here are at least three of those:

1. Sport is no longer play. That is easily seen. The definition of sport no longer has a lot to do with the definition of play. Sport presents itself now as an activity that is “useful,” “productive,” “restrictive,” “indispensable” and “predictable.” Society today makes you feel guilty if you don’t practice some sport. That’s the exact

opposite of play, which is still something “gratuitous,” “playful,” “freeing,” “non-essential” and “unpredictable.” The break is now complete. Sport has achieved its autonomy as regards play. We could say that today there is a veritable “sports industry.” And so we come to a situation that is surprising. Play, which gave birth to sports, is now put out of the house by the very thing it gave birth to. Sports finds itself in a such a financial, political and social spiral that the virtues involved with play (gratuity, freedom, conviviality) find themselves firmly rejected by the sports machine, which always wants to produce results...and benefits!

To illustrate this change from play to sport, I just have to speak of soccer. The game of the poor has become the sport of the rich. The simplicity of a game (two goal posts and a ball) has been transformed into a sports complex (finances, administration, rules, security etc.) The sport has put its history aside and finds itself far from the spirit of the first Olympic games, when the players of the time had to be reminded by their leaders that winning was not most important but that just participating was. Where have the times gone when poets such as Pindar, in a quasi-sacred place, would proclaim their “paeans” (poems) in the stadium so as to render homage to the Olympic spirit?

2. Saving sports will come from a return to play. Play is an action that is superfluous but not superficial. If you play something, you decide to do it freely. No one forces you to play. Sports, with its calendar, its obligation of producing results and its financial demands, has become “performative,” while at the same time remaining an “opium of the people.” Play has something of idleness and lightness that sports have lost. Play retains its ability to express hope for tomorrow. In his book, *The Lord of the Dance*, Jurgen Moltman writes, **“Play looses hope and its salt when its only purpose is to forget what it is impossible to change for a brief moment. One finds joy in freedom when one anticipates by play what can possibly be other and must be other...”**

As a coach of a young peoples’ soccer team, I would recommend a return to the sense of “play.” My priorities, are not those of victory at any price but of appreciating a sporting event and the challenge of acting well in victory as well as in defeat, of being part of a group in which each person has his/her place, of learning about oneself and about others, of giving oneself to play as surprisingly and as creatively as possible. It’s about time that we abandoned the sense of sport as a “duel” to rediscover its “symbolic” and “playful” function. As Moltman emphasizes, **“play takes us from categories of doing, having and working to categories of being, being authentically and joyfully, of which it is itself the source.”**

3. Play makes the link between “sport” and “faith”, between “playing and believing.” It was definitely this idea of “play” than helped me overcome the opposition between sport and faith and to be able to make the connection between my Christian commitment and my life as a sportsman. In hanging around bookstores and different libraries, I discovered that this notion of play had interested a good number of theologians and exegetes. In the dictionary of spirituality, you can find a very beautiful article by Hugo Rahner on “play” The scripture passage that gave me the most to meditate on play is from Proverbs, **“Then was I beside**

**him as his craftsman, and I was his delight day by day, playing before him all the while, playing on the surface of his earth; and I found delight in the sons of men.**" (Proverbs 8:30-31) In this passage from Proverbs creative Wisdom personified presents herself as a child at play during the creation of the world. The Fathers of the Church, Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa as well as Maximus the Confessor spoke of Creation with reference to this passage. These authors see creation as something dynamic, something the Creator does joyfully and freely. They speak from a completely different perspective than scientists or the later Thomists, who continually appeal to categories of causality and determinism. I find myself more at home with those who see creation as play. I like what the young Jesuit theologian, François Euvé says in his book, *Penser la Création comme un jeu* (Thinking of Creation as a Game) **"To associate play and creation in a theological sense, is to value the modern desire that wants to rediscover a more gratuitous relationship between the world and God, seen less in terms of domination and submission and more as shared pleasure."** By integrating the dimension of play, creation is rediscovered as an act of God, who is free, generous, joyful and innovative. Creation is not the result of necessity imposed on God, but more a free and gratuitous act that has no other reason than the sharing of the liberty and gratuity of life. **"There is play in creation, because the future promised and hoped for can be expressed by the 'dance' of the chosen."** (J.M. Maldamé)

## Conclusion

During my childhood, I had to listen to the coach and the priest. While appreciating the two men, I noticed the differences which were really in opposition. There were two ways of being and acting. Today, I am both a priest and a coach. But in spite of the differences which are unavoidably present, I see that it is possible to venture into these two areas without having "a split personality." It is possible to find a way to invest oneself in sports without denying one's faith in the Gospel. Thanks to a new appreciation of the idea of play, I am more and more able to give myself to sports and to believe in their educative value. Without that, sports would no longer have much interest for me. Some people tell me at times that I am just being trendy and that I'm too nice as a coach. Then I simply respond to my detractors that victory is not won in any old way and that to be trendy<sup>1</sup>, is the ambition of a dead leaf!

Albert Camus said **"what I know of morality and the duties of men, I owe to soccer."** I adhere completely to this idea of the French philosopher and novelist. And I would go farther and say that if I continue to play football with the young, it is because my Christian faith lets me to play a little tune about their difference and graciously allows me the "joy of believing" and the "joy of playing!"

---

<sup>1</sup> Translators note. In French, Bertrand uses a play on words "to be trendy" in French is an expression which translated literally would be "to be in the wind."

# “...do everything for the glory of God”

(1 Cor 10:31)

Jacek Filipiuk ss.cc.



In the weeks just before summer vacation – in the teachers’ room, in classrooms, in the parish office or in spontaneous conversations with people after Mass – waiting for vacation seems to be a part of everything. As a religious and priest I believe that I have a good appreciation of the need for a break from everyday life, where we get all caught up in everyday activities. Noise that seems to increase daily and constant movement seems to shape our lives. Everything just seems to get faster and louder. The need for change becomes essential to keep up with the rhythm of the times. But then there is the question of stability, permanence, how to break that rhythm and get some rest.

And so we begin to reflect on the need for a time of rest and vacation. Many people look forward to that very special time of the year. Vacation is supposed to help us recoup the energies necessary to fulfill the different tasks foreseen over the course of the year. Vacation can include many things; get togethers, new experiences and, sometimes, some kind of adventure.

That’s how I look at vacation. Each year I experience it and the expectations increase. I want to do more things, to explore something new and I have a growing appetite for adventure. I feel almost a need to go to the mountains, to read a book I put aside, to visit friends, old friends, to go to such and such a place and, at the same time, not lose the taste for something spiritual. Even during vacation I do not want to lose contact with the mystery of “*God with us.*”

This is my conviction and I take it along in my knapsack every time I set out on the road. In the light of what St. Paul says, “*So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.*” (1 Cor. 10:31), everything can contribute to spiritual development and one’s personal relationship with God, even during vacation.

Continuing with the conviction of Saint Paul, I also think of our founder, the Good Father, of his ministry before the Blessed Sacrament, adoring in secret and tirelessly bringing the Blessed Sacrament to those in need. I believe that Pierre Coudrin also had to rest in the midst of his activity.

In their interpretation of Saint Paul, spiritual guides such as Teresa or Ignatius of Loyola, point out that we can seek and find God in everything, even in the little everyday things. In the Ignatian spiritual exercises, we find an important passage where we are told that we must “*seek the presence of our Lord in all things, in speaking, walking, looking, tasting, listening, thinking and in all activities...*” And so we can open ourselves to the possibility of combining the time of vacation with our spiritual religious identity.

I remember how after taking my first exams, in spite of the harsh climate, we took a few days off in the Karkonosze mountains. It was a time when we could stand back from the books, homework and the schedule of prayer and life during the school year. Along the mountain paths, which were deserted at that time of the year, we prayed the rosary. Often enough during

the day the path led us to some nearby church, where like other students we were able to participate in the Mass.

I am aware that these are not only memories that come back for a moment, but they have left an indelible mark. Going to the mountains I more easily find an answer to the question of providence, eternity and the need to stop or rest. The rock which I trip over reminds me of the glacial period. The wall of black rock, which I see along the trail, is older than the humanity itself. There are millions of years of lethargy in the ravine where there is a stream whose roaring waters recall its origin. The mountains themselves raise a song without words, the song of eternity.

So it is good now and then to go to the mountains and to be in contact with rocks that bear the marks of centuries. In their presence the disorder of so many problems and questions finds another light and a solution. Face to face with the extraordinary miracle of nature, which we encounter in the mountains, consciously or not we come to the idea of eternity. Our problems also seem smaller and less important. The change of perspective, which we can have from the top of a mountain, allows us to see the things of everyday in a different way. Space and size give us a big and broad heart, able to breathe deeply. That is why the Bible calls God "*rock*." He is the risen Lord. He is the one who remains with us. He is the eternal God in a world in constant change.

Perhaps it is more than a coincidence that in recent years I have worked in a town whose southern border is at the foot of the Alps. Because of the proximity of the mountains, it's like we live among them every day. This is reflected in our ministry here. Personally, I have the pleasure of participating every year in unusual liturgies at the summit of Hochrappenkopf, at 2,423 meters above sea level, where I celebrate Mass for the Kempten DAV Sektion (German Association of the Section of the Alps-Kempten). There are several kinds of transportation for getting to Oberstdorf but from there you have only your two legs, which have to take you five hours to the "Rappenseehütte" shelter and then two hours more to the summit.

In mid July, when the valleys already warmed by the sun indicate the silent path to the heights, with the peaks sometimes adorned with a white cap of snow, I leave the activity of every day to experience once more the "*mystery of Emmanuel*" – God who remains with us. It is impressive to see how the people of our group carry heavy backpacks with things for Mass, a white cloth and a vase of flowers to decorate the table of the Lord, on which I will celebrate the holy Sacrifice. This is an extraordinary experience, when I see how the preparation for the liturgy is peaceful and harmonious. Walking the path to the summit together builds bonds among us, preparing us for that unique encounter with the Lord in the Eucharist. Taking out of the backpack the things for the liturgy, I give myself away in front of my dear friends, because there is also everything I will need as a priest to spend some days in the mountains. At ten o'clock, we are ready to begin the celebration at the summit with the entrance song.

The celebration of Mass is not only a communal experience. The celebration of this Mass is an extraordinary spiritual experience. The unique backdrop of sky, sun, mountains, the words of Scripture and the words of our prayer come together in thanksgiving remembering the eternal truth of the one God, eternal, unchangeable, in whom our heart rests.

## Leisure, free time in religious life

### *Role of leisure in my personal life & its effects on the SS.CC. community*

*Paul Zaccone ss.cc.*



“JESUS OFTEN WITHDREW.” Luke 5:16

Jesus himself withdrew for a while and not inadvertently but “often”.

I believe that to be a good ssc religious I must be holistic in my approach in taking care of me. This means that I need to be concerned not only with the spiritual dimension of my life but as well with the physical and the psychological. In order to be true to this I hold 3 important factors close to myself.

#### ***Prayer***

#### ***Others***

#### ***Exercise***

Each of these elements are a great part of me and my religious life.

Withdrawing for a while is important for two purposes, to pray and to exercise. These two help uplift my spirit within so that I can then give to others. It is most certain that we can not give that which we do not have.

My leisure time is spent in various ways: I enjoy nature, to be out doors, to walk the beautiful beaches in Hawaii. The experience of Gods gift of creation to us! I love to bicycle ride and to pace walk. In conjunction with these activities I add another facet of life that delights me, helps me to reflect, pray, and have a certain calmness - music.

I enjoy listening to music and searching for new music pieces to add to my collection. Various types of music help set my tone, sometimes it may be the music type or the lyrics. Music can assist to place me in deep prayer and reflection or a direct sense of joy. The combination with the activity is most beneficial to me.

Others areas of leisure I enjoy are exercising at the gym, which is a good healthy release of stress. Indoor activities I enjoy are reading, movies and photography. Although reality is that I am able to only do some of the activities only part of the time. Most importantly I schedule into my days, time to pray and time for leisure. Scheduling exercise is a challenge to do, making certain that it fits into my busy day to day activities. I attempt to try and treat these two each day as important to my life as person, religious, and priest.

Scheduling in these events into my day assumes that I will take time for them, just as any other appointment, they must be kept.

Like Jesus it is good to 'Often' (daily) spend time in things that help nurture my person/soul. In the quiet time of reading, meditating or in the movement of music I become uplifted and refreshed, able and ready to take on what is next.

We take our example from our God 'He rested from all the work he had done' Genesis 2:3

This alone time or free time in leisure is most important in that it affects my community.

If things are not going well in my ministry for a particular day and I have not taken time for my self to 'regroup' the simple reality is that I will end up bringing home the things 'not going well', or stress and take it out on my community members. It is best for me to take out a small portion of time to do or be other than who I am in my ministry, a photographer a work out at the gym. This bit of consideration takes the burden off my community. Instead of coming home to my community with the tired bad day and take it out on a community member or the entire community by an unkind word or look, or explode on something that at other times I would have patience with, I rid myself of it prior by this withdraw time. I am better able to cope with the reality of community life and the particular of my community members if I have dealt with myself first.

I must add that this is not a full professional system but is an indicator to me that if I am aware of myself and mood then I am less to share the negative. When I have not gone three days without some exercise time and I myself can feel I am not at my best in my mood, which affects my interaction, I know it is time for "Jesus time" - retreat / withdraw a while. God may be able to deal with me as He created me but my brothers or sisters may not be as tolerable.

Catholic guilt can get to me some of the times. Do I have the time today with all its busyness to go to the gym? So I do forgo the exercise and do keep to the prayer. Even seasons of the Church year lend to spend a few more minutes listening to music, walking the beach or prayer.

Over all being a religion means to be holistic in my life to juggle all that comes my way in a day and yet still take time for God and important time for me.

I imagine my community would thank me or send me to the gym so that I would not be in a poor temperament.

We should remember Jesus often withdrew and God rested, What better example!

Praise be Jesus and Mary!

## Vacation time for African Sisters

*Lula Georgine ss.cc.*



Moved by a strong desire to share with you some of our vivid and edifying experiences in spending our vacations, I want above all to emphasize the importance that those free times have for us. They free us from routine and also open our spirits as we share the daily reality of our families. They help us return to being what we really are. They lift us up above an eventual time of depression. They awaken in us new strength and new motivation for serving Christ. They give us a pleasant time spent in our place of origin.

Besides providing us with a pleasant time, our vacations also give us an opportunity to spend time in an agreeable setting or atmosphere, to refresh our memories, to tell of our adventures with many a hearty laugh. We can enjoy long tranquil hours when we share a restful silence, or answer questions about our religious life. We return to the place where we were children; we visit the places where we grew up; and this setting is both sweet and refreshing for us. We especially return home, where our vocation was born. We can say that our spirits leap for joy as we receive once again deep maternal affection and all that involves. We share meals with our brothers and sisters as we did once upon a time, and we can measure more adequately how we bore with patience the idle chatter of our brothers and sisters, our nieces and nephews, and our cousins. We find our family spirit growing within us. We take long walks together, we find ourselves wanting to play "blind man's buff," and to do our laundry in the river, as we used to do.

It is certainly true that our vacations are not only a change of activities, but that they are also a change in schedules. We follow a different schedule, often being awakened by the noise of our nieces and nephews. All day long we have continual visits with young people, adults, good friends and former schoolmates, of brothers and sisters who are always ready to give us a lot of advice. Many persons come who want to hear us speak of religious life. Both young and grown ups, our elderly, our parents want us to speak to them of God, and to share with them our experience of life. We therefore make use of this occasion to render some pastoral service by explaining what living the religious life entails. Some admire how we live, but others think our way of life is "unusual" and dislike what they hear. However, all our hearers wish us a happy continuation. We are able to approach the Christians more easily, and we can console them by our presence and our visits.

After a day filled with various events, we are able to enjoy the quiet of the night for our meditation. Everything seems to be refreshed. We evaluate how the day has been spent, and we draw closer to God and to ourselves. We begin to feel ourselves quite alone, and we realize how important community is to us. We enter a process of self-formation, increasing our love for community life. Maintaining a schedule of daily prayer demands great responsibility from us.

In the morning everyone awaits us for Morning Office in the parish. The aspirants organize prayers in which we are invited to participate. After the Eucharistic celebration on Sundays,

everyone wants to greet us and wish us well. Truly, our presence is noted by all, even by those who are rather shy; nothing escapes their gaze.

Both in the parish and in the general area, we are expected to give a witness to God. Our brothers and our sisters, and especially our parents and grandparents expect us to attend all the different celebrations of prayers in the parish. In this way, our presence can attract young persons to religious life. We are more or less (let's say more than less) an example for the youth in our area.

Though our passage among them, we exemplify for them the ideal of a successful life. Parents will point us out and tell their children, "You should become like this Sister or this Brother if you wish to be respected." Some of the mothers and fathers in the parish who come to visit us give us the same advice: "You must bear with the difficulties, since the life you have chosen is not easy." They all ask us to persevere and to pray. We are treated with special politeness because we are religious.

Sometimes we experience difficulty in our relationships, sensing that those who have grown up with us experience a sense of inferiority and keep away from us. Unfortunately, the more they keep distant, the more religious life remains an enigma for them. Although we attract many young persons to religious life, sometimes we become aware that others regard religious life as too demanding and so they keep a distance. They think we are waging a kind of war against them.

Sometimes when we stay at the home of our brothers or sisters, we must follow their schedule. We often have to remain home alone. During this time we maintain a balance by reading or enjoying other forms of relaxation. Often enough, we are invited to share a meal with one family or other, and the day passes quickly.

# The Costal Route from Temuco to Valdivia: on Two Wheels

*Matías Álvaro Valenzuela Damilano ss.cc.*



For some years now a group of brothers from the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts has spent some time during the summer touring various places in our country by bicycle. The goal is to know, relax, and share with one another and exercise.

This year the group that gathered was larger than usual. We were five brothers between the ages of 30 and 40 years old, eager to ride and travel a route that was unknown to all of us. The compass pointed us to the south, to the coastal area of the ninth region. Someone said, “to Arauco along the coast on two wheels”.

We departed from Temuco toward Carahue, going through Nueva Imperial. The first thing we noticed was the grandeur of the Imperial River and the various bridges that cross it. One of them is a suspension bridge that inspired the coat of arms of the city of Carahue. We also recognized the strong presence of the indigenous world through the faces of the people and the products that were sold in the area (for example, a cart loaded with cochayuyos that are brought from Tirúa). Also the roundabout of the beautiful square in Carahue is adorned with the faces of tribal chiefs. Included in the heritage of this square are some antique locomotives. It should be noted that the municipal campground in Carahue is free and has good facilities.

After Carahue the route took us to Nehuentúe and Puerto Saavedra, there at the mouth of the Imperial River we met up with the sea and its wide open beaches with plenty of waves and beautiful scenery. Puerto Saavedra is a place where you no longer see any trace of the 1960 tsunami, which we remembered from the film “La Frontera”, but it is still affected by the recent earthquake and its aftershocks. Yet the place is still very beautiful and one can see that they have raised their town with care and dedication. In all of these places it was possible to eat seafood such as mussels, clams, sea bass and mackerel, as well as products of the land. The area produces some exquisite potatoes (we have to say that potato production is typical of the area, and in the folklore festival week there is a day dedicated to this tuber), which we cooked on the coals.

From Puerto Saavedra to the south the road is made of gravel, which slows the progress of the bikes, especially on the hills, but nothing stopped our journey. We decided to travel through the Huapibudi peninsula, with the goal of taking the raft that crosses Lake Budi, from west to east, carrying us to Puerto Domínguez. Lake Budi is the only saltwater lake in our country because it is near the coast and its outlet allows the salty seawater in. This does not prevent the growth of vegetation around it. It is a spot with very beautiful islands where people get

around by rowing or motorboat. Many of the inhabitants of this place belong to the indigenous community of “mapuche lafkenches”, that is, coastal peoples, whose culture is linked to maritime, river, or lake activity. We were impressed to see the women vigorously rowing without losing heart or complaining. We thought of those who live in big cities, who suffer from terminal boredom, this, it would seem would not be possible in these areas where life is hard and of necessity must be faced with perseverance.

From Puerto Domínguez we travelled to the south going through Hualpín (leaving behind the crossing to Teodoro Schmidt, which we did not visit) and we spent the night in Nueva Toltén. We arrived for the Toltén folklore festival, that was well organized, but it's a place that is less prepared for welcoming campers, which shows the limited flow of travelers to this area. In any case, the banks of the Toltén river are very beautiful and worth visiting.

The last legs of our trip took us to the resorts in the area of Valdivia, Queule and Mehuín. We will never forget the effort it took to us get to Mehuín, but we were rewarded with the descent that followed. We camped on a small beach there that was protected by rocks. It is called Pichicullín. With many birds and not too many people, it was an ideal place to relax. The sea allowed us this needed rest and recreation to recover our strength. It was Sunday and we celebrated the Eucharist among the rocks. Our altar was these ancestral volcanic rocks that reminded us of the beginning of everything and the Father Creator, and also of Jesus who together with his disciples often shared bread and fish at the water's edge, giving life and showing the path of love.

While traveling the route between Mehuín and San José de la Mariquina we could not help but notice the signs which said “no pipeline”, which showed the battle of the “fishermen” against the paper mill that threatens to build a pipeline that will affect the sea in the area. We must zealously care for our ecosystems. It is a responsibility toward our work and for future generations.

The end of our journey was San José de la Mariquina, which in the ecclesiastical world was well known for the seminaries and formation houses it once had. Now they are part of the past but a well-cared for sanitarium has been preserved and is run by the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Here we finished a part of the trip in tubs of warm water with medicinal algae. This relaxed us so much that we slept like babies that night.

Three of the five finished the journey the next day in Valdivia, completing approximately 313 Km of travel. It was a great trip and we were grateful for the good weather that accompanied us. The summer rain is not wet, as they say in the south, but in this case, more than half of the time, we felt the summer sun that fills the heart. We must also highlight the friendliness of the people who encouraged or simply greeted us. Apparently seeing people traveling by bicycle lowers the barriers of mistrust. This mode of travel allows for a very horizontal contact with the people and the place. At any rate, it is a mode of travel that is not yet incorporated in our culture, which one notes in the narrow shoulders of the highways and above all in the difficulty in transporting bicycles by bus to the place one has decided to begin one's trip.

Finally, we thank the Lord who gave us a few days of fraternity and rest in our beloved country, which we will remember throughout the year.

*Recommendations for a bicycle trip:*

- Physical preparation during the year and equipping the bicycles with carrying racks and saddle bags.
- Knowledge of the route.
- Carry patches and/or air pumps.
- Carry tools for repairing broken chains.
- Carry a tent, sleeping bag and camp stove.
- Wear silicon riding pants which allow for a more comfortable trip.
- Wear a shirt that allows sweat to evaporate.
- Carry a little clothing and the minimum amount food; include something caloric for stops that can give strength and hydration.

# Television, Internet, music and free time

## in religious life



*Isaac García Guerrero ss.cc.*

Recently times studies, articles, surveys, books, experiments, conferences or congresses have multiplied which have as their aim the clarification of some of the words in the title.

Free time, in religious life today, is greatly influenced by television, music or the internet. However, it's also true that the internet plays a part or is an habitual instrument, not only in free time but also in times when religious are busy.

### **The boom and the aggiornamento**

Many analysts of this topic have two phenomena coincide. On the one hand there is the initial boom in social communications media around the second half of the 'seventies' in the last century. On the other hand there is the aggiornamento (renewal) of consecrated life that wanted to put the guidelines of the II Vatican Council into practice at that time. It is a curious if not providential coincident that can also help us orient the renewal of consecrated life that this new digital era brings with it. It is something like a change of mentality in the way one relates to oneself and to others.

### **A Spectacular change**

In the last twenty years our societies have continued to be surprised by new chapters of this initial boom in the sphere of information, knowledge and communication. Someone has baptized the phenomenon as the world of the three screens, television, computer and mobile telephone.

There is an increasing interconnection between them. They tend to relate to one another to the point that in a short time they will merge into one, as Steve Ballmer, president of Microsoft Corporation, has just announced.

The three screens already form part of the panorama which religious life offers today in five continents. For example, an average Spanish religious today can be always connected and interact on all the levels. With just one fixed or mobile gadget he can talk and send and receive photos, music, videos and any type of archive. With the boom in social websites he can, as well, work with a group he may choose at any time.

## **Television**

After some initial hesitation our communities have accepted it as part of the furniture of our life. We have witnessed the passing of the black and white TV to the color TV; and we are witnessing the change from analog TV to digital.

The reality we are witnessing makes us more global, makes the walls of the cloisters, the limits of the religious house, the separation from the world that our ascetic life favors more fragile.

## **The Computer and Internet**

The second screen that has entered our communities, rooms and obviously also our institutions is the computer and internet. If the adult generation among us has been the generation of the TV, the younger generations of religious men and women are rather the generation of the computer and internet. Young people communicate by means of programs such as Messenger or Facebook or Twitter.

## **The Mobile Telephone**

Another screen that captivates us is that of the mobile telephone. It's another of the great inventions which permit us to talk to other people without having to be tied down to one place. The mobile is changing our way of relating to one another, of working and even how we perceive the world, time and space.

## **Consequences**

Face with the changes just enumerated we need to deeply read the reality they lead to and try to critically interpret it.

The use of the cellular telephone, internet, Ipod, plasma or LCD television creates new situations for communities of religious life and for consecrated persons. And these are not only in the moral aspect of the contents which the communication media transmit, nor in the time dedicated to the use of those media that could be detrimental to the time dedicated to the community or the time for personal responsibilities, but above all in the new forms of communication which are generated through the use or abuse of these media.

Cardinal Franc Rode said that in the past the walls of the convents were impermeable to the world. Now this is not so. The media have become the transporting vehicles of the world's mentality to the convents. The new situations which the communities of consecrated life and consecrated persons live in relation to the use of the media influence their quality. Religious life can be made more beautiful or ugly by the media.

## **Opportunities**

The Magisterium of the Church exhorts us constantly to use the media to transmit the gospel, the good news. It's true that something is being done although a lot needs to be done. It's not enough to know the techniques of the media, it's necessary to take the risk of more

strongly promoting evangelization, promoting the apostolate, vocations, even to the point of permeating the present culture with the values that are proper to the gospel.

As far as opportunities go, the internet potentially represents an extraordinary means for starting up new internal communication programs in consecrated life, both in the institute as well as in the area of congregations as a whole: share the consecration through sharing knowledge and experiences. The Internet is a resource for the Catholic Church in general and for consecrated life in particular.

The web offers many opportunities for proclaiming the gospel and communicating consecrated life in all of its expressions. Equally numerous are the opportunities for promoting the charisms of the foundation and starting new pastoral initiatives, in a special way those of the vocational type. For example the vocations that were discovered or born on the internet.

The superiors and formators ought to make a serene and profound analysis in order to compare the current use being made of the means of communication in the community with their own Constitutions, the rule of life or the chapter decisions.

Religious life has a fundamental role here in expressing itself and empowering itself through the internet. It cannot be denied that the internet generates sociability, relationships and networks of human relationships; but it is also evident that they are different from physical communities. The internet helps us religious to meet restless people in social movements (environment, ecology, women, civil rights) and be able to have a global influence locally.

The internet is a resource for the Catholic Church in general and for consecrated life in particular.

Its possibilities are as of yet unforeseen. Although presently it has a great handicap; it's the risk of losing privacy; but there are also other risks, such as addiction, the possibility of establishing contacts which de-identify, which makes one belong to other imagined communities ... The internet is become part of the fabric of our lives at this time. It is not future. It is present.

Also in order to face it, it is necessary to have a serious anthropotechnological formation.

## Leisure and vacation:

### times to recreate ourselves and enhance personal growth

Lorgia Carrión ss.cc.



The work of God created in freedom must continue in time according to His word that speaks infinitely to us about pauses, moments, and times to renew and validate our natural status. Two months ago it was winter in Europe and everything seemed to have entered into a period of stillness. All of nature seemed to be resting and indeed it was. Today we are in spring and nature seems to have entered a race to blossom forth in the most sublime way: plants full of leaves and flowers, and blessed, delicious fruits that later will be on our tables. Nature manifests a wisdom that man has not yet grasped. He is the only being who is still incessantly violating things, and not taking significant breaks to rest and be renewed. For this reason we suggest the need for leisure and holidays as well as simple and concrete ways in which we can more significantly build our way of being and living.

Religious life seems not to escape from the cultural and social environment in which minutes and hours limit and oppress our ability to promote a more enriching life. Life seems to disappear in the agitation and the effort to accomplish the responsibilities that surpass our ability or available time.

Religious people, who should radiate a calm, serene and cheerful disposition are overwhelmed and let go of the beautiful experience of living. A simple and constructive recreation helps us to take advantage of the gratuitous and necessary times to recreate our nature. This seems to be present in the very project of our Creator God (Gn 2,2).

Holidays are a space in which we can relax, renew, and cultivate some dimensions of our lives that we perhaps put aside due to the demands of our work, of multiple occupations that are inherent to our daily responsibilities. These are days in which we strengthen our openness to other chores that make us more human, considerate and sensitive with ourselves. Thus leisure constitutes a key to promote and achieve personal growth, family integration and the charm of community life, and the gift of fraternity. Vacation and leisure should be the opportunity where the gratuity to be like children playing freely becomes a vital necessity.

Our **foundress** reminds us that *“Joy and fervor go together”*. We must know that happiness is the result of an integral experience as a human being, of the capacity to be disciples of Jesus and, especially, of a great consciousness of knowing that we are God’s children created and loved, *“created not against us but in our favor”* as the Spanish theologian Andrés Torres Queiruga affirms.

Saint **Damien of Molokai** proclaims his happiness: *“I am the happiest missionary in the world”*. How did he organize the beginning of each day in his mission? Despite his busy

schedule, we assume that he never lost sight of the need to take time to assess his feelings and to renew himself, to restore himself through a more personal contemplation, to write intimate letters describing his missionary experience, to imagine the future of the island confided to him, ... in the solitude and the dynamism of silent moments in his daily routine.

Nowadays we have the testimony of our elder sisters who have lived their consecration with joy and have developed the art of recreating in community, devoting time to personal encounters, playing games, cards, etc or just walking together in the garden ... wonderful opportunities to laugh, joke, and express their good humor and share anecdotes. I have noted with great satisfaction two sisters, above 80 years old, who spend their free time enjoying themselves in a daily game of scrabble which demands lots of concentration. They do it because it is an activity that keeps their minds active and, at the same time, unites them in fun. One of them told me: *"This helps me to avoid Alzheimer"*. Age is not important; the essential thing is to cultivate the art of eluding the limits that only an experience of gratuity of life, keeps us free, standing and in a healthy condition of our faculties.

There are multiple possibilities to experience leisure and free time in a pleasant, creative and constructive way: reading, meditating, enjoying music and engaging in handicrafts, weaving, embroidery, painting, and gardening. All of these evoke a re-encounter and make us more aware of our altruistic abilities, develop in us a universal spirit, opening us to the creativity of many aspects, even of being co-participants in more global initiatives that promote life.

Reflecting and sharing from the experience of personal leisure and community recreation is an opportunity to challenge all communities to integrate into our lives, presently so full of activities, other experiences that enrich and encourage the sharing of our life and mission. Leisure activities and community walks facilitate openness, freedom and spontaneous sharing and allow the assimilation of learning even though it lacks attraction.

One way of revitalizing the fraternal spirit is by sharing at the table of our meals. Sharing with joy, harmony and friendship at the table is an art. Nowadays we long for the family spirit built around the table, and it is recognized as a lost value. At the same time, there is an attempt to recover it as a patrimony present in other human groups such as corporations. We, sometimes put aside this inspiring and edifying practice.

In our younger communities we are gradually losing this familiar nuance that needs to be urgently revalued. We have experienced it with a great intensity in the communities of initial formation. Rather than at lunch or dinner, it is the time we spend at the table after meals that opens up the possibility to transform these moments into spaces of recreation through chatting, discussion and sharing of life experiences. We can notably reduce stress when we talk without prejudices and we feel *"the community is in a green zone"*, as Peter Fincker says, where each one can be herself because she feels she is in a trusting atmosphere. Thus we can experience in a certain way the eschatological joy of the *"banquet of the Kingdom"* and confirm the value of this heritage to the society.

Jesus of Nazareth for whom we have opted and left "everything" also chose to rest and *"invited his disciple to rest for a while"* (Mc 6,31). He is constantly telling us that there is no better care than that done by ourselves by seriously respecting the limits of our humanity. Rest is a value, and true rest is a grace because for humankind to rest is a natural need which restores the energy of body and mind. The invitation of Jesus to his disciple must be a

reference for our humanity which shows signs of exhaustion, emptiness, and cries for help (SOS).

This fraternal sharing from daily experience shows that the more human or relaxed our personal and communal life is, the better it expresses the interior joy, reflects peace and harmony, and may be a sign of good health for our generation. We can remark that if our abilities and talents are active and we accept who we are, valuing the differences among us, then we will bring about vitality, simplicity and co-responsibility through any recreational activity which is a means to respond to the re-foundation of the human person who is eager to live differently.

Finally, to live leisure is not to abandon our religious dimension, but to give a deserved attention to our own being. Rest, relaxation, play, and recreation give us so much goodness that our “beatitudes and sacrifices on behalf of the Kingdom” do not lose sight of what makes us human. It is to have the ability to recover in order to commit ourselves more fruitfully to the tasks, utopias and ideals even if they seem crazy. It is **to participate and to put more heart into whatever God asks of us**. It is to take time for holidays, to change the rhythm of life, to engage in a sport, to have passion for something small, to build up simple pleasures that make us better equipped to build life as a gift. We are invited to make the experience of leisure and recreation a way of humanization that impels us to participate in all that concerns self-knowledge with joy and hope, recreating trust, openness and putting our talents at the service of others in constructing the community in the SS.CC. style.

## Leisure and Recreation in the Religious Life

*Aurora Laguarda ss.cc.*



Leisure, free time in Religious Life! The first thing that comes to my mind is the question: is there room for free time? I look around and see, especially, women, mothers, working almost 20 hours a day. They wake up when it is still night to fetch water, to prepare the "chula" (carbon stove) to cook food, to arrange the children and take them to school (those who can afford to go), to work at breaking stones and coal, to deal with the husband ... and a long list of tasks one after another until the sun has long set and night envelops everything again.

And I wonder, do I have the right to have "free time"? Perhaps it depends on how we understand the concept of free time. If we understand it as a time "without activity", I have to say that in these latitudes this is a word that is not in "our dictionary", there is always too many things to do. But if we understand free time as a change of activity, as an invitation to live the festive, celebrative, gratuitous moments of life, I have to accept that we do have free time. Moreover, we need the time off if we want to have a balanced life, if we want to be faithful witnesses of Christ.

The question takes a new turn. It is no longer whether we have free time, but of how we use the time off, both personally and communally. In other words, how do we live the free time? We need to find time to live and relish the joy of being together, to witness that our life and mission is worthwhile.

Free time has, for me, two aspects, one "inside" focused more on personal and community life and another, "outside" that affects, above all, our mission. Within the first aspect would be time we spend personally to relax, to enjoy doing small or big things that somehow distract, entertain or help us to better prepare for mission. Having asked our young Sisters in Asia how they spend their free time, a vast range of possibilities opened up: reading, praying, watching a good program on TV, walking, contemplating life, chatting with friends, listening to music, engaging in some kind of sports, gardening, taking the opportunity to "catch up" on different tasks, and a long list of various activities. This helps us to "break" a little from the daily "grind", from "the absorbing activism" in which we are stuck. It leads us to find ourselves, to enjoy things that we are offered, to enjoy the greatest gift we have received from God: life. It's another way of Contemplating God's Love, of Restoring, of Liberating, of Reconciling.

Within this aspect is also the community dimension. To enjoy together really helps us to know each other better, to be more faithful to our vocation as religious. These are the times when we prioritize meeting with the Sisters, without rush, without worries. These are moments of enjoying and celebrating life together, of allowing ourselves to be amazed by the uniqueness of each sister, each day. This brings us to a better understanding of our Sisters in ways that, perhaps in the rush of daily life, we have failed to discover. It is to express with joy the vocation to which we have been called, the joy of being together, sharing together. At the same time, it

helps us to witness that our life is worth living, to witness that religious life is not boring and obsolete.

The second aspect, in my opinion, involves the mission. How do we help our youth to use their free time in a constructive way? It is a good opportunity to offer other kinds of educational, pastoral and, why not also, evangelizing experiences. In Asia we work especially with children and young people. The Society nowadays has few alternatives for them. It is up to us, then, to offer alternatives to help them to use their free time creatively and, at the same time, to teach them to devote part of their free time to other less fortunate people. In this sense we have many possible activities: "summer camps, retreats and workshops for youth, and playrooms for children, tutorials, participation in programs that benefit village communities. So, as you see, there is a wide variety of educational, pastoral and evangelizing activities.

And since I do not have an "abundance of free time" I finish this reflection emphasizing the importance of living the brief moments of free time that we do have as a gift from God and encouraging you to accept the invitation to live the gratuitous, celebrative and festive moments of our life.

## ***Sharing among SS.CC. Brothers***

### **How do I usually use my free time?**

When I have free time, I try to catch up on some things awaiting my attention, like straightening my room, answering e-mail and especially taking more time to pray or praying more calmly. In other words, I try to give some order to my world, outside and inside, putting things back in focus.

I also take time to visit people I care about and whom I don't usually see, cultivating friendships and relationships in general. I love to get together for some good conversation and something to eat, ice cream or a glass of wine with cheese, or even a good barbecue. I know that sharing a meal with someone nourishes my spirit. Among the people I visit is my family, who are one of the basic support structures of my life.

The things that relax me the most are those that clear my mind such as a good novel. I love to read, classics as well as contemporary writers, even fantasy. This summer I read "Les Miserables" by Victor Hugo, which I would heartily recommend. Reading while listening to music is therapeutic and doing it lying in bed is a pleasure.

The other thing that clears my head and revives my body is camping, sleeping in the open on a mountain or at the seashore. It is like living outside of time, no rush, breathing the pure air, letting myself be filled by the beauty of the surroundings and the presence of the Creator. It's great to get to know new places, walking or on bicycle, swimming, laughing, meeting people along the way but most of all to be in the midst of nature.

Related to the above and something I really get a lot out of is sports, especially cycling, running, hiking or also a good game of soccer. All of that gives me a new lease on life and helps me live from day to day.

---

Usually I enjoy Tuesday as my "free day." The usual routine is "not to turn on the computer," to visit a friend who has been sick for a long time without leaving the house, visit some of the surrounding parishes to offer to celebrate a weekend mass on our brother Saint Damien –with written material and accompanying DVD's- and arrive on time for a meal with a priest friend. We are from the same country and he prepares a complete feast. His parish staff (four people) comes, as well another priest. It usually ends with a long after dinner chat and discussion of things theological, historical, social and religious in which we bring one another up to date and have a friendly back and forth, solving the problems of the world, the church and society in general. Often we keep pictures and notes from those discussions. When the World Cup was on we also watch some of the matches on TV.

On ordinary days I use my free time at the computer doing e-mail and internet. At night I watch the TV news, very rarely a movie, because there are so many commercials that you have to leave the outcome to the imagination.

I'll say nothing about sports. I would be lying if I did.

But there is always free time to welcome the SS.CC. brothers who visit.

---

Speaking of free time, it would be necessary to say that free time in religious life is something that is scheduled. In other words, in the midst of everything going on in our work, community life or studies one has to find time for leisure.

I think that if there is a lot of free time, there is some problem at the religious level. I am going through a change in my use of free time. Because of a bad experience of free time, a short while ago I was making very bad use of such time. Many times I used my leisure time looking at online pornography or spending hours in online chat rooms. Often I would drink alcohol to excess. Sometimes I would do no matter what, just to kill time.

At present I have experienced a change in my way of utilizing free time. Now I use my free time to do things that I like and that can teach me a little bit about a lot of things. I use my free time to: play sports, read a good book or learn new computer programs. It's unbelievable that up until recently I knew nothing about Excel and other very useful programs.

I use my free time to improve my native tongue and learn other languages. I use it to do things that interest me, like take a walk, go to the movies, to the theater, to a museum, to a nature park, and even, to pray more. I am giving more time to conversations with others, to cultivating friendships and to staying in touch with my parents and my brothers.

I also have plans to use my leisure time to sleep a bit more, respecting the sacred time of sleep. I would also like to give more time to music and to different things, such as getting a license to drive a motorcycle or a bus or to learn a language from a book.

I am experiencing a great change in my life just from making better use of leisure time, free time in my religious life, even if it be for well deserved rest. Thank you.

---

This is a very interesting topic as there is no question that leisure or free time for many religious was - and by some is still - considered a luxury, something we could do without or haven't got time for! This is what happens when you take God and religion too seriously. We forget that the sabbath was made holy because that was the day that God rested. To rest is a sacred enterprise! A friend of mine who retired from work in his early 60's speaks without any hint of embarrassment of enjoying his 'Sacred idleness'. I have on my wall a plaque which states: 'How beautiful it is to do nothing and then rest afterwards'.

Rest is not only seen by some as a luxury, it is also understood by others as a potential for danger: 'the devil makes work for idle hands!' There is some truth in this if resting or being idle

becomes something boring or purposeless. When that happens there may well be a temptation to use the time in less helpful ways.

So, free time in religious life - is it to be considered a luxury or a potential for danger? Of course it can be both. But to not have free time in religious life - now that would be a disaster.

Having said all I have said about leisure and free time, the truth is that I do not have a disciplined habit of resting. My moments of free time come often out of the blue, spontaneously, snatched. But at least when those moments do come I take advantage of them: travel, contemplate nature, go to theatre, listen to music; visit and socialise with friends, cinema, read, play computer games, sudoku, googling, facebook, ...

---

I have very little free time and the little that I do have I usually take advantage of by being in the community room to chat with the brothers, watch some TV or look at a movie or do something else together. I consider it time for being together and to get to know one another better. We grow as a family as we get to know one another better.

I also use the time to read and for my own formation. Formation is very important for a religious because if we are going to form others, first we have to be in formation ourselves. I also like to read about what is going on in the world, so that later I can transmit some of that to the young, as I try to raise awareness that each person can do something to change the world.

Sometimes in my free time I like to disconnect from the world. We live in a world in which we are constantly surrounded by people and there are times when I look for some solitude.

Another thing I do during my free time is get in touch with family and friends through the Internet. Every once in a while I try to speak with different people, especially with people that I see very little. For someone like me, living outside of my country, it is very important to have that contact, because it lets me feel connected to those who are close to me and it also gives me an opportunity to speak my own language.

And I always have some music. I like to listen to music and I find it relaxing. Usually I listen to different types of music. I always try to keep up with modern music. I also look for music that I can recommend to young people, music that has a message, which can transmit something worthwhile.

---

I use my free time to be myself.

In order to be myself I go to mountain to breathe deeply and watch the beauty of nature.

And I take pictures and share them with others.

Communication with other people is also a time to enjoy.

Dialogue with nature and other people is a life-giving time for me.

---

## Free time in the Philippines

Here are the things that the brothers' activity outside our house schedules

### *For the students:*

Studying, reading of books/ news papers, sending emails, watching TV, washing clothes and also ironing, cleaning the rooms, personal prayers, do the research, reviewing, reflecting, silence, resting, walking, physical exercise, watching movie, chatting with brothers, sharing and bonding with brothers.

During Sundays: Mass attendance, cooking

### *Priests:*

Answering emails, walking, looking for documents about Bible, science, archeology, giving Bible studies, playing cards, preparing homilies, relaxing, silence, cleaning rooms, outing with relative and friends, fixing things like documents, talking to students, giving retreat/confessions, counseling, reflecting and silence.

---

You are asking me this question at a very special and privileged time in my life, when I have been given the opportunity to remember, relive, reflect and meditate on the incredible life that the Lord has given me so that I can make him present among the poor. Because of that, he has allowed me to have a deeper prayer life. I have more time to read, to complete my formation, to use the computer, to take a walk, to look at television...I am able to experience my own ability to see the face and features of Jesus in my brothers and they help me grow in service to the community. I am happy and thankful to the Lord that I am a member of this community. I trust that the Lord will continue to help me overcome the cold and have good health, physically and spiritually. Lastly, I hope that the Lord of time and leisure will continue to pour out his redeeming love in my free time. With my love.

---

I am an extravert person who enjoys being among people in particular with family and friends. Therefore I find time to be connected with people in various ways either through technologies like Skype, yahoo messenger, or telephone conversations and emails. I too use my free time to enjoy some good relaxing interactions or conversations with my companion priest in the house. Being a very sports oriented person one of the most exciting things for me is to have some sports. I use my free time to join the students and other priests nearby to play basketball or other sports. After sports with the fathers in the nearby formation house we sit and indulge ourselves in some relaxing funny and friendly conversations at the side of the court. I find this very good refreshing and healthy often I look forward to it as a recharger in the ministry of formation where rewards or appreciations are not imminent and rare. I enjoy watching movies so at times the leisure time is used for watching movies and going out for a meal with the companion priest.

---

I don't have to use a lot of imagination to fill up my free time and leisure for they have a rather small place in my daily schedule. Perhaps that's unfortunate, especially considering my advanced age.

When possible I take some time to sleep a bit more, if problems sleeping don't prevent that. I try to relax by taking a walk in the country or in town. If I have a bit more time and if the opportunity presents itself and if my health permits, I take a trip, putting the useful and pleasurable together. I also like to take advantage of my free time to watch a bit of television, see a movie or read a book that I've been wanting to read. I gladly visit with friends, family or another community of the Congregation. I take more time for an enjoyable conversation and I answer correspondence. Sometimes I also use my free time to do some work that awaits my attention, work that does not have to be rushed and that is to my liking or the needs of the moment. Sometimes I don't do anything special, taking time to dream, reflect and pray according to what I am feeling at the moment.

---

I am seventy-two years old. I work eight hours a day as treasurer of an institute for the visually impaired. It's a residential center.

I sleep seven or eight hours. From Monday to Friday I have two-three hours of free time. When I return to the community around 4:30 in the afternoon I rest a bit, look at the news on the Internet, study Portuguese or Sena and read up on things that I have to share or speak about later. The rest of the time is for personal and communal prayer, supper, watching news or some sporting or cultural event on TV.

On the weekend, aside from the community meeting and Sunday Mass at the neighborhood parish, I use my free time for the activities I already mentioned. I add a walk for an hour, participation in religious gatherings and some visits here and there.

---

I have to begin by recognizing that many times it has been an effort to use my free time well, to really take advantage of it. I will share three ways that I often use my leisure time that have been very useful to me.

What has helped me most when I have some leisure moments is when I have given prayer the place it deserves. In Jesus I really find peace, relief and rest. At the same time it is one of the main ways of living discipleship and being with Him. It is also a very silent and fruitful form of apostolate. Contemplative prayer, listening to the Word of God in contemplation of nature has strengthened, healed and rejuvenated me.

The second thing that has helped me in my free time, which I am not sure I do all that much but certainly if I have it at hand, is good reading. Spiritual reading becomes another voice opening me to a deeper experience of God, from another perspective, another experience and wisdom. It is nourishment for the soul and a source of new enthusiasm in following the Lord. With a good novel, my imagination can get into it and my creativity is formed.

Third and lastly, is free time with others sharing conversation, a good meal and after dinner chat, a good film and the like. Getting out of myself opens me to others. It's a way of accompanying one another through life, being enriched with the gifts of others. I have experience that as giving me a new lease on life, new strength and new joy. Experiencing that within community has been a way to grow in fraternity, which is then seen in prayer, apostolate and contact with friends.

## Leisure time, rest is a necessity



*Radosław Zięzio ss.cc.*

The beginnings of the year and of summer are, equally, times when many of us start enjoying vacations. Perhaps some cannot, but each one of us changes the rhythm of our activities in some way. Therefore, it is good to reflect on this time; the rest, the free time that a large majority have. But I don't want to limit this reflection to this special time that we have in our annual rhythm, I also want to make reference to all free time, simply to the leisure time in our lives.

At the beginning of the Bible we have a good example of taking time to rest. In the book of Genesis, in the narrative of the creation of the world and man, it tells us that on the seventh day God rested. He creates the world in six days and on the seventh day he rests. So I wonder, what would this rest, this leisure time of God be like, what would it involve?

Many times we are just waiting for the arrival of our annual break, or maybe for that day when we do not have to get up early and we can rest. Certainly we cannot be always at rest, in a perpetual siesta. So I wonder: What is rest? Maybe the desire to rest from our work, once and for all, has to do with the fact that many times we have to do work that we do not like doing. So I think that the God's rest, after having created the world out of his immense love, would have been a time of "enjoying" what he had done, a time to continue totally "loving" what he had made.

Often our sense of rest is "at last I can stop working", and maybe we cannot enjoy the rest as we ought, because we have not learned the true meaning of rest. It is the ability to continue loving and enjoying what we have, what we have done. Our rest and each moment of free time reflect what we have and what we do. So I would hope that our rest would be to enjoy more of what we have done, what we have and the persons who surround us; whether we go somewhere to admire nature, monuments, or interesting places or we play sports or watch them on TV, or read a book or stay at home but in a different way than we do every other day. The cultivation of our friendships, and the time we dedicate to family, either through visits or other kinds of contact deserve a special mention. There must also be some time dedicated to God with tranquil prayer and a deeper and more prolonged reflection.

Work is an essential dimension of man and our work must be done with love, intelligence, competence and a spirit of service. It would be a mistake; however, to think that the religious is made only for work; and that the more and better one works, the more one is fulfilled. We have to work a lot and work well. But we also have to get enough rest to maintain our mental and psychological equilibrium. Thus, rest is not time that is uselessly lost or wasted, but a time that is necessary to live a life in accord with our human dignity, our status and our vocation. *We have to take this time!* In our case, in general, we cannot take time off on the weekends or holidays, so we have to learn to find enough time during the weekdays for the sake of our spirit

and our psyche. There are times when the fatigue of work, the feeling of being overwhelmed, the speed of modern life and daily pressures converge in us.

Today it is said that modern man tires more than previous generations and so needs more time to rest his body and above all his spirit. I think that we religious belong to this modern man. Consequently, the “rest” factor is something we have to take ever more seriously; and appreciate in more and more each day as a humanizing factor and, in our case, also one for sanctification and ministry.

In conclusion, I recommend taking enough time for leisure and rest. Not only that, the most important thing is learning and knowing how to use this time for loving who we are, what we are doing and maintaining our spiritual and physical equilibrium, in order to cultivate our human and spiritual formation and broaden the base of our ministries. The ingredients, then, of our summer vacations ought to be time dedicated to physical and psychic rest, the cultivation of our intelligence and artistic tastes, playing our favorite sports and practicing our manual skills. An ingredient that should never be missing is our contact with nature, which, we must not forget, was created for the service and enjoyment of man.

What our free time, leisure or vacation should never be is a time of actions that offend our personhood and religious dignity. Spending it well has nothing to do with frivolity, superficiality, banality and moral transgression. It is time to fill not to empty oneself.

In concrete:

1. Take time for yourself.
2. Learn to use this time in your life for your spiritual and physical well-being.
3. Return to your job to live your love for God, for those who live with you and for what you are doing.

## Time for rest: scarce and fleeting



*Alberto Toutin ss.cc.*

An approach to the time of rest in religious life requires, on the one hand, our assuming certain repressions which exist among us in this regard and a certain laxity, as paradoxical as that may seem. On the other hand, it requires situating this topic within the perspective of the importance of free time in our contemporary societies, at least in the West.

Speaking about free time in religious life really means facing certain repressions that exist among us - I am speaking especially of men - ministers. A first repression has to do with the idea that we can only rest when our task in ministry permits it. So often we are in such demand that we don't even have time to think about rest. Behind this kind of thinking is the genuine expression that we have been consecrated to be in service of the people entrusted to our care. It is they and their needs and demands that call for our best energies and, in a certain sense, determine our agenda. However there is a counterpart, or shadow, of the previous feeling that comes along with this. It is the principle, strongly instilled in each one of us, which says action, activity, and the full agenda are what validate us as persons and as religious. Again this has an understandable human dimension, which is the satisfaction that comes from knowing one is useful and helping others. However, this carries along with it an identification of our being with our doing, "I am what I do" (and hopefully how much I do). This identification does not allow us - or we do not allow ourselves - the space to think of rest time, of renewing our strength - not only to return to work with more enthusiasm but also in order to be more.

There are multiple manifestations of this principle of validation. When there are brothers who take regular times of rest or who, after a short time in the ministerial life, are already thinking of retirement, it generates a suppressed or open irritation in those who do not do it or do not allow themselves to do it. On the other hand, the brothers who, because of age or health, must reduce their activity begin to feel that they cease to exist. In fact, it often happens that the old and sick brothers already don't count in the eyes of the active brothers. We act as if they didn't exist precisely because they are no longer a part of the sometimes addictive or obscurely compensatory clamor of activity.

This same perspective is reflected in ongoing formation conferences on religious life when, in echoing the importance that taking time off is gaining in our society, they begin to talk about caring for oneself at all levels - physical, mental, and spiritual - both individually as well as communally. Then resistances arise in us that in us that are more or less thematic when we broach this subject because it irritates the idea we have about what religious consecration is or what it ought to be, namely a life centered in the service of others and not the care of oneself. And at the same time it calls into question the principle of individual legitimization: "I do, and then I am".

There is a certain laxity in religious life concerning the topic of free time. It has to do with laxity in the name of sacrifices already made or time already given - and we boast about the exact quantity of this - or the renunciations that religious life entails. The result is that some feel they have a right to seldom feel rushed to do the work that is given to them and have little passion for their work life. So they settle quietly into the idea that I have already given enough

and so I'm rightfully due a time of rest. It is not necessarily always at an advanced age when this happens as it may vary according to people and temperaments. From this perspective it's not rare that religious, who are not so old, begin to think of retiring and will in no way compromise time, weeks or month of rest. Paradoxical as it may seem, this other side of the same principle of legitimacy. A principle by which the active members govern themselves – always from oneself and considering oneself – from one's own needs – that determines what legitimizes my use of time. For some this will be without allowing oneself any time to rest and for others it will be more in thinking about their rest time which they see as unpleasantly interrupted by some tasks that “fallen upon” them or that they “have” to do.

These ideas, present in religious life, are in part a reflection of some often contradictory cultural tendencies that influence our society and penetrate our sensibilities and criteria for decision. All educational formation, from a very early age, aims at preparing us for a competitive labor market that values the optimization of material and human resources to generate the greatest possible yield and profits. Sooner or later people see themselves subject to goals that are set for them. And their job stability hangs on the fulfillment of these in order to avoid the threat of finding themselves unemployed and as a consequence socially and affectively marginalized. In this context people's acquired abilities and their efficiency in carrying out assigned tasks are what is valued in them and what gives them value in the marketplace. Everything is subordinated to these achievements. This is legitimized by the fact that the one who is efficient in work often earns more and so can offer a better life to his own. However, there are personal costs that come along with this and make themselves felt: long work days, stress, fatigue, burn out, family and affective life being put aside, health problems .... Then the idea settles in: I am what I do, what I produce.

At the same time there is the awareness from within this situation that it cannot go on at this rhythm. It is important to develop “soft” abilities or skills in those who have and exercise leadership over others: attention to people, ability for dialogue and persuasion to get them to join in a common project, connection with one's own emotions and with those of the people around them. Places are arranged for work colleagues to share with each other in a caring environment, or for the formation of leaders with a goal of developing these emotional skills. Respect for the weekly time off is legislated and people are encouraged to take their vacation time. This awareness is aimed at introducing equilibrium into a time marked by efficiency and productivity.

However, free time remains tied to the benchmark, for in part, free time is a break that tries to ensure that people regain their strength so they can be more competitive and efficient. And in part this free time is ruled by the logic of efficiency and productivity; because the rest time is so short one has to make the most of it. In the immediate and in the short space of a weekend one has to do everything that one cannot do during the week: house work, spend with the children, visit family and friends, and have some time for self.... It's too much for such a short time! And for longer times, those weeks of vacation, one has to plan in advance, visit the greatest number of places possible, go to the most exotic places, combine the multiple and contradictory interests of all who want to join in this time of rest. Once again, too much for such a short time! The tension that exists in society with regard to the value of time for rest is expressed in a song by the Brazilian singer Lenine: “Including when everything asks for a little more calm, even when the body asks for a little more soul, life does not stop...”(Paciência)<sup>1</sup>.”

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://letras.terra.com.br/lenine/47001/> visitado el 18 de abril de 2011.

Our own use of free time in religious life falls into this context. We are penetrated by the same tensions that exist in society. This speaks of our constitutive worldliness but it could be different, in the measure with which we are aware of it. This awareness lies in recognizing how much of this tension we have within ourselves and in our criteria for assessing this dimension of our life. We are then called to purify and criticize the principle: “I am and then I exist.” Each one of us are who we are, not primarily for what we do but above all thanks to the care, love and giving of many persons; and what we have “done” has been “receiving” and “welcoming”. Without this openness and receptivity – a kind of active passivity – we would not be who we are. This is especially true when we are in full swing of things with its immediate gratifications, and above all when we are “successful” and haven’t been visited by failure, or if so we have not accepted it. We could become deluded by the idea that what gives us worth is what we do, and leave the importance of the fundamental attitudes of being, welcoming, sharing, and knowing how to waste time in order to gain it in another way in the shadows.

Our projects and achievements have been possible because we are supported by a vast network of people and institutions that surround us. And the bonds, which hold us and nurture us in whom we are help us to be much better than what we are or what we imagine ourselves to be. Within these key bonds are certainly found the bonds we weave among ourselves through our common friendship with Jesus. This requires the integration of that other time of gratuity, of being together over and above work. Then there is the link we have God the Father himself, who sustains us in being because He loves us and because He has created us to love him and praise him. The link with Jesus who offers us as a key for understanding our existence an affiliation regarding a Father who irrevocably loves us regardless of any particular action of ours. And offers us a fraternity that he himself established with each one of us in taking on our humanity and placing no conditions on it other than that we accept the fact that he died and gave himself for each of us. And a link with Spirit Comforter, the same who is the love poured into our loving yet wicked hearts. The one who groans with us and all creation reminding us of our filial condition, which does not come from our origins but that we lovingly receive from another, and inviting us to give warmth and cordiality to our world converted into an apparently endless resource and an anonymous society.

I think that the fundamental task that we have to do in order to spend our free time and relaxation in a more gospel-oriented way is related to purifying our perception of time and how we use it. We need to move from a vision of time only measured by a calculation of efficiency and centered on productivity to a vision of time measured by gratuity, dedication and loss, and which integrates the qualitative dimensions of existence. Yes, the Little Prince in his odyssey among men in search of friends meets up with a merchant selling a pill that quenches thirst. According to him, it is enough to take one of these per week and you no longer feel a need of anything to drink. The Little Prince asks why he is selling these pills.

“Because they save a tremendous amount of time, said the merchant. “Computations have been made by experts. With these pills, you save fifty three minutes in every week.”

“And what do I do with those fifty-three minutes?”

“Anything you like...”

“As for me,” said the little Prince to himself, “if I had fifty-three minutes to go spend as I liked, I should walk at my leisure toward a big spring of fresh water.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*. Gallimard, Paris, 1999, p. 80.

The Little Prince has a different perspective of time, it is not a luxury given only to a few privileged people. Our poor, with the precariousness of their resources and threatened by a feverish consumerism, often teach us what it means to give time, to welcome, to waste time together. It is a different way of responding to urgent basic human needs such as that of satisfying one's thirst. This primordial thirst is a metaphor for other very basic needs such as those that also require "time" that is qualitatively different from "time" that is efficient. When this latter time predominantly interferes in our life sooner or later it brings with it our dehumanization and that of our world.

Jesus himself offers us a qualitative approach to time. He himself seems to be driven by a project that completely engages him and requires his best energies: the proclamation of the nearness of God's Kingdom. In virtue of this task, the Gospel often shows us Jesus with no time for eating or relaxing with his own. However, no matter how urgent it is or immanent it appears, the cause does not stop him from tending to people in their concrete situations, making them feel that they are the most important people for Jesus at this moment. He makes time to cultivate friendship with those who are closest to him, Martha, Mary, Peter, James, John, giving himself privileged time with them. He decides to give himself space for privileged meeting with God, his Father, at night or at dawn, when the calm of the day that has finished or is beginning fosters this dialogue. Even his entire preaching is penetrated by a contemplative and poetic view, attentive to the growth of plants, domestic life, rural life, climate change and the meanderings of human relationships. In his view, all of this is subject to speak about how God is acting in the midst of the people. It is a view that reflects an experience of contemplative time, availability and an empathy that are touched by the events and the persons who come to meet him. Isn't there an invitation for us to enter into this same vision here, not to alienate ourselves from our harsh reality but to tune into what the God of Jesus is doing in us and around us and what he offers to all men and women who want to welcome him in the depths of their own existence? Let those who have –ears to hear, hear.

**N. 23, 2011**

Published on the SS.CC. Website: [www.sccpicpus.com](http://www.sccpicpus.com)

SS.CC. Brothers' General House

Via Rivarone, 85

00166 Rome, Italy

Tel. + 39 - 06 66 17 931

Fax + 39 - 06 66 17 9355

Email : [secgen@sccpicpus.com](mailto:secgen@sccpicpus.com)

Email : [comunicazione@sccpicpus.com](mailto:comunicazione@sccpicpus.com)

SS.CC. Sisters' General House

Via Aurelia, 145

00165 Rome, Italy

Tel. + 39 - 06 63 81 140

Fax + 39 - 06 63 81 013

Email : [secgen.scc@interbusiness.it](mailto:secgen.scc@interbusiness.it)

Email : [secgen2.scc@interbusiness.it](mailto:secgen2.scc@interbusiness.it)