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A Winter Holiday

I've never been away on holiday in December before, but last year I did manage to get away for some R & R in the Canaries for a week with my daughter. It was bliss to escape the frenetic rush of the Christmas build-up as well as the torrential rain. In our vast hotel there were 500 holidaymakers who were all enjoying themselves, on the face of it, as we were. But as we got to know several of them whilst chatting at the bar, we learnt that some weren't having such fun. They had experienced recent sadness in their lives and had come on holiday to escape or to have some respite. Stories of deaths, illnesses and disappearing pension funds were all shared with us.

My holiday-reading included a story of redemption called *The Shack*, and inside there were some good quotes. One of them was by the Presbyterian Minister, Frederick Buechner, 'You can kiss your family and friends goodbye and put miles between you, but at the same time, you carry them with you in your heart, your mind, your stomach, because you do not just live in a world, but a world lives in you.' As I walked along the seafront I thought of my friends back home, their fortunes as well as their worries, knowing that they certainly did live in me. And at the end of the week as we flew out of Fuerteventura, I knew that those whom I had just got to know had now become part of my world as well. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed by this, but it is comforting and re-assuring to know that God, as the spiritual goes, 'has got the whole world in His hands.'