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The Importance of Rest

Last month I had the privilege of celebrating the Eucharist with a small group in the Bell Tower of the Tower of London. We were in the cell in which St. John Fisher had been imprisoned for over a year prior to his execution on 22nd June, 1535. John Fisher's memory is somewhat eclipsed by that of his contemporary, St. Thomas More. Fisher was Bishop of Rochester and like More a scholar of European standing. Erasmus described him as a "man of incomparable uprightness of life," and "of learning and greatness of soul." He was the only bishop who stood up to King Henry VIII saying to his fellow bishops: "The fort is betrayed even of them that should have defended it."

What I noticed on my visit to the Tower was the enormous number and diversity of the visitors. It must be the most popular attraction in London. The general buzz and the obvious enjoyment of the visitors was palpable, a reminder that the summer vacation is almost here. If you are fortunate to get away, you will have looked for the best deals and hoped for good weather. Holidays are meant to be a time of relaxation, fun and enjoyment; thinking of them reminds of some wise words of Pope John XXIII: "Man has a right to rest a while from work, and indeed the need to do so if he is to renew his bodily strength and to refresh his spirit by suitable recreation. He has also to think of his family, the unity of which depends so much on frequent contact and the peaceful living together of all its members." Is our failure to follow this advice at the root of so many of our family problems today?

"Religion and moral and physical well-being are one in demanding this periodic rest." (Mater et Magistra 1961)