

---

## *Vacation Was Great. Now What?*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
By Canon George Maxwell**

We are just back from our time in Maine. I preached and presided over services and a weekly Bible study for two weeks at All Saints-by-the-Sea, an Episcopal chapel on the island of Southport in the Boothbay region. We stayed in a cottage that the chapel provided for us.

We had a wonderful time!

We hiked, kayaked, ate lobster, spent time with friends, and ate some more lobster. We were happy ... and not just in the sense of having fun. We were happy in the sense of being awake and alive.

Why, I wonder?

My first reaction is that it is better to look at the world through the wide-open eyes of a seven-year-old boy than the narrowed frame of an outraged political commentator!

A more helpful reflection might be that the freedom we enjoyed from the demands of our regular schedule gave us some sacred space in which to remember what it is that gives meaning and purpose to our lives.

Now that we're back, I wonder how we hold on to what we found?

I think it's about attitude.

I know from past experience that it won't take long for me to want to get back in control of things. I have a sense of how I want my life to be and I'm eager to get on with the business of making that vision a reality. Somehow I seem to have gotten the idea that if there's going to be meaning in my life, then I'm going to have to be the one to create it.

I'll wake up one day to find that the happiness I felt on vacation has faded into the background like a luxury that I can no longer afford. And, there I'll be, impatiently waiting for whoever it is to finish saying whatever they are saying so that I can correct them!

The late Dr. Gerald May called this attitude "willfulness." He said it's like saying "yes, but..." to life and warned that it invariably leaves us feeling separate and alone.

Following Jesus, he counsels, calls us to adopt an attitude of "willingness" – as in "not my will but Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39).

Willingness is a way of saying "yes" to life by surrendering our desire for control and opening ourselves to the mystery of being alive. If I am willing, then I will spend less time reacting to what shouldn't be and more time participating in things as they are in appropriate and meaningful ways. Willingness is finding the patience to listen to what others are saying and let what I hear show me things I hadn't seen before!

So, what about the happiness we felt on vacation?

It might be that holding on to it requires us to loosen our grip.

Meaning and purpose are not things we create for ourselves as much as things that we discover as we go about the business of doing God's will.

I think Dr. May got it right when he said, "Willfulness must give way to willingness and surrender. Mastery must yield to mystery."

---

© *The Cathedral of St. Philip. All rights reserved.*