



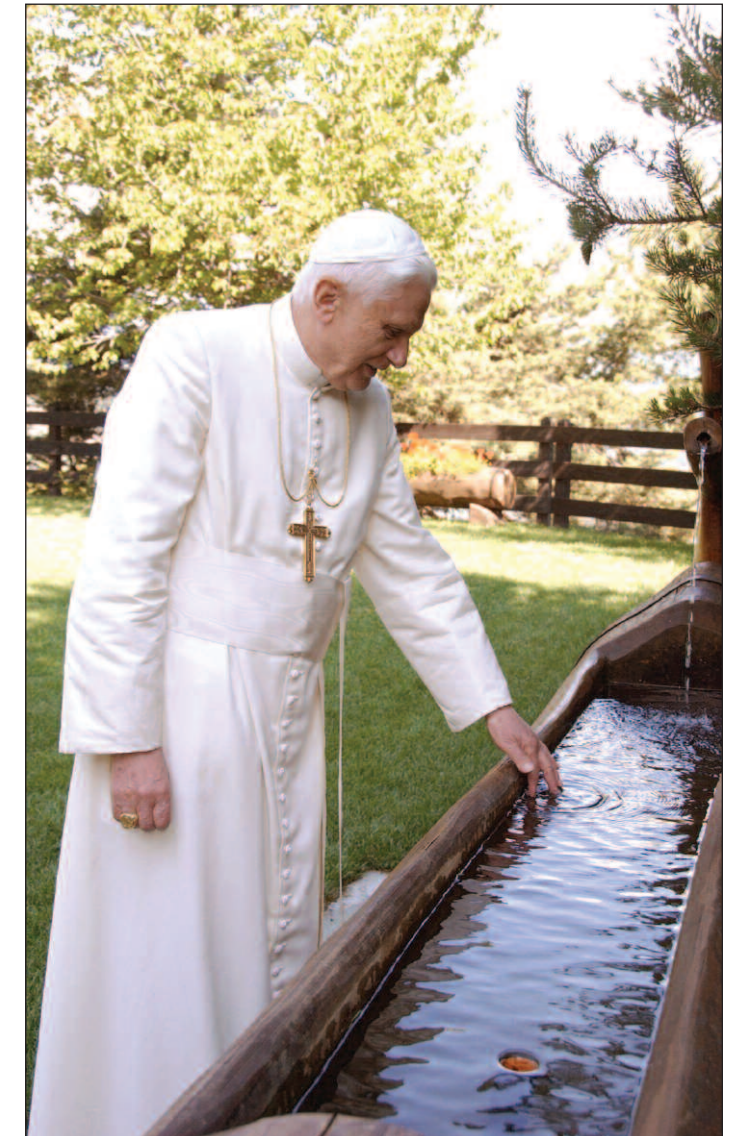
Pope Benedict XVI, wearing sunglasses, smiles as he comes back from a walk. (CNS photo/Alessia Giuliani)



Pope Benedict XVI admires the landscape from the balcony of his summer retreat in Les Combes, Italy, in this photo released by the Vatican newspaper July 17. The pope said he was "quickly immersed in this stupendous Alpine panorama that helps restore body and spirit." (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters)



Pope Benedict XVI plays the piano at his summer retreat in this photo released by the Vatican newspaper July 17. The pope played music by Wolfgang Mozart and Johann Sebastian Bach on the upright piano that was moved into the Salesi-owned chalet in time for his first visit last year. (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters)



Pope Benedict XVI touches the water of the fountain in his garden. (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters)



Pope Benedict XVI picks fruit in the garden of his summer retreat. (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters)

# In prayer, at piano, at rest

## Vacation in 'Alpine panorama' restores pope's body, spirit



Pope Benedict XVI plays with Saint Bernard dogs July 18 at the famous kennel operated by the Augustinian monks in the mountains of Switzerland. For more than three centuries, the Augustinians have raised the dogs and trained them to assist in mountain rescues. (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano)

LES COMBES, Italy (CNS) - Prayer, piano playing and paths winding through the pines were part of Pope Benedict XVI's first week of vacation in the northern Italian Alps.

The Vatican television center July 16 released a five-minute videotape of key moments of the pope's stay in Les Combes, where he arrived from the Vatican July 11.

The tape shows the pope, wearing his white cassock and zucchetto, playing music by Wolfgang Mozart and Johann Sebastian Bach on the upright piano that was moved into the Salesian-owned chalet in time for his first visit last year.

Other segments show him writing at his desk and reading; walking through the woods with his personal secretary, Msgr. Georg Ganswein; and stopping for prayer before a Marian image along the pathway.

Greeting some 5,000 people who joined him July 16 for the midday recitation of the Angelus, Pope Benedict said, "Again this year I have the joy of passing a period of rest here in the Valle d'Aosta, in the house that often hosted the beloved John Paul II."

"I was quickly immersed in this stupendous Alpine panorama that helps restore body and spirit," he said.

Addressing English-speakers in the crowd, the pope expressed his hope that people would find the same

refreshment during their holidays and that vacation time would be "an opportunity to draw closer to the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving."

The second week of his vacation, Pope Benedict XVI issued several statements deploring the escalating violence of the clashes between Israelis and Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon and called for a cease fire.

At one point in late July, he said he thought the prayers of people of good will might be paying off, expressing hope for the ravaged region and its people.

Prior to the start of the papal vacation - which concluded July 28 - the preacher of the papal household said vacation time should be lived as "a gift given in order to discover something."

Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa said extended free time is rare for most people, and they should make the most of it.

"They are not a time to lose or waste, but a time to value to the maximum," he told listeners of Vatican Radio. "Perhaps the most beautiful meaning of vacation is that of getting back into an intimate, profound contact with the root of our being, with God."



Pope Benedict XVI poses for a picture with children and adults following the Angelus prayer July 23. (CNS photo/Giuseppe Cacace, Reuters)