

THEME – REFRESHMENT AND ENRICHMENT

This July, we consider families and celebrate the 'Away From It All' scheme in Britain & Ireland that provides vital breaks for those facing challenges, especially vulnerable families. Holidays are important, to recover from the busyness of our lives and to spend time with those we love. But we do not have to travel far to follow the long Christian tradition of a pilgrimage. Committing to undertake a sacred journey to meet with God is allowing ourselves to be refreshed and enriched by him. May we use this July to find ways to rest in the Lord, to reflect on experiences of his amazing grace and allow ourselves to be restored.

**Prayers from Saint Augustine,
AFIA experiences and quotes and
the AFIA Prayer.**

1.

***Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit
That my thoughts may be holy
Act in me. O Holy Spirit
That my work may be holy
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit
To love what is holy.***

As we now have the chance to look back over the past year in Nottingham, England, the preparations and then the actual AFIA holidays at the end of May 2025 we thank you God our Father that we were able to help yet more families and have some special time out to make positive memories! Lord help those involved in AFIA, 'Away from it all' holidays to continue the heartfelt work that has brought joy to so many families in our local area. A quote from Edwina (AFIA Holiday 2025) she said, "Thank you for giving me and my son this opportunity to get away and have an amazing holiday!" Lord, may we never forget that what we so often take for granted, many see as beyond their reach...help us Lord to be generous with our time, our energies and our money so that others may share in the goodness and joy that a week 'away from it all' can bring!

2.

***Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit
That my thoughts may be holy
Act in me. O Holy Spirit
That my work may be holy
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit
To love what is holy.***

Jesus was born into a human family and was able to grow and flourish amongst people who loved Him. We remember the panic of His earthly parents, Mary and Joseph when Jesus went missing, only to find in the Temple where He felt close to His spiritual Father. We thank you God for families, and we are mindful that they come in many shapes and sizes, may they each share that special family bond and may you, Abba Father be ever present within their homes and their hearts. Irena (AFIA Holiday 2025) said "We spent lots of time on the beach, building sandcastles and collecting shells. The children liked to paddle in the sea, and they loved the ice-cream shop! Thank you so much for our amazing family memories."

Thank you, Lord, that through giving of time, energy and money springs joy and hope for others!

3.

***Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit
That my thoughts may be holy
Act in me. O Holy Spirit
That my work may be holy
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit
To love what is holy.***

Making special memories reminds us of how God delights in being a part of our past, our present and our future. May we never forget that God is ever present and never stops caring about us. Help us Lord to continue the work of AFIA and that we can make a difference to those we meet by listening, by showing kindness and by sharing that same love that Jesus lavishes upon us. George (AFIA Holiday 2025) said "We will be forever grateful for the kindness shown to our family, Thank you!"

4.

***Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit
That my thoughts may be holy
Act in me. O Holy Spirit
That my work may be holy
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit
To love what is holy.***

The process we go through to select the families to go on the AFIA holidays gives our volunteer visitors the opportunity to meet them in person, to get to know them a little better and to begin to walk alongside them for a short time at least as they journey through life...what a privilege it is!

Thank you, Lord for walking beside each of us, for listening, for watching over us and for sending your Holy Spirit to minister to us and through us. We ask that you watch over the families from AFIA 2025 and may they each, young and old come to know you as their saviour in your time. Life can be tough but with You Lord as their anchor holding them firm and steady we know you will show them your glory and love.

Andy (Afia Holiday 2025) "The holiday was so needed...thank you so much without this we would never have got away".

5.

***Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit
That my thoughts may be holy
Act in me. O Holy Spirit
That my work may be holy
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit
To love what is holy.***

We are facing strange, often worrying times at the moment. Life seems to have become so fragile and unpredictable, yet you Lord are constant, trustworthy, and Holy in every way. May we be lights that shine out in this fragile world. We thank you Lord for the opportunity to bring positivity and joy into a small part of this world through the AFIA holidays. May the Mothers' Union continue to support family life, and may we do all we can to help families when times are difficult for them.

6.

***Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit
That my thoughts may be holy
Act in me. O Holy Spirit
That my work may be holy
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit
To love what is holy.***

Now as we begin to plan for May 2026 lead us heavenly Father to meet those who you want us to bless with a holiday in the coming year. We pray for one of the key worries for AFIA...that is for funding! To be able to continue providing holidays for families we need to find new funding streams and we do pray Lord Jesus that these will appear! May we take our duties seriously and give our time to this project with thankful hearts. Amen And to end this week I leave you with the following quotes as a blessing to all.

"Irene - Thank you for our amazing family memories, Andy - Thank you so much! Edwina - We have had an amazing time. From Anthony (aged 7 years) - Thank you, and from George - We are so grateful for your kindness towards the family, thank you!" And the last words from Nate, George, and Chloe "We had an amazing holiday, the opportunity of a lifetime and the chance to have a great time with the family!"

THE AFIA PRAYER

Oh Lord, let our thoughts be Holy, our acts be Holy and may we always love what is Holy, Amen

Father God, we give you thanks and praise for the AFIA team from Mothers' Union who have made it possible for families to enjoy time away together. We pray that the families may have a relaxing experience in a safe environment, making memories which will last a lifetime. We also give thanks for all the Mothers' Union members who have been generous in giving of their time, talents, and money to make it possible for AFIA to be able to offer, either days or weekends away or supporting projects within their communities. In Jesus' name. Amen

*By Jackie Smith AFIA Coordinator
Nottinghamshire, England*