



Making “Slow Tourism”

Letter from the Bishop of Orihuela-Alicante to the tourists

Dear vacationers:

Greetings to everyone, and welcome to all who will spend the holidays with us.

I can imagine that your intention is to enjoy these days of rest and relaxation the best you can. I also guess that, besides resting, you would love to visit and get to know the countless attractions and places that our Alicante's land can offer you. On this respect you are going to receive many offers, possibilities and itinerary routes that will attract your attention. Most certainly you'll find the most diverse options to be able to plan your holidays. For this reason, following some of our Holy Father ideas, let me give you some suggestions that could catch your interest.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, in a recent speech to the members of Italy's Youth Tourist Center, has presented us a new way of doing Tourism. I'm referring to the so called *“Slow Tourism”, that promotes solidarity, quality and sustainability* in opposition to the mass tourism.

This is motivated by the fact that the fast pace of living, and the multiplicity of mobility often take us into a kind of superficial tourism. Just by getting only information or spending a short and quick staying in a place, we could stock in our minds lots of data, but without being able to catch up the essence of the people, things and places that we have visited. This exactly what the Holy Father pointed out when on this same speech he said: *“If I visit a city, it is important that I know not just the monuments, but also that I realize the history behind it, how the people live, what challenges they are trying to face.”*

“If I climb a mountain, not only must I keep within the limits that nature imposes, I must respect it, admiring its beauty and safeguarding the environment,” creating a bond with the natural elements by knowledge, recognition and appreciation”.

The Pope reaffirms all of these with these words *“slowness -if it is not because of laziness- helps to create attention to places and peoples, commitment and dedication to the land”*. Hereby, what is really important is that Slow Tourism offers a chance to get to know people and places, to increase mutual understanding and respect and connect with the culture and problems of our time.

Let's not forget that Tourism must be always focused towards the *“person's integral vision”* and *“to look into your surroundings, so that one could understand himself deeply. It is necessary to tend towards a Tourism which is more concerned with personal encounters and exchanges than with consumerism and competition of racking up experiences”*.

So then, the objective of this suggested slowness for these holydays is to get knowledge and deepening, it is to move from speed to quietness, it is to take control of the time and travel with tranquility. It is to be able to enjoy the little things... What is important is to discover the essence of the place: its people, traditions, handicrafts, fiestas, traditions, language, environment, etc. And with a sense of wonder and thanksgiving to learn how to live everything in prayer. To be able to live life as a gift, as God's permanent present in people, history and nature, and in our daily time that flows as a space for happiness.

Finally, remember that I'm with you through my prayers. I would also like to express my especial gratitude to all the workers on the Tourism field for your welcoming attention and service to everyone coming to visit us. For you I refer this text from the Letter to the Hebrews 13,2: *“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels”*.

May God the Father, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, bless and grant all of you a very happy holydays.

Happy Summer!

✠ **The Most Reverend Msgr. Jesús Murgui Soriano.**
Bishop of Orihuela-Alicante