

- 1 Football was banned in England on this day in 1349. To understand why, we need to know first of all, that the terrible plague of the Black Death had reached England in the previous summer. Fleas living on infected rats carried the disease to humans and animals, killing at least half the population.
- 2 The terrible disease affected everyone in many ways. Those who did not become ill, suffered the death of loved ones. With only half the people to do the same number of jobs, wages were higher and food prices were lower - but all at such a terrible cost of so many deaths, leaving behind devastated families.
- 3 With fewer people, would the country - still at war with France - be able to defend itself? King Edward III was very concerned about the defence of the country - particularly the contribution that archers would make. Only three years before, English archers had won the Battle of Crécy against the French. The king knew that people had begun to see life very differently after so many had died of the Black Death. Practising archery was a low priority for them, and they wanted to spend their time doing other things. The king was concerned that the people would lose their skills as archers, and so, on this day in 1349 (a year after the Black Death hit England), King Edward III made a law, banning such sports as football. He proclaimed that every able-bodied man was to spend his spare time practising with a bow and arrow - playing no sport but archery. The archers did regain their skills, and went on to help win the Hundred Years War against France.
- 4 *Let us pray:*
Help me, Lord,
to discover the talents
I have been given,
and not to let them lie unused
but to make the best use of them
both for myself and for others.
May sport help
to bring out the best in people,
teaching us the lessons
of commitment and co-operation,
of fairness and appreciation.
May sports and hobbies and interests
help me to develop my personality
that I may be renewed and re-created
in your image and likeness. Amen.

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:
<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org