

Column

‘Taking on and letting go’ might be a good theme for Lent 2020. What I am thinking about are all the material things we collect, store and – in the end – have to find some way of getting rid of.

I speak from personal experience. About ten years ago, during the renovation of my house, several rooms had to be emptied. When time came to put everything back, there was way more items than needed, resulting in three trips to a local thrift store with a car bulging at the seams. I should also add that, in addition, there were several boxes placed in closets of things with which I simply could not part.

Whence came all this stuff? Well, it came one item at a time. “Oh yes, that looks interesting. I can find room for it” . . . and then another and another. Before you know it, these bits add up.

I have often said that I would like to be a fly on the wall when I die and someone goes up into my attic. There they will find old radios, phonographs, cameras, small appliances, framed pictures, magazines and who knows what else. All of these are things I find interesting and of value, but I suspect few others will.

Taking several steps back and having a good look at our stacks of treasures is a good way of beginning Lent. As one does, one hears – or should hear – Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Matthew 6:19).

Yet, that is exactly what we do – we lay up treasure. Jesus’ words here are more than ‘spiritual’: they are practical. A few years ago, some members of our church were called upon to clean out the house of an elderly person who had had to go into a senior living facility. Would you believe that three or four large dumpsters were required to clear out the house . . . and this was after several truckloads of saleable items were removed.

Is ‘taking on’ nice things wrong? No, it’s fun and I still do it, but we must do it with wisdom and an eye on the words of Jesus I just quoted. Ideally, as we ‘take on’, we should be doing some ‘letting go’.

Lent begins this year on Feb. 26. Let’s have a go at it!

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent; Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness. may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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