

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

What We Save

When I left CBS, I didn't come home empty-handed. I left with a dozen cardboard boxes, containing 26 years of ... well, *stuff*. The couriers dropped off these things at our apartment one evening, and they sat outside my home office for a very long, long time. Finally, after my wife had about as much of it as she could take (she's very patient), she said, "Isn't it about time you went through these?"

Uh. Yeah. And so, one weekend, I did.

I suspected that a lot of the stuff in the boxes was fundamentally worthless. And it was. There were files on stories that aired 20 years ago, radio scripts going back to 1987, outdated résumés and writing samples, crumpled baseball caps, and colorful coffee mugs.

Then there were strange things that I kept tacked to my bulletin board. A postcard of the *S.S. Norway* (now little more than scrap metal, but my wife and I had taken our first cruise on that in 1995); the torn ticket stub from Jerry Seinfeld's farewell concert; a couple pictures of me, tanned and with a lot more hair (mostly brown) at Disney World; and a long lanyard containing credentials from a variety of projects that I'd worked on, including the 1996 New Hampshire primary and the first Persian Gulf War in 1990.

There was a Rolodex full of phone numbers of people I haven't called in decades, and memos about company holidays and a bumper sticker that gave a winking nod to a former CBS News anchorman with the phrase "I'd RATHER be watching *48 Hours*." And so it went: file folders, paperweights wrapped in old newspapers, accumulated mementos and souvenirs and bric-à-brac and junk. Seeing some things brought a smile; others, a grimace. A fair amount of the stuff ended up in green plastic garbage bags.

But it gave me an opportunity to think about the things we save, and the things we discard. We are creatures who collect and recollect. We hold on, and we remember. Our religion, in fact, is one built on remembrance—following Christ's command to "Do this in memory of Me"—and so much of our liturgical practices are tied to the tangible relics and remnants of centuries past. We can't help but find comfort and consolation in recalling where we have come from and what led us to where we are today.

Reflecting on all this, I realized that so much of our lives are composed of cardboard boxes containing pieces of our past. And a lot of it is, almost literally, baggage.

It can sometimes hold us back and drag us down. We can run the risk of becoming too attached to what *was*, forgetting what *is*. Sorting through those boxes, I saw a different person. It was nice to visit with him for a while. But—and this is probably a good thing—I didn't find myself feeling much nostalgia for him or the things he packed away in those boxes. God has a way of placing us where He wants us, when He wants us there.

And so it wasn't hard for me to bundle up those belongings and haul them out to the trash and bid them goodbye.

Life continues.

I have more work ahead of me, other assignments and tasks and obligations waiting to be tackled. Besides: part of the adventure of living lies in creating moments, and memories. I'm sure there are many more cardboard boxes waiting to be filled.

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