

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

Back to School Already

When I was growing up there were four little words that filled my heart with dread: “Back To School Sale.”

It would usually begin in mid-August. I’d go shopping with my mother, enjoying the final weeks of summer vacation. We’d pop into People’s Drug Store to buy some aspirin or suntan lotion, and my innocent eyes would discover, with a shock, that the aisles had been transformed overnight into the Little Shop of Horrors. My jaw would drop and my throat would tighten and my lips would tremble.

It was all I could do not to run screaming from the store.

Book bags, binders, marble-covered notebooks, calculators, compasses, file folders. It was endless. My heart would sink and my stomach would turn. The end was near!

Well, I’m not sure when it happened, or why, but somewhere, someone decided that it would be a much better idea to get the misery going in July, instead of August. (I’m convinced it is the same someone who decided we should start selling Christmas cards around Labor Day.) So now we’re reminded of autumn, school, homework, detention, mid-terms, band practice, and home room *weeks* earlier.

This is progress?

Heading back to school after the summer break, I know, isn’t *all* misery. There are things to learn and adventures to undertake. There is something fresh and hopeful about notebooks full of blank pages, waiting to be filled. There is the unspoiled snap of a new hardback textbook being cracked open for the first time, and the clean smell of wood pencils, and the intoxicating fragrance of Elmer’s glue, and the spotless, untouched purity of a new book cover that hasn’t yet been scratched, dinged, scuffed or stained.

On the first day of school, every grade is an A and every teacher is a joy and every classmate is your best friend forever and ever. That’s all the good stuff.

But still.

It *is* school, after all.

And it seems like we are being reminded of it earlier and earlier.

Now, I should point out:, I was never a terrible student. I managed to survive things like geometry and Introductory Physical Science, and have since become a fairly upright and responsible member of society. I pay taxes. I support saving the whales. I look both ways (usually) before I cross the street. But I just never really liked school very much—and really never liked all the anticipation that “Back to School” entailed.

The Bible doesn’t tell us much about schooling, or what sort of education Jesus had. (Did the world’s greatest teacher really have anything to learn?) Since he was “a man like us in all things but sin,” I imagine Jesus had some complicated feelings about the classroom, and homework, and studying.

Of course, I also imagine He was a much more diligent student than I ever was, and probably looked forward to it.

And why wouldn’t He?

In Nazareth, in the year 12 A.D., He never had to deal with “Back To School Sales” in July.

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