

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

Starting Over

If you subscribe to Time Warner Cable, you know that you can press a button on your remote and make a program begin again. So if you find yourself dropping by a program at the midway point, you can hit a button and, within seconds, the whole thing will start at the very beginning—which, as Maria Von Trapp told us, is “a very good place to start.”

When I tried this for the first time, I hit the button and the screen paused for a second, asked me to wait while it processed and then, like magic, the entire program began again. What became past, was present. I regained twenty minutes of life that I had lost. The time-space continuum was reversed! Alert Marty McFly! (Perhaps this has something to do with the “time” portion of “Time Warner,” but I honestly don’t know ... someone should investigate.)

The television viewing implications are obvious. The theological and philosophical implications, of course, are something else.

Wouldn’t all of us like to be able to do that with our lives? To hit a button and restart some moment, some choice, some decision? Wouldn’t we like to watch our lives unfold once again, to see where we went wrong and, just maybe, change course?

(I should note: Time Warner’s system does not allow you to change plot points in movies. What happened, happened. Sorry.)

Isn’t the idea of Starting Over—at least with some things —irresistible?

All of us live with a catalog of regrets, a suitcase full of good ideas gone bad and seemingly sound choices that went awry. (That kinky, bushy haircut that I wore for my sophomore high school picture is just one pathetic case in point.)

And then there are the more serious errors so many of us have made—love affairs that soured, the “one for the road” that ended in a fender-bender, or the real-estate investment that wiped out your retirement. I could go on. But you get the idea. We make mistakes and have to live with them, like it or not.

But a lot of us would like to restart the tape of our lives at some point, and fix them.

And yet, scripture offers us this hope: “Behold,” Revelation exhorts, “I make all things new.” For, in Christ, we *are* reborn, and remade. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we *do* start over—the slate wiped clean, our sins washed away. The Church, in Her wisdom, invites us to bring our setbacks and stumbling points to God, admit them and seek to move beyond them. Our mistakes are part of our history. But we can also learn from them, and grow.

What you *can’t* do is what you can’t do with the cable system, either: rewrite history. We can’t revise the plot points of our lives.

Of course, once Time Warner figures out a way to do that ... well, what do you bet *that* service *won’t* be free?

