

A LOOK BACK

In all of the 75 years of my life, I cannot remember ever wishing that the old year would come back so that I could relive it. People speak of the “good old days.” However, I do not think that anyone would want to go back and live them over again. Doing so would mean doing the “whole package” and not just those things that we recall with fondness.

While I consider myself as having had a happy childhood, there were things to which I would not want to return. I remember kerosene lamps and outhouses. Besides the bedroom, we lived in one room that served as the living room, kitchen, dining room, and my place of study. Even my schooling began in a one-room schoolhouse. When I was in the second grade, we moved, and I attended a two-room schoolhouse. Eventually, I did get to a multi-room high school. I was lost for a couple of weeks. I would not want to go back to any of that.

What I do recall and miss from the past are the people involved with my life. And, I mean, “involved.”

Several years ago, I received an old book from a woman who (as a girl) was a part of my past in the village. People knew that I was a kid who liked to read, and, so, they gave me their used books. I had quite a collection, which I decided to loan out, - library style. Apparently, this person had borrowed one of my books when she was a little girl and thought that I would like it back. (It still carried my childish signature.) Talk about overdue!

She and her parents had lived across town. Nevertheless, since they owned one of the first television sets in the area, I was welcome to come over any evening. This I did, riding my bike, even on the snowy streets during the Winter. Other residents in the village were equally as kind. The subscribers on my paper route became an extended family to me.

Then there were the teachers. Whether it was the teacher in the one-room schoolhouse, the teachers in the two-room schoolhouse, or the teachers in the high school, - I sensed their personal interest in me. Not only did they teach the various subjects, they taught one how to live and they cared about my well-being. To this day, I feel a special bond to those teachers. Some still come to our high school class reunions. I think that they come because they feel a special bond to us, as well.

When I look back on the days when I was a young priest, I recall situations that I would not want to have repeated in my life. However, I treasure a number of the people from those days. They were the ones that were my support during those difficult times. Some of them have become my very good friends.

And, today? Well, it is the same. Whether it is the past 22 years or just the past year, there are situations that I would rather not relive. And, yet, there are those persons that have made my life easier when I had to deal with those difficult situations.

So, it seems to me that former times are measured more by the people that touch our lives than by the events and situations that affect us. Judging from the past, I expect that this year will be no different. After all, there are good people of positive attitude through whom the Lord works in every age and place. Consequently, we can face another year with confidence.