

NEW CHAPTERS

Packing is not one of my favorite things to do. Where do I start? I find myself faced with 23 plus years of accumulation that has filled the Bishop's Residence.

While I do not consider myself a pack rat, I do not like to throw away good things. (Does that sound like a contradiction?) There seems to have been an amassing of things over these past years. There are gifts from people, souvenirs from Slovakia, shelves of books, pictures on the walls, photographs from the past, and piles of written material. It is these last two that are giving me the most stress.

Opening up one of the boxes that had not been opened for years, I discovered photographs from my past. They brought back many memories. Of course, I will want to keep them; - right? Well, I thought about that, and I am not sure that I do. I do not want to end up an old man reminiscing about the past that was instead of living in the present and dreaming about the future that still can be.

As for the other items, I have devised a system. There will be four boxes. One will be for things that can be thrown away, another for things that I do not want but others might, a third for those things that should be kept in the diocesan archives, and the fourth box will be for those things that I want to keep. I hope that there will be only a few of those fourth boxes.

All of those boxes represent the various chapters of my life. It is now time to begin another.

There are always new chapters to be written in our book of life. The New Year is a good reminder that every chapter is a new beginning. However, there can be no beginning if there is no end.

Perhaps that is the crux of the problem, which so many have. They have difficulty concluding a particular phase of their life. Consequently, they keep writing the chapter, drawing out their story into a meaningless plot, until they are bored into a dissatisfaction that borders on depression. I pray that it will not be like that with me.

In order to have beginnings, we must also have conclusions. Before we can start another chapter, we have to conclude the one prior. This is true of life, as well. However, the end of a chapter is not the end of the book; - unless, of course, it is the final chapter.

As I look forward to writing that next chapter of my life, I realize that I need to close the chapter preceding. That means letting go of boxes one, two, and three. This is not an easy thing to do.

Letting go becomes easier when we realize that, in the final analysis, we do not own anything. We are God's stewards of whatever we have been given to manage. How we manage that which we have been given is what makes up the real content of each life's chapters, - something like a book. It is not the ink that gives meaning to the story but the words.