

FOR THE GOOD OF THE HOUSEHOLD

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LIFE WAS MEANT TO BE SIMPLE

As a child, my life was simple. This stemmed from several circumstances. I grew up as an only child (even though I had a brother almost 14 years older than I). We lived in a little village, where I was a part of neighboring families almost as much as I was of my own. Our household was considered to be poor. I did not experience the pressures of all the extra-curricular activities to which children of today are subjected by both parents and schools. And while I was expected to work in the house and in the garden, we kids were pretty much on our own.

There was enough time in which to get bored, unless we, ourselves, found something to do. And, this, we did. Using our imagination, we entertained ourselves. The village belonged to us – at least our side of the tracks did. To us, it was all one playground, including the river and woods in the countryside adjoining it. We did not know from one day to another what we would be doing. That was especially true during the Summer.

The adults entertained themselves, as well. My father and mother would simply decide to visit someone on an evening or Sunday afternoon and walk over to their house, even if it was a mile or more away. (My father did not drive.) And, since I was not allowed to stay home alone, I went with them. Acquaintances felt free to come to our house, as well. I remember going to some friends' house, only to find that they were not home. When we returned, they were sitting under our willow tree, waiting for our return. You never knew who would be over or when.

I recall with fondness the walks into the countryside that my mother and I would take with some of the neighbors. There was no particular destination. You just walked, observed, and admired what you saw, marveling at God's creation. After I became a priest, days off for me consisted in taking my parents and the neighbor lady for a car ride, which usually covered more than a hundred miles. We just drove through towns and country, observed, and talked, - turning to the left here and to the right there, stopping for an ice cream cone or a picnic at a roadside park.

Those were adventures. It was as if God entertained us and brought us joy, - which, of course, He did. Life was simple, decisions often made on the spur of the moment. I did not think much of it at the time. We seldom appreciate what we have at the time that we have it. As I look back now, though, I see what a wonderful life it was.

However, we should not be looking back, except to be informed and to learn. If life was like that then, why can it not be now? Actually, it can. It is not God that has complicated things. Human beings have, - to our own detriment. Life can still be an adventure, if we allow God to surprise us and be at peace with it.

As I have learned and need to remember, the Lord has his way and his own timing. He also knows what is around the corner. If we can let go of our preconceived notions, our plans, and our desires, - not only can we be surprised but excited about what will come about that is not, nor would it have been, of our own making. (I am preaching to myself, here.)

Life truly is a journey. It does have a destination. However, it is much more exciting and significantly less stressful if we let the Lord be the guide. He has experiences in store for us that we would not even imagine. I am counting on that.