

AT THE END OF THE DAY: LEAVING A LIVING LEGACY

If you are over fifty you have started to receive unsolicited mail that invites you to a dinner or lunch-free of charge, of course-at which time a representative of a bank or investment group or insurance company will offer you advice on retirement. Usually it involves you giving most if not all of your retirement account to that company. They promise to invest for you, advise you, and direct you in ways that will insure your “golden” years are without care.

If I had saved all those pieces of mail over the years I am sure I would have enough to fill a garbage truck several times over.

Interestingly, in none of these widely diverse offerings was there a single mention of what we really have to leave for our heirs and loved ones; the wisdom we have accumulated throughout our years.

This past year I had the opportunity to go on vacation with my sister for a whole week. We did a lot of remembering during that time and events that I had forgotten were recalled and discussed. I have noticed over the years that while my children are not at all interested in our stories from the past, often the grandkids are enthralled. In her book “The Spiritual Practice of Remembering”, Margret Bendroth says, “Remembering must become a regular spiritual practice, part of the rhythm of our daily lives as we recognize our world to be, in many ways, a gift from others who have gone before”.

Our stories, our wisdom is the true legacy that we leave for those who come after us. And it is essential that we take the time to remember and to record in some way what that legacy really is.

We come from a long line of adventurous people...they were immigrants at some point. They were creative, industrious, probably contentious, and dedicated. There were open to change and accepted challenges. Just as we often wonder about those who went before us, our descendants will no doubt wonder about us!

My generation, born just after the Second World War are called Baby Boomers. We were conceived when our parents returned from the War. Our Baby Boomer generation has lived in and through the greatest explosion of technology in the history of the world! Imagine that!

I recently gave a talk at an area Technical College as part of a senior enrichment day. Nursing students were encouraged to attend and sit in on the presentations. During my talk I invited the seniors present to remember their childhood years and the kind of communication technology we experienced. We were sharing memories of the early days of telephone and were talking about party lines. There were lots of chuckles and stories. Many folks actually remembered their own “rings”. The notification each house heard when the phone call was for them- like two longs and one short.

I noticed that the nursing students who were in their late teens and early twenties, were cracking up listening. I turned to them and asked what they found so amusing. With incredulous looks they said to me, “You’re making this up aren’t you? This stuff about a party line??”.

Remember, the internet is only 27 years old! This generation has always had computers, cell phones, instant communication and Google.

Time moves on. And we had better keep one foot in the today or we may get lost in yesterday!

What wisdom did our parent and grandparents give to us? For some it is common decency- be nice to people, share what you have, don't gossip, don't cheat. For others it has to do with our work ethic- do your job, don't be lazy, listen and learn. For others it has to do with our spiritual lives- pray, give thanks to God, go to church, respect the earth, love one another, share what you have.

Some of us were blessed with parents who taught us practical skills. How to make the bed, how to clean, how to iron- yes there are still folks who do that!- how to change a tire, change the oil, plant a garden, fix a bike, knit, crochet, sew, fish, tend livestock...the list is endless. These are the skills we taught our own children or grandchildren. Sometimes they didn't want to learn!

What wisdom do you want to share with those who come after us? Practical wisdom, ethical wisdom, or maybe spiritual wisdom. As we celebrate the Easter Season perhaps we should take the time to make sure that the legacy we leave is one of true value. Not money or possessions. Not buildings or bonds. But rather the faith we have in our loving God. Or the beliefs that have guided our lives- that we are all brothers and sisters. That we are here to help one another, to care for one another and to make this place a better world. The wisdom to know that life is short but filled with endless possibilities. The priceless knowledge that when we reach out to help another, we are doing what is really important. Do it now! Speak the words or write them down! Don't let your legacy disappear without acknowledging it and most importantly, sharing it with those who come after us.

At the end of the day, leave a living legacy.