

Do You Need A “Do Over” from God?

February 18, 2018

Have you ever asked for a “Do Over”? Maybe if you are playing golf with friends and are distracted during a tee shot, or when you throw a gutter ball while bowling you would ask for a do over. Perhaps it is after regrettable words are spoken and you need to ask for forgiveness to start over to be in right relationship with someone.

Whatever the case, if we are given a do over, we are given a gift. There is something about knowing you can do better, and not accepting that you really messed things up. The people in Noah’s day had really messed up their lives and the lives of others. It must have been pretty bad if God made the decision to start over with the family of Noah. I have to wonder, were they worse than we are? It was a pretty drastic thing for God to destroy all the people and

animals except Noah and his family and a mating pair of each creature. Things must have been very bad indeed.

Compare their misdeeds with ours, and you will find that we live with such excess that it is almost material gluttony.

We surround ourselves with things as if those things will give us security. What is the cost to the rest of the world when we continually have to buy and consume more things? How do the things we purchase impact the world around us? What toxins go into manufacturing our play toys? How is our atmosphere and environment depleted by our purchasing habits? Where are the things made that we buy? Do we buy them because they are cheaper in one store as opposed to another? Have you ever looked at the tags on our clothes to see where they are made? If they are manufactured in a third world country, the chances of them being made by workers in a sweatshop, in deplorable

conditions and for very little money are pretty high. Some might say, well at least they are able to provide food for their families as a justification – what would they do without the low wage job? Ask yourself the question – would you work for wages like that? Many Americans will not take menial jobs that pay minimum wage – but immigrants or migrant workers will in order to care for their families! Minimum wage is like a luxury for them! Purchasing clothing or other goods made in third world nations perpetuates the poverty under which people live. If there was no demand for cheap products, big business would have to pay a living wage to their workers.

What is the emptiness within us caused by that we need to fill with more possessions? There is a void within us that things cannot fill, yet we continue to attempt it by getting the newest gadget, or a bigger boat, or a brand new car! In

some ways, it provides a status for us. We judge each other by the kind of cell phone we have – “Oh, you still use a flip phone!” as if that is what gives a person value!

I think you can see where I am going with this! Sometimes we need a reality check. It is better to answer the question “How can I fill the void within myself?” rather than continually looking for **things** to give our lives meaning.

Last year I read the book “The Life-changing Magic of Tidying Up” by Marie Kondo. The process Marie uses in her book requires time and commitment, and if done correctly, will never have to be done again. I have to say that after I went through my myriad of possessions, I felt so much lighter. She writes “My criterion for deciding to keep an item is that we should feel a thrill of joy when we touch it.” For Marie, it is as simple as that. There are some things that I still do from going through this process.

But I can also tell you that I probably have acquired about half as many clothes as I brought to the Urban Mission.

There it is again – that need to fill the void; that need to fill the dresser drawers. I love tee shirts and caps and usually buy one whenever I go on vacation. Why? To preserve the memories, to brag that I have been there, to have a memento of the trip? Why do I need this? I don't have the answer. But I can tell you, if I was asked to take only a few things on the Ark because God was sending a flood, I don't think any of these things would make the cut! What would you bring with you on the Ark?

Only God and our loved ones can fill our needs and complete our void within. Luckily, the Church gives us an annual cause to reassess our lives in Lent. The example of God's relationship with Noah also show us that we can have a "do-over". We become vulnerable when we rely on

God and our loved ones to help fill the void left by our insecurities and selfishness. Vulnerability is probably what we avoid by acquiring the many *things* in our lives. It is hard to be vulnerable. Expressing our needs to others takes courage and self-knowledge. To open ourselves up to God leaves us in a state of unknowing. That is a scary place to be, especially if we like to be in control of our lives! If we trust God enough and have faith, even though we do not know the outcome, we can be assured that God has only good in store for us.

So what “do-over” are you need of from God this Lent? Is it the physically letting go of your excess of possessions? Is it that relationship that needs to be mended with a friend or family member? Is the emptiness within you urging you to follow God more closely in some kind of ministry? Are you in need of support and friendship and

are finding yourself aloof in some way? Is there a secret within you that needs to see the light of day in order to be healed? Are you drawn to be more generous of your time, talent or treasure? How is God calling you to do something over to be more connected to the plight of the poor, of the needs of children or of the environment? Whatever God is nudging you to do this Lent, let us open ourselves up to receive the insights and reconciliation awaiting us.

Remember, the flood was not the end and be all in this story from Genesis. God makes a promise, represented by placing a rainbow in the sky, that no natural disaster will end life on earth. This Covenant is a dear and precious gift. Let us protect this gift so that our habits and behaviors, our purchasing power and our waste does not cause a catastrophe on this earth that could be avoided by

being better stewards, being responsible consumers of goods, and compassionate keepers of our brothers and sisters best interests. God's Covenant demands nothing of us in return, but our responsibility as followers of Christ moves us to take good care of the gifts we have been given, in the world and its resources and in each other. Asking for a "do-over" also means that we accept the responsibility of the privilege that having a second chance requires.

Let us pray.