

Traveling Companion: Are you suffering from TMS?

Fr. Michael Tracey

Are you suffering from TMS? Do you find it hard to put your car in the garage? Is your garage filled with boxes of discarded toys? empty paint cans? things you haven't unpacked since your last move? Have you found things on sale that you have never opened? Have you Christmas gifts from last year that you have never used? Do you still have a collection of the Christmas cards you received last year? Are you one of those persons who is afraid to throw away anything in case you find a use for it some day? Have you ever held a Garage Sale? Have you ever gone to a Garage Sale, bought some things that you found at a bargain and thought you needed but haven't the courage now to put them in your own Garage Sale? Have you ever felt guilty about throwing anything away, even the box it came in, just in case you might have to return it some day? Do you still have your children's baby clothes even though they have their own children now? Do you ever rearrange your house and its rooms without throwing away anything, even the leftover pieces of fabric, carpet pieces, floor covering remnants? Have you had to build more closet space lately even though there are less people living in your house? Do you still have newspapers that are older than yesterdays? Do you still have your child's First Communion outfit? Have you found any 8-track tapes or vinyl LP around the house even though you don't have an 8-track player or a phonograph? Do you still have grandma's old sewing basket? Do you still keep an old, out of style, pair of jeans in your closet just in case that some day they may come back in style and you may be able to fit into them? Do you still have small leftover pieces of lumber from a job you did at home some years ago and are keeping them in case you might need them soon? Have you ever gone to a closet looking for some thing you knew was there somewhere but didn't find it in the rubble so you decided to get a new one just in case you would never find the old one? Did you buy an extra artificial Christmas tree even though you had a perfectly good one somewhere in the attic? If you can answer "yes" to any of the above, then you may be suffering from TMS? What's that, you may ask! Simple! Too Much Stuff.

Why do we suffer from TMS? Why do we hoard? Sometimes, we don't want to throw away things because of sentimental reasons. Another possible reason for our hoarding is more psychological. Hoarding things can provide a security blanket and prevent us from letting go of the past.

Comedian George Carlin has a comedy routine about "stuff;" about how we accumulate stuff in case we might need it; about how we move stuff from place to place so that we can have stuff there ahead of us when we go from place to place.

I must admit that I suffer from the disease of TMS. I have been in therapy for some time in order to treat this disease. During my last session with the psychologist, he suggested that I read Luke 10:4. I did!

As a result, I am thinking about starting a self-help group and calling it "The TMSers." Presently, I am drawing up a charter and some requirements. One requirement will be that participants show up each week in the same outfit and secondly that they bring at least one item they have been hoarding and we can either have a public burning and cleansing or donate it to some charity.

So, if you cannot find yourself in the closet of life, then maybe you might want to join our group.