

Traveling Companion: A Dollar for my troubles

Fr. Michael Tracey

I thought I had done a good job preaching on Sunday at all the Masses. Some people even commented how much the homily meant to them. At least, I thought, I allowed the Lord to break through to some people's hearts but now I have serious doubts.

On Monday morning I began to realize the truism of putting your money where your mouth is. As I did, I began to have serious depression problems.

One of the persons who counts the Sunday collections on Monday morning brought me the bitter pill that reminded me of my failures from Sunday. They produced a dollar bill they found in the collection. It was not just any dollar bill. It was soiled; obviously it had been in circulation for a long time. I knew the last known possessor of it had a hard time parting with it. He or she must have gone through mental torture trying to decide whether or not to part with it.

Obviously, it must have been an agonizing decision to part with the dollar bill. I would love to meet the person involved so that I might recommend some therapy that might lessen the trauma of parting with it.

I took out my magnifying glass to examine the dollar bill further. As I did, I encountered a creative genius behind the dollar bill. Maybe such a genius needs to be discovered by some talent scouts so that his or her creativity can be marshaled in a more utilitarian manner. On closer examination, I discovered the dollar bill was folded in a unique way. It reminded me of my last purchase of a black, short-sleeved clerical shirt. Such a purchase came with a supporting cast of a piece of cardboard that filled its inside, making it more presentable.

The dollar bill was folded to make a short-sleeved shirt, complete with sleeves and collar to match.

As I pondered the short-sleeved dollar bill shirt, I realized the gospel that particular Sunday was not challenging the person who had two shirts to give one away. So obviously, the creative genius was not interpreting the message literally.

The more I thought about it, the more I envisioned the creative genius taking a dollar bill from his or her pocket and engaging in a serious conversation with themselves, wondering how they might channel their creative juices into a more constructive outlet.

I realized all this was probably done during the homily as the creative genius deliberated the fate of their dollar bill. I wondered about their mental anguish, their soul-searching deliberations; their tantalizing dilemmas; their excruciating torture and their unbearable pain.

I concluded that either the homily was complete boredom or got them so upset that they got "hot under the collar." So, the only choice open to them was to retaliate; to allow their pent up frustration or creative energy to burst forth.

The more I thought about it, the more depressed I got. I felt I had failed this creative genius. Maybe, instead of using his or her creativity in church, they should consider channeling them onto the fashion runways of Paris or Madison Avenue where their dollar shirts could be appreciated and worn by the rich and famous, allowing them free advertising that would net millions of dollar bills.

I may need to go into therapy myself to glue together my broken and battered self-image. I know that can be an expensive proposition and wonder if my insurance will cover such. Otherwise I might lose the shirt off my own back.