

Fried or fired!

During the past two months, several persons have stopped me in church or on the street or emailed me with one question: “What happened to your column in Gulf Pine Catholic? You haven’t had any in there in a while. Did they fire you?”

My answer to them all was that I was not fired. Instead, I told them that I had taken some time off for the holidays to concentrate on other things as well as see if my creative juices might flow and I could create some extra columns to help me through the lean, mean, creative-less times.

Over the past few months, I have been fried a few times, not like the chicken brand but like the computer brand. Two years ago, I had to replace the power supply in my desktop computer. Luckily, my hard drive didn’t fry also at that time. In September, my hard drive got lonely and decided to fry itself. I had some of the documents backed up but not my upcoming columns for Gulf Pine Catholic. Nothing could be recovered from the crashed hard drive. Even two of my computer gurus could not retrieve any files. So my upcoming columns died in the process. I spent some time shedding crocodile tears as well as beating myself up with lots of “I should have…”

Did I learn any lesson? Well, the rest of the story will tell its tale. Two weeks ago, my power supply – now less than two years old – decided to die. Amid the withdrawal symptoms, I was able to use my laptop to help heal my symptoms. I had the power supply replaced and fired up the desktop once again. All went well for a few hours. Then the blue screen of death appeared. I engaged in some troubleshooting scenarios to see if there might be a virus, a bad memory or some bad sectors in the hard drive. It all proved fruitless. So, I enlisted the help of my local guru. He confirmed the prognosis – the hard drive had died. It was just two months old and how could it have died. It wouldn’t talk to me.

You may wonder if I learned the lesson from my previous hard drive crash. No! I didn’t I should have backed up all my document files instead of some of them. Then I asked myself: What about the eight columns I had written and kept in reserve for Gulf Pine Catholic during my hiatus from the paper? Were they gone to the graveyard of crashed files, drives, frustrated hearts and “I should have…” deaths?

I know I am learning some valuable lessons from these experiences. The question is: will I put them into practice?

Often, we fly by the proverbial “seat of my pants” mentality. We don’t anticipate. We don’t prepare. We don’t back up. Why? Because bad things don’t happen to us. Somehow, we think we are immune from certain things. We are invincible. We are immune to disaster. We are not ready to let a part of us die because we trust ourselves unrealistically.

Life is supposed to follow a pattern and we expect that pattern to be the driving force in our own lives. Babies are born. They learn to walk, talk and grow in knowledge and wisdom. Then they discover their gifts that will provide opportunities to contribute to society. They meet someone and pledge to love that someone for the rest of their lives. Then they start the whole creative process over again.

Clinically speaking, we are born, we grow, we live to a ripe old age – the longer the better – and then we die prematurely.

Last week, I had two funerals just one day apart. One day, we celebrated the funeral of a seven month premature baby girl. Two days later, we celebrated the funeral of her great-grandmother who was in her nineties. The experiences brought home to me how little control we have over life. We can plan, predict, protect but we soon find out that we don’t control the rhythm of life. The unknown and unpredictable aspects of life cannot be controlled. It can only be entered into through the eyes of faith.

I am left with one puzzling question following my computer crashes and Gulf Pine Catholic columns. Will I be able to resurrect any or all of the eight columns I had in reserve or will I continue to be fried in my own stubborn stew of saying “it cannot happen to me again.”