

## **Traveling Companion: The Pager I didn't accept**

### **Fr. Michael Tracey**

There I was settling down in my nice, navy blue recliner, enjoying a rare evening without an appointment or meeting, when the phone rang. I answered it.

“This is Randy Braxton from WPLN radio calling. Your phone number has been selected from the millions of phone numbers throughout the country. You have been specially selected to receive a new, state of the art Motorola Pager...”

I didn't listen any more. I just clicked and left Randy with his pager. What a shame that I didn't accept this great, exclusive, once in a lifetime, specially chosen, gift to be bestowed on me through a miraculous computer generated random selection of my unique phone number. I felt so honored, so blessed, and so special that such an honor had been bestowed on me. And furthermore, that I had the audacity to slam the phone down on such a benevolent gift-giver. I'm sure I will stay awake at night regretting my decision and, every time, I hear one of those pagers go off, my face will flush with jealousy because I could be just as good with my own Motorola pager that would have put me into the category of efficient and immediate communicators. All, I can do is envy the person who is now bathing in my misfortune by them being able to showcase, in front of the whole world, their own unique pager.

What aggravates me more is the fact that this is not the first time I have been chosen for such honors and gifts and I have turned them all down. You think that I would have learned my lesson by now and, the sad part is that, I may never get another chance to be chosen again in the future.

This reminds me that I blew another opportunity recently. I received a survey from “US News and World Report.” On completing and mailing it in, I was guaranteed a beautiful travel clock and a year's subscription to the magazine for only \$7.95. What a bargain, I thought. If I didn't like the magazine, I could cancel at any time and still keep the clock. I sure needed that clock for my office desk to make sure that I didn't fall asleep on the job. Yet, I failed. I tore up the survey and forgot it.

Recently, I received another offer. A Catholic video publishing company called and offered a selection of videotapes for young people and was sending them on to me to “review.” The tapes were already in the mail so I couldn't turn down the privileged opportunity to become a prime “reviewer” of these tapes. The tapes did arrive but also included a sizeable bill. But once I had reviewed the tapes and if per chance I didn't find them excellent, then I could return them within thirty days.

The company sending such to you hopes that you will pay the bill and not go through the aggravation of having to mail the package back to them.

There always seems to be a “catch.” Maybe, I don't accept such “free” gifts and “free” offers because I believe there isn't any “free” lunch. Maybe, when we have to pay for something, we value it more and appreciate it more.

Maybe, too, that's why our Christian faith has the symbol of the cross as a pivotal part of it, reminding us that nothing is free; that the cross has its own, ultimate price and redeeming feature.