

Traveling Companion: Punch lists and patience

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Moving into our new rectory recently was like moving from a FEMA trailer to an executive suite in the best hotel. Our staff was thrilled to have an environment that was more conducive to work and service. Yours truly was happy to discover and adjust to a totally new environment again.

Living in a new place, one becomes more aware of every sound and breath that the building takes. A dripping faucet, a methodic icemaker; an ever watchful movement monitor, a blinking and active fire alarm system introduces themselves to the new residence.

Living and working in a building that is in the final stages of completion, can be a proverbial pain in our non-routine as well as a lesson in patience.

One day, a young man arrived and said he was here to work on testing and setting up the air-flow in the building. He introduced himself while wearing a distinctive red cap. He went from room to room with a hooded contraption that he placed over each vent to measure its output. Later, he indicated he was leaving and would be back the next day. I asked him to wear his red cap again so we could distinguish him again. The next day, he was back again to work on the air conditioning ventilation system. He did wear his red cap and reminded me, in case I had forgotten.

Other work men and women came and went. Some introduced themselves and indicated why they were there. Others, just walked in and out, immune to the fact that someone might live there or have to work there also.

Usually, when I saw a stranger walking around outside the building or walking through the building, I usually asked where they were lost. Most indicated they were not lost, that they were just doing a job. They just continued doing what they came to do – do some touch up painting; architects checking on their initial punch lists; blind people checking on and adjusting shutters; door people checking on what doors needed to be replaced.

Like a group of busy ants, they scurried around doing their final touch up and close out. Still circuit breakers popped; lights shorted out; alarms screamed; and dish washers decided to go on strike.

Through the whole ordeal, I learned a lot about punch lists and patience. In fact, I learned a lot about life's punch lists and the need for patience in dealing with them.

When God created humankind, he indicated that they were "very good." I notice that he didn't say they were "complete," just good.

I realize that life is a journey through a series of punch lists and patience. The punch lists are things that need to be corrected or weeded out in our lives; things that will make our lives more livable and at peace; things that will guide us along the process to being complete.

Life presents us with moments to check and adjust our punch lists; demanding of us patience and perseverance in case we get discouraged, feel overwhelmed and feel like quitting.

The church presents its own opportunities to do the same. We have opportunities to make New Year Resolutions. If we fail there, then we have Lent and its opportunity to try the same resolutions or to make some new ones, if we are successful with the old ones. Birthdays are other opportunities to check our priorities with patience. Sometimes, the opportunity to check our punch lists is thrust upon us without warning. An earth-shattering event, a death, a sickness, a job loss, a breakdown of a relationship forces us to face another punch list with patience.

Punch lists are wonderful opportunities to correct flaws, to do some touch up in our lives, to do some troubleshooting, to do some critical corrections that may not be obvious to the eye; to realize that our lives are still "under construction."

Now, I must check my punch list with patience.