

Dear Friends,

Several years ago, after my father retired, I was home visiting and Dad and I sat on the porch talking. I asked him if he was happy with the way his life turned out, that is to say, if he found the work he did fulfilling. He was a machinist for Rockwell International, and he was very good at what he did. He said he never thought that much about whether or not he was happy, but he is proud of the fact that because of his job he was able to support us. He was able to help us get college educations (all six of us have our bachelor's degrees). He enjoyed the work he did because he worked in an important industry, for a major company.

He went on to say, though, that when he decided to work for Collins Radio (which became Rockwell International), he knew he needed a job just to support himself. Before long, he realized what kind of company he worked for, and what kind of loyalty they deserved. There were moments in his career that were extremely difficult, which is true for anyone who works. Then he told me one of the most important lessons anyone can learn. He said, "I made a decision and with every decision there are consequences; some are positive, some are not. Some consequences were so bad I thought about walking away. But, I couldn't do that. I learned I had to work through them." Then he went on to say, "I made a commitment and I am happy with the fact that I was able to honor it, stick with it, and remain faithful to it."

This mentality does not seem to be one that sticks for a lot of people today. If we don't like something, we throw it away. We are living in a disposable era in which people discard jobs if they don't feel satisfied or fulfilled, families if the love they expect is not there, religions if the mission of the Church is not carried out in exactly the way they want it to be done.

I still feel the shame I caused because of my temper when I first came here and people left the parish. I know that there have been hurt feelings, and never once did I deliberately intend to offend anyone. I have challenged people, and their sense of the way things are supposed to be. Some have been able to accept the challenges. Others choose to walk away. I hope in time they can forgive me. My faults always need a great deal of attention. Like my Dad, I choose to try and work through them. But it's progress, not perfection.

I raise this point, though, not as a public confession, or as a way to put myself down, or to judge others. I raise this point as an encouragement to all of us, myself included, to see the value of our faith. It is not something that can be discarded so easily. It is a gift of immeasurable value and worth. We who are baptized and confirmed into this faith are committed to working through the challenges and struggles, embracing the joyous and grace-filled moments, and disciplining our lives in such a manner that we would never allow anything to cause us to abandon it like anything else we might throw away.

I love this parish very much, and will continue to devote the best of my energy, intellect and talents to serving you, the people of God, as I have been called to do. Like my Dad, this is the commitment I have made, and I will stick with it through the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly; I will keep on working on the faults of my life, because in the end, as St. Paul says, "Faith is enough for me, for in my weaknesses God's grace brings them all to perfection."

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel