

Jesus said: 'Take these things out of here!

Every so often, as you drive around the various neighbourhoods around Humberstone, you will notice the presence of skips. Sometimes they are there to collect the waste from construction; sometimes reconstruction; but at other times, the skip seems to be just for want of better word 'junk'.

I find this last kind of skip to be the most interesting; even exciting...for which many may say the Canon Precentor is very sad!

Victor Meldrew comes to mind who rejoiced in finding a Citroen 2CV in his skip at the front of his house. He rejoiced because at least it wasn't filled by someone's old burst mattress. Next day however, he woke up to find that someone's old burst mattress had not too neatly been stuffed inside the 2CV.

He 'did not believe it!'

I've often imagined how great it would be to just have a big old skip in our driveway for a while. Oh, the things I would throw in there! You heave any number of things in there. You hear a crash. The junk is out of your life.

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If you ever have the opportunity to have a skip, you'll find yourself getting carried away with what psychologists apparently call "skip fever". You'll fill it 2/3s of the way by design, but then you'll start walking around the house looking for something, anything that you can throw away to fill it up. Your husband's precious collection of 'something or other' but absolutely cluttering up the house, and a collection which you feel is so hideous...would he notice...skip or not?

That wonderful old evergreen given so 'generously' by the mother-in-law standing in the corner of the lounge, but which now seems to be breaking through into the bedroom upstairs. Secretly you have been trying to kill it with various sorts of bleach for years. Skip or not?

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Our houses, like our very lives get cluttered. And sometimes, we get to the point where we just want to reclaim a space we would like so that,

in the fullest sense, we'll have a place to live, we can rebalance and appreciate again those things which are of the most importance.

'All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on.'  
So said 19<sup>th</sup>c. Psychologist Henry Ellis.

Of course, you might not agree with what I say, you might actually like your junk and would hesitate to throw any of it away. The skip is just an illustration. An illustration meant to evoke the feeling of being cleansed and set free. . .the need for cleansing and freeing up. I'm sure you can imagine a situation in which you feel that way...to be cleansed and set free to live as you feel it is destined to be.

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In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus was all about the business of cleansing the temple. On the Feast of the Passover, people from all over were coming into Jerusalem to worship and to offer sacrifices. And since many were not able to bring their own animals for sacrifice, they chose to buy animals in Jerusalem. In addition, they also had to have their money changed into the local currency so they could pay the temple tax, which went to support the upkeep of the temple.

So during Passover, there was an abundance of people who sold animals, and people who changed money which were much needed services. But by Jesus' time, it had become corrupt. While they still provided a service they were ripping people off, taking advantage of the visitors. Not only that, they had actually moved their businesses into the courtyards of the temple...had actually filled the environment of a most holy place with junk!

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It is no wonder that the sight of this greatly disturbed Jesus. He quickly made a whip out of cords and drove out the animals and the animal vendors...we know the story.

So where is God's house in our time? Some would suggest that it is church buildings; that church buildings are the modern version of the temple. Not so. In truth the temple of today, the place wherein God dwells, is inside you and me.

I Corinthians 3:16 "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's Temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" And in another place in scripture it says "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?" and still another place in scripture. "We are the temple of the Living God."

So you yourselves are God's temple. But of course, that leads us to a question: What kind of stuff do you have in your temple? What kind of stuff have you packed away in there? Is there any junk? Is there some junk in your life that prevents you from really living with him and for him?

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's Temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?"

The Decalogue, set for today as the OT reading, far from being the usual notion of a set of rules to 'clout yourself around the head with' or indeed to use as ammunition to 'clout others round the head with', they are about the creating of happy balanced relationships with God and others within a happy balanced covenant society. There are those we would say are realised in us in all their fullness now. There are those we would say that we moving towards...work in progress, to use a modern phrase. There are those we would say we are quite definitely guilty of, and would prefer if they were not there at all, due to their conviction of us and our lack of will to do anything about.

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Jesus in the power of his Spirit wants to give us release. He wants us to be free from all the junk that has gathered in us, to be renewed in vision, and growth...to grow into his very image.

'To become Christ-like is the only thing in the whole world worth caring for, the thing before which every ambition of man is folly and all lower achievement vain.' so said the 19<sup>th</sup>c. writer Henry Drummond.

This renewal is not bound and excited by a sense of vindictive punishment, and must never be seen as such. In Christ, this renewal is offered by a love that is eternal, free from self-interest and expressed in self-sacrifice.

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So don't be afraid of the cleansing that Jesus would like to do in your life. It's really something that is very exciting; even exhilarating. It's like having a skip outside your house. It's a wonderful opportunity to clean up your house and actually live in a state of change... and, if you will excuse the pun, to live for a change.

To fit our talents and gifts, our possessions to the mission of Christ in us and through us is one of the greatest visions we could have.

'When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, "I used everything you gave me".' Erma Bombeck 20<sup>th</sup> C Journalist