

The View from Blackwater Bluff — Charles LaFond

Sitting with a friend over a sandwich recently, we told each other our life story. Not all of it. Just some of the story of our respective journeys in life. We are different people and yet there were so many similarities – like recipes for different casseroles with similar base ingredients. We gave each other our story like a gift – tentatively, timidly, generously. And as is so often the case, the more we gave our story away to the “other,” the more our own story had its margins filled in and some lines redefined.

It is tempting to gently pack up that tired and abused word “STEWARDSHIP” – put it away for another year or at least until spring when campaign plans begin again with heavy sighs and eye rolling. Like putting away Aunt Mildred’s porcelain Santa and gently wrapping the ornaments from a tree now relegated to the road-side. Red ball, tissue paper, box. Silver ball, tissue paper, box.

These long nights of winter afford another kind of stewardship – another kind of care for what God has given to us. We have stewardship of our story. If we guard it jealously, our story festers. When share it with others, it is enriched like a soup on the stove all afternoon. And we too are enriched with the telling.

What about the stewardship of *your* story? Win-



ter and Lent are good times to consider life. What’s your story?

Like that box of Christmas ornaments we have just carefully packed, I have a series of stories that make up the journey of my life. Even our old ornaments can remind us of some of our stories - and those places along the way.

Along with money and time, I’m aware that my story too is a treasure that God has entrusted to me, not to hoard but to share, even though some aspects of it are broken and bent, rusted and scratched. For most of us, our journey-story ends up looking like a necklace whose beads were chosen and strung in the dark! Parts of my story do

not fit with the rest, or are ugly or broken or garish next to each other. But there it is! My story.

These are months in which to be good stewards of our stories – to give them away – like our time and our money. Some of my best moments have been spent with a close friend or a new friend or a stranger telling my story and listening – deeply, really listening - to their story. We sit by a fire or at a bus stop and drink deep of the “recipe” of each other’s lives – all the while marveling that such ingredients could still come out so good!

My mother and father died as I was leaving the monastery to come to New Hampshire. Mom died knowing I had finally found a home. I have their furniture here at Blackwater Bluff. Chairs, tables, cups, plates. But what I cherish most is that they told me their story and I told them mine. We shared our stories well – even when doing so was hard. The ingredients of their lives flavored mine. Good stewardship of our stories enriches us regardless of whether we are telling them or listening to them. And then, like Mary, “we ponder these things in our hearts.” Stewardship is not about money. Stewardship is about what our hearts are like inside. When we deal well with the heart, everything else will follow.

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