

December 2006
Advent and the Simple Life

Dear Theophilus,

I am trying to simplify. It started by going through bags and bags of files from my office during the Thanksgiving holiday and keeping only those which are essential. I didn't get rid of as many files as I had imagined (what is essential, anyway?) but I did come across many things I had been missing and other things I never knew I had.

One was a file on Advent, and tucked away in a little booklet were words from George L. Miller called "There's Always Room in the Stable." I share a portion of them with you as we enter this season.

"Did you ever stop to think that, from birth to death, there was never any room for Jesus? No room in Bethlehem—the tourists crowded him out. And no room when they took him off the cross—they had to put him in a borrowed grave. No room for the Son of God.

"We'd like to think we'd do better in our day, but would we? Could he find a parking place outside our supermarket? Would he "fit in" at our parties during the Christmas season?

"All the places we put Jesus today are the places we don't need for anything else. We put him in a stable. . . . There's always room in the stable. Is there any room in life for Christ?"

Advent means "coming to," the time when we prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus. The challenge for me, and maybe for you, too, is to go through all the bags of files, all that clutters our life, and find those activities that are meaningful and life-giving, that will get me to the stable and then find room for Christ in my own life.

You will note that for the past few years we have not cluttered the church calendar with a lot of activities. It is by design. You've told me you are overbooked and exhausted, too busy to even think about preparing for Christ because you are too busy preparing for everything else.

So let's talk about simplifying our lives. I'll be doing this in my Sunday messages during Advent. I'm also considering starting a "Simplicity Circle," a place where we can share our experiences, successes and failures, about trying to reduce all the "clutter" of living. Let me know if you are interested.

In the meantime I hope there is room for Jesus. Be born again, we pray O God, not in a manger, but in us.

Many blessings to you,

Harry