

God, Life, and Everything "Tiny House Dreamin'"

I'm writing this column on Monday, the day of the Iowa caucuses. By the time you read this, we'll know who won, but right now, it's all just guess work. And you know what? I don't care.

Just for today, I don't want to think about this endless, ridiculous mockery of an election process we have so perverted over the past decades. I don't want to think about the peculiar caucus system or the even more peculiar candidates.

Fortunately, just as I was thinking that I don't want to think about any of it anymore, a perfect distraction came my way. My sister-in-law put a picture of a tiny cabin on her Facebook page with a note to my siblings and me (and our spouses) that we should look at it. It was beautiful, and as I looked at the first picture, I could already imagine myself rocking on the porch in an old birchbark rocking chair.

So, what's the deal with the cabin?

Well, you see, as a priest, I have always lived in a rectory. That means that my wife and I don't own a home. Now, as retirement starts to peek at me from beyond the horizon, I realize that a home is something we'll have to procure in the coming years.

As it turns out, my parents own a farm in Indiana, and they've suggested that all six kids will inherit together. Rather than one buying the others out, however, or simply selling it and dividing the profit, we thought we might think about all living on the farm together.

Crazy, huh?

Except that there's enough land on that farm to built a little cottage community that would be big enough to accommodate all of us without feeling crowded. Granted, it would require small homes, but this is where it gets good.

You see, that tiny cabin my sister-in-law sent us would be just about right for a retired couple. Better yet, I have been a big fan of the tiny home movement for several years now.

The tiny home movement believes that you don't need nearly as much space as you think you do, and that American housing has gotten out of hand with the glut of McMansions we see across the land. Tiny homes are generally in the 250 to 800 square foot category, which is pretty darn small.

But they are incredibly efficient, attractive and portable. You can even pack up one of those things on the back of a trailer and move it.

The reasons for a tiny home are many, but among the chief ones for me are that they consume fewer resources to build and maintain, are affordable, and force you to examine what possessions you feel you really need.

We have lived in our current home for nearly twenty years, and in that time, you acquire a lot of junk. Very little of it is really necessary. As Job said to his wife when everything was taken from him, I came into this world with nothing, and I will leave this world with nothing. Everything else is just on loan.

So, as we approach the penitential season of Lent, when we ponder our mortality, it's good to think about how to strip down our lives to the essentials, or at least to a simpler form.

Besides, those tiny homes are just so darn cute.