Travel light: storing up treasures in heaven

“Wife have too many shoes?”

The billboard on Interstate 94 caught my eye. The solution it advertised, of the next exit, was not a Goodwill or a therapist, but a storage unit. Why get rid of the stillettes when you can pay $50 a month to stash them somewhere else?

Millions of Americans have purchased storage, locking up the Hummel dolls, tax returns and soccer trophies they don’t need but can’t quite part with. At the end of 2008, self-storage facilities occupied 2.35 billion square feet, making it physically possible for every American to stand under the total canopy of self-storage roofing.

My canopy of choice has been the ping-pong table in my basement, based on a phenomenon which you’ll find Mead spiral-bound notebooks detailing my introduction to the Pascal’s Wager theorem and the periodic table. Those royal blue and Kelly green pads signal such youthful diligence that they have not yet made their way to the recycling bin they warrant.

Last night I examined the bins below the staircase. I was struck by how many years were mixed together, how time was compressed in a single cardboard box. Baseball cards, birthday cards, report cards. A rhyming dictionary and a cookbook. Crinkled newspapers stacked on a busted Gateway laptop.

These days, it’s not just physical stuff we store. It’s also digital: documents, pictures, spreadsheets, Power Points, mp3s, pdfs. “Current statistics show that one in every 10 hard drives fail every year,” warns the online storage site Mozy, which claims more than 1 million users. “Unfortunately, computers are vulnerable to hard drive crashes, virus attacks, theft and natural disasters, which can erase everything in an instant.”

That appeal to fear drives us to the poor, and you will have stored up treasures in heaven. ... For where your treasure is, there will be the world, they will develop into mature Christians. All of our talents and abilities are gifts from God to be used to build God’s kingdom. When we keep those gifts hidden under a bushel basket the world and the church suffer.

May this new academic year be a time of growth and self-discovery for our students everywhere. May each student stay close to the Lord and get to know God more deeply, knowing that God is with him or her in all the ups and downs of life. Good luck, especially, to first-year students.

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