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Share the Depression by Carl E Beyer

Now I bet you are wondering why you should share your depression. Good question. But I am referring to the economy. I heard on TV the other day to share the “depression” with your kids. Do not insulate them from it and paint a rosy picture. We, as parents, want more for our kids than we had but in doing so we can paint too rosy of a picture for them. By doing such they think they are having tough times when they do not have what we have.

What is taught in the Old Testament? Can we relate to spending forty years in the desert seeking the land of milk and honey? Without knowing the Old Testament, I am sure if you ask a kid where to find milk and honey they would say Albertson, Smith, Commissary etc but not a place to seek it wandering in the desert.

Almost every election we hear that we have the worst economy since the depression. Get real. They had bread lines. Now for the young ones we are not talking about standing in line for “bread” referring to money, but actual bread. Who among us can even relate to standing in a long line to get bread to calm the hunger pains. The other day they showed on the news long lines of people waiting for the new Blackberry. OK for the old ones not “blackberries” but a phone. How in our basic human needs does a new phone and long lines even speak of any kind of serious depression? We may indeed be in a mild depression and have to tighten our belts some but nowhere near what our previous generations had to do.

From the little sharing my parents did, I am trying to think why they shared two stories that stuck with me over the years. Simple stories but let me share them.

My Mom was born in 1933 and remembers as a child her parents sitting the kids down and telling them there was no Easter Bunny. Why did they get told this as a young age? It was simply that her parents could not afford to buy the kids jelly beans. They had to concentrate on getting real food on the table. I never knew my grandparents. They died in their early fifties and it was certainly related to their years of hard toiling as poor farmers.

My Stepfather was born in 1912 so he had clearer memories but only shared one. He remembers that as a child, he was required to walk down to a neighboring farm to get milk for a young one in the household. On the way home he had many bad thoughts of what he could do to that child so that he could have the milk for himself. There wasn't milk for the older kids just the young one. Can we possibly relate to that?

I have one more story that does come to mind. It is funny how some memories stick with you, but I remember standing on my lawn at about age twelve when a local farmer stopped by to speak to my stepfather. He comments to my stepfather that I look old enough to start working. I wasn't consulted but told that the next day I would start working seven days a week on that farm and I should consider myself very fortunate. So much for childhood. I was going to be allowed to keep my money but had to start buying my own clothes. You see, my stepfather was put into the lumber camps at age fourteen and the money he earned was kept by his father for their family's needs. I was indeed fortunate in comparison.

I know my household is not everyone's household but I would bet that in St John Vianney and St Thomas Aquinas families, we could count on one hand where there are kids younger than eighteen who have to work to help their parents keep food on the table. We are a blessed generation.

I am no different than anyone else in not wanting to forsake my “toys” and suffer a “depression”, but let us step back. In this mild time of suffering, make this a time of learning. Sit

the kids down and not tell them how fortunate they are because that will go in one ear and out the other. No, instead relate to them stories that were passed down from one generation to another. Share the stories of true suffering and what literal blood and sweat was spent to allow us to have this great society of true blessings.

Now we have come full circle. How do we share the “depression”? If you are one of the unfortunate ones without a job, I believe you already are suffering so the following may seem petty but for us fortunate ones that have an income let us brainstorm a bit.

I know in my household we have always tried to make Christmas a big deal as far as presents goes. Of course, we try and pass on the true meaning of Christmas but Christmas has become a traditional time of exchanging presents. My kids have been forewarned that the number of presents will be thinned this Christmas. Do not, in this period of time, with our poorer economy, put your family in jeopardy by running up the credit cards to have a “normal” Christmas.

My mind always returns to food as many of you know. Think about the money you are spending. Let the kids know you will not be spending as much money on “fast food”. Fast food should be called “wallet draining food”. Even some of the food we buy and take home is just plain expensive junk food. Let us try to get back to the staples. Spaghetti, noodles, grilled cheese, homemade soups etc. Forsake the pre-made dinners and save some money cooking a little bit more from scratch. Tell the kids why you are doing this.

Brrr I am getting cold. Oh yeah, how about turning down the thermostat and telling the kids why you need to. Introduce them to the concept of a blanket, shawl, sweater, socks, etc to have your own body keep you warm instead of the furnace.

I am sure I missed many things but use your imagination. Some I skipped on purpose such as cable TV & Pepsi because I love my TV and my Pepsi.

God Bless you all, now go forth and share the depression.