

Fr Louis Reflection

30th March 2020

'Utilities': For many of our fellow citizens, the word is associated with public services such as water, gas or electricity supply, bus and train services, in fact anything that is of practical use. However there are smaller utilities which are used for a more personal and practical reason, and one that springs to my mind is a trunk!

I was the proud owner of a trunk. As many other trunks it was a large strong case, measuring about four feet by two feet by one foot, solid in construction, and held in shape by wooden bands, which gave the trunk added toughness. That extra strength was essential, as three times a year it travelled by British Rail from Bristol to Leicester and back again, and it had to be tough to survive the treatment it received. For seven years it carried all my worldly belongings, until after its final journey from Leicester to Bristol, it was laid to rest in the attic at home.

Gone were the clothes, sporting kit and accessories that it used to protect, to be replaced by seven years of memorabilia; photographs, letters and personal items which had been accrued and were to be a reminder of my very happy days avoiding the chores of education. The trunk had become a time-capsule protecting the confidential thoughts, associations and personal letters amassed during those seven heavenly years, to remain frozen in time, only to see the light of day after my demise. And so, I left home and sought refuge in London to seek wealth and happiness. It hadn't happened by Christmas of that year, so I went home to enjoy family hospitality. It reminded me of the return of the prodigal son, but without the fatted calf or the big party!

The day after my homecoming I went into the attic to check on the time capsule containing the secrets of a life well-lived. I should explain that it was easy to get into the attic. We lived in a large bungalow, and the attic was the full length of the bungalow with a dormer window at either end, and was boarded throughout its length. It was used as a playroom, with a full-sized table-tennis table at one end and enough room to have a snooker table and a bar if required in the remaining area. The access was via a standard sized staircase and unrestricted! One simply walked up the stairway and directly into the attic.

I entered the attic and familiarised myself with the layout and noticed that my trunk had been moved! I walked over to have a look, lifted the lid, and knew that the contents had been rifled. I am tidy by nature, and the contents of the trunk were not as I had left them. I was annoyed, and being disgruntled sought an explanation from my mother who at the time was chatting with my elder sister.

'Someone has been nosing in my trunk' I said, 'and they've made a mess of it.' My mother, completely unflustered said 'It was the little girls.' The little girls were my two youngest sisters who were aged 5 and 7, and there was no way I was going to cross-examine them, and my mother knew it. She continued ... 'we tidied the contents as best as we could ... no harm done!' Defeated and infuriated I turned to walk away, and at that moment my mother and elder sister, as one, threw this grenade of a question,

'And who is Angela?

So, the both of them had sat down and read every damn letter in the trunk, ferreted through all my personal belongings, and thought they would have fun at my expense. I tried to regain my composure, and said in the most dignified and polite tone I could muster, 'Well, you have read her letters, which means you know as much about her as I do, and I can assure you, I did not reply to any of them. However, there is nothing to stop either of you from writing to her, and asking her of her intentions towards me.' [end of scene]

My trunk, including most of its contents [and I stress MOST] has long since decayed, and I am delighted that many aspects of my youth will no longer be scrutinised by members of my family or anyone else for that matter. Did the contents amount to any earth-shattering scandal? No, ... but as in so many youthful indiscretions, they are best forgotten.

As many of you may have observed over recent weeks during the steady creep known as the Corona virus [COVID 19], some people are hoarders. They hoard food, some of which is perishable and not suitable for freezing, and unless consumed within a certain time will decay. It becomes waste, and it is left in overflowing bins for all to see and is a clear advertisement for their selfishness. I am sure that such people would be more than angry if they were challenged about their indiscretion and selfish attitude.

Equally I am sure that if you are like me and feel offended when challenged over one's personal life, one would feel justified in retaliation!