**The Baggage of Ordinary Time**

**(Column 91, February 20, 2023)**

By Lucia A. Silecchia

Anyone who has ever had the misfortune to drive me to an airport, meet me at a train station, or share the trunk of a car with me on a road trip can tell you one thing: I do not travel lightly. Whether a journey is two days, two weeks or two months, my bulging bags and stuffed suitcases defy the saying that “you can’t take it with you.” I do.

Alas, however, there are those times when a clerk at an airport tells me that my suitcase is too heavy and something has to go. There are also the times when the simple laws of physics tell me that a suitcase cannot be bigger than the luggage rack that will hold it. So, then, it is time to leave something behind.

Life, in many ways, is the same. We each carry much with us – the habits, temptations, opinions, grudges, ambitions, regrets, hopes, memories, relationships, doubts, worries, certainties, foibles, mistakes and triumphs of our lives. Some of those things are well worth clinging to with all our strength – but not everything.

As Lent comes yet again, it may be the opportunity to sift prayerfully through the baggage of life and follow the advice I have received, more than once, from airport baggage clerks: leave some of this behind.

The first part of this is easy. I know that there are things I cannot travel with because airline rules prohibit them. I know there are things I cannot travel with because they are fragile and will break if they are crushed in the luggage rack on a train. Other things, I know I cannot take with me because in the hot trunk of a car they will spoil or melt.

So too, in life, it is easy to know that there are some things that should not be part of our lives because they are clearly dangerous or destructive. For such things, the Lenten prayer is for the strength and resolve to leave them behind.

What is harder, though, is to look beyond what is obvious to see what else we might leave behind.

When I pack too many clothes, is it because I need them or because of the pride that wants to be sure that I am well-dressed?

When I pack too many shoes, is it because I need them or because I value comfort a little too much?

When I pack too many books, is it because I need them or because of an ambitious desire to be productive?

When I pack too many supplies of any kind, is it because I need them or because I fear inconvenience or discomfort?

When I pack too many projects to entertain me, is it because I need them or because I do not value calm as much as I should?

When I pack too much food for the journey, is it because I need it or because I want security for any unexpected situation?

Clothes, shoes, books, supplies, projects and food are all good things – as are so many other things we may carry through life. But, even if they are not the obviously dangerous things we should shed, they are still a burden. They can be the things that tempt us to cling to pride, ambition, comfort, ambition, fear, entertainment or security They also take up valuable space in our lives that, perhaps, we could better use to hold other things that are more beautiful, good, and true.

If that is true, maybe Lent ’23 is the chance to leave behind those things that interfere with a life lived well on the holy journey to Easter joy. Maybe it is a time to pull from life’s luggage not only those things that are the obvious harms, but also those things that we will only discover during these forty days of prayerful contemplation.

Wishing you a holy Lent, and a journey richly blessed as you lay aside the burdensome baggage of ordinary time.

*Lucia A. Silecchia is a Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Faculty Research at the Catholic University of America’s Columbus School of Law. “On Ordinary Times” is a biweekly column reflecting on the ways to find the sacred in the simple. Email her at* [*silecchia@cua.edu*](mailto:silecchia@cua.edu)*.*