

1st September 2022

Rubbish

“Nothing happens by itself ... The trick is to filter out the rubbish.”

Benjamin Crème, *Maitreaya's Mission Vol III*

The recent strike of rubbish-collectors in Edinburgh, and the subsequent spread of the strike to other Local Authority areas, has been hard to bear. We know rubbish needs to be disposed of; we're aware of the cost-of-living crisis and the struggles many Council employees have living on relatively low wages; we're often guilty of taking our "cleansing operatives" for granted. But most of the time, we don't give it much thought – until rubbish piles up on the Capital's streets; visitors are disappointed with our city; news-reports are filmed against a backdrop of overflowing bins; and pest-control experts warn of a plague of rats. On the one hand, it shows what a good job our refuse collectors normally do. On the other, it has resonances of the "winter of discontent" over 1978-79 in the UK. One way or another, rubbish is on our agenda.

In his letter to the Church at Philippi, St Paul talks about rubbish – or garbage, as it's translated – and explains how so much of the stuff he failed to dispose of cluttered up his mind and actions so that there is no room for anything else. He'd put his confidence in religiosity; pious zeal; heritage; persecution of the Church; righteousness; obedience to the Law; purity; faultlessness. Nothing wrong with any of that, some might say. But for St Paul, these things so filled his life that he had no space for other things: no room for newness; thinking differently; acceptance; tolerance; anything that came from Jesus' truth. So he called what cluttered his life his garbage, rubbish that needed to be disposed of because it had taken over, rubbish that was the backdrop against which all else was seen.

Might there be rubbish which, like St Paul, we need to dispose of to allow room for newness and fullness of life? What might we count as garbage that needs to be thrown away? Might it be that what seems to matter so much actually gets in the way of better and more important stuff? And while you're pondering that, remember that, as Benjamin Crème tells us, "Nothing happens by itself ... The trick is to filter out the rubbish." You don't have any cleansing operatives to dispose of your garbage for you. You'll have to do it yourself – and the sooner the better!

A prayer for today

Lord, as I ditch the rubbish, help me to fill my life with better things. Amen

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