
A New Year's Closet Cleaning

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,
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For me, New Year's Day arrived on the day before. That's when my wife and I decided to clean out the supply closet. Our closet, just outside the kitchen, is where we seem to keep everything we might need in a hurry. Over the years, that closet has collected food, medicine, office supplies, maps, charging cords, fishing rods, walking sticks, old shirts, running shoes, wine, whiskey, and tool boxes.

In some cultures, the observance of a calendar new year is associated with repentance and amendment of life. For instance, the Jewish New Year is Rosh Hashanah, which begins a ten day period leading up to Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. During those days, observant Jews repair relationships with God and with humanity. The American tradition of "New Year's Resolutions" goes something like that. As a new calendar year begins, we use that occasion to resolve some new habit or practice; the new year marks new resolve. (Of course, many of our resolutions fail to last even those first ten days!)

So, my wife and I cleared out, cleaned out, and reorganized our supply closet. It was like a Spring Cleaning! (In fact, Spring Cleaning has also been associated with new year's practices: before the modern calendar, the new year began around March 25 each year.)

The easiest things to throw away with the old year were all our old medicines, because their expiration dates were clearly marked. Why is that we had fifteen half-used packages of cold and fever medications? Were they really so good that we got well using only half the package? Or do we usually wait until we are already halfway through our illness before we ever buy any medicine for it?

Old foods, however, were a different matter. I, for instance, do not pay attention to expiration dates, while my wife seems eager to pitch the can or bottle even if the expiration date is three months away. I did get her to agree to keep the old bottles of olive oil for up to one year past the expiration date (surely olive oil can't go bad, can it?).

Other stuff was even easier to throw away. Torn carrying bags and broken luggage. A coffee machine that I had forgotten had stopped working five years ago. Rusted fishing tackle that was stuck to the closet shelf.

I even found some very bad bottles of wine that had, obviously, not been stored properly. The old soured wine actually came in handy that night, New Year's Eve itself. My daughter and her husband, with two friends, joined us for a grand dinner of leftovers, actually! very tasty and efficient. But we did have some excellent wine. Then I brought in the old supply closet wine that I knew had turned disastrously bad. This was my lesson on how to taste bad wine, and it worked very well.

Even the best wine turns bad, at some point, especially if it has been stored improperly. Even the best years have elements that need to be forgotten, or thrown out, or remedied. And every new year has some possibility that we need to clean the shelves for, that we need to prepare for. Here's to the possibilities that await you this new calendar year!

And, remember, every new day can be a day to begin again; every new day can be the start of a new year. The Daily Office lesson for December 31 last week was from 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
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