

*Reminders and Resources for the spring 2024 Homily Series*

**Spring Cleaning for the Soul**  
Week Two — Free & At Peace

As we discussed last week, clutter can take many forms. By removing it from our lives, we create space for what actually nourishes our souls. When we give rise to our souls we connect with the more meaningful parts of life; we're attuned to hear God's voice.

Gospel Connection: (Gospel — Jn 10:11-18)

**In the Gospel** we hear a contrast made between a good shepherd, devoted to the care of his flock, and a hired hand who lacks any real investment in the situation. The hired hand's indifference runs counter to Christ's example of selfless love and attentiveness. Jesus says "I know mine and mine know me."

*How are we to know and be known by God? We need to let go of the unnecessary "stuff" in our lives and put our soul life — our connection with the Divine — at the center. Then we will be able to hear God's voice and align with what really matters in life.*

Keep in Mind:

**1. The Golden Rule of Clutter:** "If you don't love it, need it, or use it, it's clutter." — Kerrie Richardson. Whether in your closet or on your calendar, determine what you love, need, and use... and let the rest go.

A few practical tips for decluttering:

- Try decluttering incrementally, say 25 minutes at a time. The key, Richardson says, is to "get good at getting started" and to not burn out trying to do too much at once.
- To those with IMNTS Syndrome (I Might Need This Someday), put a piece of painter's tape on the item with today's date on it. After a period of time, if you have not used it, pass it on. What's not your favorite could become someone else's favorite.
- When cleaning a room, remove everything and consider the room's purpose. Then, only return items that serve that purpose and give away the rest. You can apply the same principle to your schedule. Clear it completely, and add back only the essentials.
- For relationship clutter, take an inventory of who you spend time with and why. If you're not doing so for good reason, step back from those engagements and instead use that time for relationships you want to prioritize. (e.g. your kids, dear friends, etc.)

There is the challenge of getting rid of things responsibly. Remember when decluttering to Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. For example, contact the City of Naperville about when and how to recycle things responsibly, such as electronics, paint, etc. The Fire Department will take medications no longer needed. You can recycle old, used textiles at certain stores like H&M, and old, worn sneakers at certain Nike stores.

**2. Simplifying is counter-cultural.** To live without clutter is to adopt a Sabbath lifestyle. This requires rejecting the barrage of distractions that overwhelm our daily

lives. We must commit to rest and renewal. This keeps us healthy and often is the remedy for our troubles. Author Jim Burns offers four ingredients for a Sabbath lifestyle:

- Rest — Do you take breaks?
- Refresh — What do you do to recharge each week?
- Restore — How do you rejuvenate your connections with others?
- Recreation — What do you do that is fun on a weekly basis?

**3. Less Stuff Means More Peace.** The monastic and mystical branches of Catholicism have upheld a rich tradition in living simply (sometimes called a vow of poverty) that can be a model for all of us. This is because living simply keeps us from taking on unnecessary burdens. It helps us to eliminate distractions. To live simply is not about grim deprivation but about energizing freedom. When we do so, we are more available to the promptings of the Spirit. It is a commitment that allows one to let go of what is not necessary and instead focus on what is of real value. Clutter no longer makes a bid for one's time because "stuff" is kept in check. Instead, Spirit gets to fill the open spaces. We are all invited, if not called, to this way of life because it is healthy for us.

Franciscan Priest, Richard Rohr writes, many "...wise people have come to know that less stuff invariably leaves room for more soul. In fact, possessions and soul seem to operate in inverse proportion to one another. Only through simplicity can we find deep contentment instead of perpetually striving and living unsatisfied."

The Serenity Prayer (adapted for clutter):

God, grant me the serenity to only keep the things I need, use, and truly love;  
The courage to release the things I do not need, use, or truly love;  
And the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

God is always present in the depths of our being; we just need to become aware of it. —  
Thomas Keating, Trappist Monk

Clutter Coaches:

- Kerri Richardson — <https://kerririchardson.com/>
- Marie Kondo — <https://konmari.com/about-the-konmari-method/>
- The Minimal Mom — <https://www.theminimalmom.com/>
- Joshua Becker — <https://www.becomingminimalist.com/>
- The Minimalists — <https://www.theminimalists.com/>

Resources:

- "6 Rules of minimalism according to the saints," article on Aleteia: <https://aleteia.org/2019/03/25/6-rules-of-minimalism-according-to-the-saints/>
- "How to Bring Order to Your Life" video by Fr. Mike Schmitz: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qw9Z8eV5BO0&t=1s>
- "The Best Decluttering Advice We've Heard," article on Oprah.com: <https://www.oprah.com/home/best-organizing-advice-for-2017/all>
- *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, & Delight in Our Busy Lives* book by Wayne Muller
- *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning* book by Margareta Magnusson