

SPRING CLEANING, SPRING PLANNING

I used to have a friend who would clean out all her closets and drawers during Lent. It was, for her, an important yearly ritual. She set aside two days every week in Lent that were devoted to just closets, just drawers. For her, stuff accumulated in those two areas unlike any other part of the house. The “thing” drawer in the kitchen was stuffed with mail, utensils, batteries, etc. that overflowed from other places. Her closets and dresser drawers held clothing that was outdated or just filled up, from more than one shopping trip. During the year, items got shoved to the back and forgotten. You are probably thinking of your own closets and drawers that could stand the same kind of attention.

This annual cleaning gave her time to reflect upon the past year. Some items were trashed, some put away in newly cleaned spaces and some items donated to charity. It was a very simple ritual, and she completed it faithfully every year she was alive. She loved seeing the straightened items in a new way, with new importance, and with clarity of function.

I found out about this ritual when I called one day to ask about how some other parts of her life were going. This was a woman who had faced some hardships. While we talked, she told me about how good this one thing made her feel. Cleaning drawers and closets gave her time to pray and reflect upon the gifts she really had. She had a house she loved, friends to play golf with, and enough money to at least accumulate some stuff during the year. Cleaning drawers made her think about her children and grandchildren, her late husband and parents, her regrets, her failures, her successes. It was a time for her to give thanks to God for all she had, and use this time to reflect upon her gratitude and her blessings.

My friend’s ritual has always stuck with me. What she did every year was hardly noteworthy; in fact, she cleaned out spaces in her house that I, nor most other people, ever saw! She told me that the cleaning, along with prayer, was what prepared her for renewal.

Isn’t that what we look forward to in Easter? The renewal in our lives that comes from Christ’s sacrifice. A chance to start over, with new purpose. It is a time to recognize that all that we have has been given by God. All of the “stuff” that accumulates in a physical sense, and all that we have in a spiritual way. To *know* we can trust that all we need will be provided. How incredibly freeing this is! This is our gift in the Easter season.

How we use that gift is important. My friend’s Lenten ritual forced her to examine, touch and figure out the destiny of each item in her drawers and closets.

How often have we really done that with our physical assets? Money in a mutual fund is pretty difficult to reach out and touch, but have you given thought to the destiny of every dollar in your estate? How much will be given to family, and how much is going “back into the drawer” ...back to be used by God and the mission of the Church? To be used in a new way and with the ability to change lives. How would this physical act strengthen your spiritual life?

If you wish to have more clarity about giving possibilities, contact a planned giving committee member at your church, or call the Episcopal Church Foundation at 800-697-2858.