

# THE PASTOR'S POST

## CLUTTER

Dear Parish Family:

Last night, a former student of mine asked to come and talk. I first met this person in the early 2000s...and he is DEFINITELY a cause for hair loss and a stress-filled look...to this day! We have reconnected over the past few months and I am happy about this....and maybe a little concerned too. "Don't worry", he says!

He was sitting in my office in St. Anthony Hall. It's a big space for me, really, too much room. When I moved in to it, I filled up many of the walls and shelves with a lot of stuff - reminders of other times, mementos, pictures and more.

As we were talking about some of the challenges he is facing these days, he stopped and looked around and said, "Hey, John, you have a lot of tchotchkes" i.e. knick-knacks, etc. Initially, I was insulted. I sort of pride myself on not having a lot of things, of living simply, and of throwing things out. As I looked around, though, he was right.

After he left, I did not rush to donate everything to "Off 5th Avenue", our new Thrift Shop ministry, but it gave me some pause for thought - especially in preparing this Sunday's homily. I'm certainly not rich or young like the man in the Gospel, but I am more attached than I think I am. Maybe the same is true for you?

It would be much easier, for each of us, if this clutter was just about the things on my wall, the items on my shelves, the pieces of art on my bookshelf, the big hanging blanket on my wall - Good Lord, he was right about my office! Those pieces of clutter can be solved with a few boxes and maybe a dumpster.

I'm pretty sure Jesus is not inviting us to settle for the exterior nor is he asking us to just think about financial realities. For sure, we need to look at the material things we hold on to, and should always be looking to use the goods we have been given for the good of others. Perhaps we can look around the places we live and work and ask ourselves the difference between what we own and what owns us.

As always, I believe Jesus is always inviting us to a deeper clearing out of our hearts, minds,

and souls so a deeper space may be created in us. Who are the people we are too attached to? What are the past hurts and lost dreams we are holding on to? What ideas are we too attached to? What are the things, the people, the thoughts that are keeping us up at night? Which of these things are owning our daily lives, so we are not fully able to carry out God's will for us and the world?

You might be feeling a little overwhelmed by some of the questions above. My heart skipped a beat as I considered a few. You might feel, using Jesus' humor, it would be easier for a camel to move through the eye of a needle than it would be for you to be without some of the things you are attached to in your life and me in mine (Mark 10:25).

This is not just personal or individual. We know this as disciples, as a Church, as a parish. We are often called to let go of some of those things we could never imagine doing without. While it is not my preference, I empathize with those who desire the Mass in Latin once again and the significance of that change some 60 years ago. I consider those who prayed at the 7 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. Masses until we started the 8 a.m. Mass. I think of the changes we are making in the Family Faith Formation program moving away from a drop off/classroom model. I can become consumed by so many of the financial challenges and realities of our parish causing us to do "less with less" in terms of resources and personnel. Even as a parish, it is easy for these changes, the desire to hold on to the past, and the mix of feelings some changes can cause to pull us away from our relationship with Jesus and his Church.

So who/what/where is owning you? Might be time to transfer ownership. For sure, donate and share with others those material things that need to go. (I am going to remove one thing each week from my office!) When it comes to the deeper things, turn to Jesus, who looks at you and me and loves us (Mk 10:21), and ask for some help to be set free!

Please pray for me. I promise the same.

*Featherman*

