**40 bags in 40 days: A Challenge to Create Change By Decluttering.**

Lent offers us an opportunity to create positive change over a forty day period. One way to transform our lives is to participate in the 40 bags in 40 day challenge by decluttering.

When we think of clutter, the first association many have is with the inside of a hoarder’s home. However, cluttering can simply involve the accumulation of more possessions than can fit into an available space.

A University of New Mexico 2016 study defined home as not just a physical dwelling, but as a broader combination “of experiences, meanings, and situations that shape and are actively shaped by a person in the creation of his or her lifeworld.” “Clutter makes it difficult to navigate through that lifeworld and to get done what you need and to in order to live comfortably within it.”Clutter comes in many forms:

* Accumulation of “stuff” (i.e.: collectables, furniture, clothing, overflowing closets and drawers, expired medication and packages foods, etc.).
* Piles of mail, bills, photos, dishes, laundry
* Email inbox
* Computer files

**Clutter Harms Your Health by:**

* Increasing levels of the stress hormone, cortisol
* Overwhelming the brain which can lead to overeating
* Triggering respiratory issues
* Becoming a safety hazard
* Decreasing productivity
* Creating isolation and a general sense of unhappiness

**Dealing with the clutter:**

Start by picking one area to work on. Break it down further by tackling one drawer, cupboard, or pile. Work on something each day. What counts as “a bag?” Anything you have worked on and completed (i.e.: cleaning out the top of the refrigerator, the toy chest, the medicine cabinet, a junk drawer, etc. etc.)

Not sure where to start? Begin with pen and paper, list some things you would like to clear out or up. Prioritize and begin with an area that is most important to you. Next, decide what to keep, throw out or donate. Mark your accomplishments on a calendar.

A “list of areas to declutter” will be available at the Welcome Center. Other resources include, The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing by Marie Kondo, and The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning: How to Free Yourself and Your Family from a Lifetime of Clutter by Margareta Magnusson.

Hopefully, by Easter Sunday you will greet the risen Lord with a lighter spirit, an increased sense of wellbeing and a more organized household.

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.”* Psalm 51:10

Sources: Whitehouseblackshutters.com; usnews.com

If I can be of assistance to you or someone you know, please contact me at

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