

A dozen years ago, I went into the Navy. I reduced my life to about two dozen boxes. The boxes I needed fit nicely in the bed of my pickup truck under the tonneau cover. After I deployed to Japan, I thought that I'd finally be able to settle down. But the life of a Naval aviator is lived on the road. I was allowed roughly 30 pounds of personal things; and after about 6 months in any one location, I was usually over that. So, I'd pack it in boxes, and ship it to my next location. After my tour in the Navy, I came home. About a month after I began to get settled in an apartment, two very large wooden boxes – shipping crates, actually – filled with all of my smaller boxes, arrived. Some of them I opened right away and used. Others ended up in the spare bedroom closet. When I began theology studies, again, I put my life into boxes. And, realize that I hadn't quite gotten through all of the boxes that came back from Japan. So for the next 6 years, I lived out of boxes. From one school to another university, Ohio to Minnesota to Omaha and back to Minnesota. Every now and then, when I had some down time, I'd go through a box or two – usually at the prompting of my mother – to make more room in a closet or in the pole barn.

We are all busy people, and I'm certain that I'm probably not the only person in this building who has boxes that we're not quite sure what's in them. Or who has things, but isn't quite sure which box it's in.

In today's second reading, St. Paul tells us:

Do you not know that you are the temple of God,
and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
... for the temple of God, which you are, is holy.

Isn't that a pleasant thought? We are the temples of God and the Spirit of God dwells in us. We could all reflect on what sort of temple we are – some of us might be small country churches, others may be giant cathedrals. Some of us may be pole barns, others garages, some are bungalows, others duplexes, some may even be apartment buildings. But that's not where I want to go.

The first reading and the psalm both give vivid imagery of water. Water, which should remind us of Baptism. And if it doesn't, then let me remind you about water and Baptism. It is the waters of Baptism that make us into temples of God. It is Baptism that places the Spirit of God within us. It is Baptism that makes us members of God's holy people.

But if we think back to our own Baptism, and for many of us, we can't remember it, except in photographs. But the question we need to ask ourselves is: what have we done to enhance our temple status?

I would think, that in today's fast-paced world, that maybe our temples are starting to fill up with boxes. Some of which we aren't even sure about the contents of those boxes. And for some of us, there are so many boxes of things – ideas, history, busyness – that there may not be very much room for God in our temples any more.

In today's Gospel, Jesus drives out the money-changers in the Jerusalem Temple. This scene is often titled, "The Cleansing of the Temple."

And that brings me to my point.

This week, I'd like all of us to take a few moments of silence. Actually, if you can spare the time, take about five minutes of silence every night.

In the silence of your heart, become aware of the presence of God, and ask God to help you take an inventory. That is, look at the boxes that may be cluttering your temple. And ask God to help you go through them in that time, and get rid of the things you don't need anymore.

Ask for the intercession of a particular Saint to help you with the inventory. I know with the boxes of mine that are in at parents' place, that if my Mom didn't ask me to go through them, I'd probably find something else to do.

So, why not ask our heavenly Mom, that is, the Blessed Virgin Mary, to help motivate us to clear out some of the things that clutter the temple of our hearts.

Five minutes. Once a day.

And as you clear things out, you'll be surprised that the more room you make for the Spirit of God in your temple, the more gifts God will bestow on you through the Spirit.

So let us pray that we may be open to God's grace and take an inventory of what we've filled our temples with, and allow the light of God's Spirit to shine within our hearts, and through the healing power of Jesus Christ, our Savior, we may cleanse our temples, the temples of our hearts, to draw closer to God and to become better followers of the life we are all called to through our own Baptism. Amen.