

By Pat Haggerty

Pope Francis has come into our lives bringing with him a breath of fresh air. He is forcing us to look at our Church in new ways and forcing us to face social justice issues. He is showing us that life lived in a "simpler way" is the Christ-like way. Gone are the majestic robes, the palatial living quarters, and those red shoes!

What does this tell us? It tells us that we must look at life through a new lens---the lens of simplicity and meaning. What is important? Who is important?

I went through a phase a few years ago, during which time I was trying to simplify my life. Those who know me know that this is next to impossible! It's not that I am encumbered with stuff; it is that I am encumbered with things to do. I am one of those people who love everything I do, and I find it extremely difficult to say "no" to people.

What to do? I searched through books and there are many: *The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life, Keeping Life Simple*
and
The Simple Living Guide: A Source-book for Less Stressful, More Joyful Living
. I
even subscribed to a magazine called
Real Simple.
The only thing it taught me was how to organize my closet and how to make a good meal in 25 minutes.

I finally found that, for me, simplifying my life really meant finding a way to be grounded. It meant finding the time to slow down and connect with God or with nature. It meant being quiet. Yes, in our tumultuous world of noise, technology, and visual bombardment, we have to find a way to isolate ourselves to find simplicity (God). It's really the spirit of simplicity, I am looking for. In actuality, my life is not simple. Whose is? However, if we find a way to create simplicity, to create "groundness," we will have won the battle. At least, that works for me! It might work for you.

Here are some things that keep me grounded:

- Spending half an hour praying and reading when I first wake up. It has become such a routine now that I can't live without that quiet time.

- Going to at least one extra mass during the week.

- Spending time with a senior citizen who is alone.

- Holding my one year old grandson. There is nothing like holding a baby to put things into perspective!

- Shutting off the radio in my car while I am driving and just listening to the quiet. It also helps to shut off the air-conditioning and let the breezes blow around you. Wonderful!

- Listening to relaxing music. Try The Piano Guys and their version of "Over the Rainbow/Simple Gifts." There is nothing better! You can find them on YouTube.

Why don't you think about this and try coming up with your own list. It will be well worth your time!

As the song says: "'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free; 'Tis a gift to come down to where we ought to be, And when we find ourselves in the place just right, 'Twill be in the valley of love and delight."

I pray that you find the place “where you ought to be.”