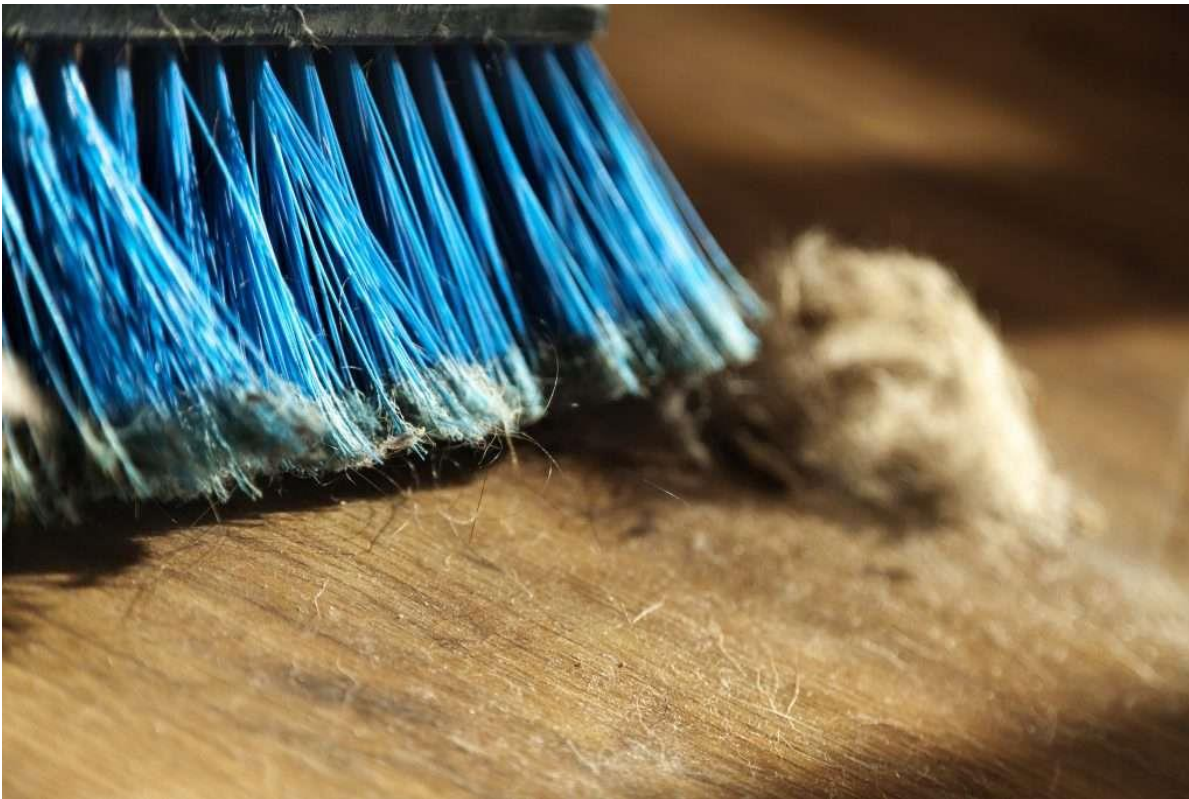


Blog.

What should you do on Good Friday? Spring cleaning

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It can be difficult to know exactly what to do on Good Friday, aside from prayer and attending church services.

The somber and solemn tone of the day make many joy-inducing activities seem inappropriate.

One option for a fittingly austere activity that has religious roots in salvation history? Spring cleaning.

The now widely-accepted phenomenon of spring cleaning seems to have religious roots, starting with the Jewish people.

When the Jews were fleeing from slavery in Egypt, they ate unleavened bread the night before, symbolizing their haste in fleeing Egypt in that they did not even have time to let their bread rise (Exodus 12).

Since then, the Jewish people cleared their house of any crumb of 'chametz' – leavened bread or anything fermented with yeast – ahead of the week-long celebration of Passover, during which the consumption of any leavened product is forbidden. This cleansing the house of chametz is called kashering, and kitchens especially are thoroughly cleaned, scrubbed and prepared. There is even a special search, called the bedikat chametz, that takes place the night before Passover, traditionally using a candle, feather, wooden spoon and a bag for collecting any chametz found. Someone 'hides' 10 pieces of chametz, a reminder of the 10 plagues, throughout the house, and all must be found and gotten rid of before the search can end.

Spring cleaning may also have roots in Holy Thursday, during which Jesus celebrated his final Passover meal before he died. On Holy Thursday, beautiful and elaborately decorated altars are erected for Eucharistic adoration which follows the Mass of the Last Supper. At midnight, the Eucharist is reposed and all the altars of the church are stripped to a bare minimum of the cross and candlesticks. The stripping of the altar is a reminder of how Jesus was stripped of his garments before he was crucified. The Jewish custom of clearing the house before Passover also appeared to have carried over with the early Christians, who did a thorough cleaning of the house during Holy Week in the lead-up to Easter, the biggest feast day of the year.



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