

A Woman's Touch

The title! In case you go off jumping to conclusions about a column with the above title from a priest, let me explain! You see, I am a bachelor priest, living on my own in my own built retirement home in Ireland. Construction of the home began in 2003 and was completed a year later. During my summer vacations from Mississippi, I stayed in the house and spent my vacations painting it and furnishing it so that it would be ready to live in it in a more permanent way, following my retirement. Since my retirement in January 2013, I have continued to put my own unique stamp of approval and livability on it. I have arranged the furnishings the way I wanted them and organized all the rooms to my own satisfaction. I even decided to choose some different color schemes and went ahead and painted.

The result of all my plans and preparations was a home where I knew where everything was and could find it at a moment's notice. After all, I have a reputation for being a bit meticulous in my organization. What resulted was a bachelor pad that fell within my own comfort zone. I knew what cabinet contained cups, what cabinet contained plates; what drawer contained which cutlery; what drawer contained which tea towels; what each shelf of my refrigerator contained; what laundry that needed to wash and when and how it should be dried outside in the fresh air. Of course, I made my bed my way and had what I needed on the side table beside it. I didn't have or want a TV set in my bedroom to watch the graveyard shift programs in case I couldn't go to sleep. My bathroom had all the necessary items for my morning ablutions where I wanted them in their order of need and priority. All in all, I was a happy camper in a home that is contoured to my tastes, likes, colors, organization and decorum.

A few months ago, my older sister arrived from England. Of course, she wanted to see how her bachelor brother was living and if anything in his home might have changed since her last visit. She did help with suggestions on where to hang pictures. I took her advice and reconciled with her choice of pictures and places to hang them.

Now, a few months later, she arrived again and of course, had to check out any improvements I had made to my living environment. In the meantime, I had changed some colors and wondered if she might notice. Of course, she did and liked my choice of colors.

Now, she enlisted the help of my youngest sister, and like a group of busy bees, set about the task of reorganizing my house again, even though, in my estimation, it was organized perfectly. In anticipation of their arrival, I had done some extra work mopping the floors, washing the windows, organizing the kitchen and was ready for their critical eye inspection.

Politely, I was told to disappear, as they began their makeover of my house. My older sister dismissed me with the words, "This house needs a woman's touch. That is what is missing." I disappeared only to return later to be reminded that I needed to open wide my wallet and purchase some items that would give the house an ambiance all its own. They even volunteered to take me shopping and bombarded me with "this would look nice in.... You could put this in... and you could put all your....in this."

The next morning I awoke and headed to the kitchen to make breakfast. Routinely, I opened the usual cabinets to get the dishes I usually used but they were not there. I had to do some detective work to find them. My whole routine was thwarted. Now, I have to create a new routine.

My older sister, the one with the "woman's touch" suggestions, informed me that when in England, and she visits her daughter, she also reorganizes her home and closets with the result that later that evening she receives a phone call from her daughter with the question: "Where did you put..." The trouble with such a phone call from me is that it would be an international and expensive call.

In the meantime, I will have to adopt a biblical approach. "Seek and you may find. Open the cabinet and you may see. Search and you may discover the displaced. Knock and you may discover something that was not moved."

All in all, it is hard to give up control of my bachelor home even if, at times, it needs "a woman's touch."