Opinion
Spirituality



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As we celebrate the New Year, we can each take time to reflect on how to usher in 2018 with a fresh commitment to our own well-being. Consider the tips below for meaningful ways to nurture your body, mind and spirit this season.



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1. Slow down. Self-care is challenging amid the busyness of modern life. A hectic lifestyle can leave us rushing past our deep longings, and ultimately diminish our presence to life itself. Trappist monk Thomas Merton recognized the detrimental effects of our chronic busyness, writing that "to allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence."

With the start of 2018, how can you slow down? Carve out time to discern where you truly feel called to place your attention and energy. What do you need to release in order to say yes to this call? How can you let go of other forms of busyness that do not serve you well?

2. Turn off the screen — or at least be intentional about technology use. How many hours do you spend scrolling through Facebook, lamenting TV headlines, or simply Internet surfing? (NCR not included, of course!) While technology has innumerable benefits, every hour in front of a screen also dumps a flood of external input into your life. How can we be selective about our media intake? What personal commitments and behaviors will ensure that we engage media as a tool, not a source of compulsion?

We must each answer these questions for ourselves. Setting guidelines for the amount of time we use media is a valuable first step.

3. Get back in your body. A felt sense of connectedness to one's physical self is vital to our health and well-being. Whether its yoga, swimming, walking the dog, or anything else, choose a body-centered activity that you love. Do you enjoy this activity on your own? Or is it helpful to have a class, a regular group or a scheduled event to get you out the door? Explore what works best for you and integrate this commitment into your week.



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4. Reconnect with the natural world. Author Charles Cook writes, "Your deepest roots are in nature. No matter who you are, where you live, or what kind of life you lead, you remain irrevocably linked with the rest of creation." Practice savoring your connection with creation. Whether through regular walks in the park, weekend camping trips, or simply watching a sunset, weave an appreciation for God's creation into your daily life.

Especially with the ecological crises facing our planet, our reconnection to nature is more vital than ever. Don't forget to read Pope Francis' encyclical "*Laudato Si*', on Care for Our Common Home" for inspiration — one that, hopefully, stirs up your inner environmental activist.

5. Seek out an adventure. It doesn't matter if you travel abroad or plan a staycation; try something new — anything! A spontaneous road trip, quirky restaurant, local theater venue or new hobby: Infuse a sense of adventure into your life. Trek off the beaten path of your daily routine to try out new, enriching experiences in your community.

6. "Spark joy." International best-selling author and organizing consultant Marie Kondo offers this mantra in her now-famous book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. Kondo's creative, even transformative approach to the traditional "spring cleaning" process encourages us to reflect on our relationship with our possessions and whether they truly "spark joy" within us. Sensing joy with that item? Keep it. No joy? Let it go.

Amid today's consumerism, Kondo transforms our relationship with our physical "stuff" — clearing out clutter, clarifying priorities, and crafting a truly joyful living space. The book is worth a read and can support us in creating a sanctuary space in our own homes.



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7. Cultivate relationships. Ultimately, isn't this what life is all about? Reflect on your relationships with family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, parishioners and your local community. What relationships could use some extra TLC? Choose a few and give them some time. Write a letter. Schedule coffee. Bring dinner to a friend. What can you do — in person — to spend quality time with those you love most?

8. Nurture your relationship with God. Just as we dedicate time to building our relationships with other people, our inner spiritual life also deserves a similar commitment. How can you nurture your spirituality each day? What spiritual practices connect you with God? Whether it's meditation, reading Scripture, journaling or any other kind of contemplative practice, choose a specific time to tune into God each day. The rest of your life, and the start of 2018, will be richer for it.

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