

Marie Kondo has written four books on organizing, which collectively have sold over thirty million copies. They have been translated from Japanese into Korean, Chinese, French, German, English, and more. Marie Kondo's 2011 book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing* has been published in more than thirty countries. It was a best seller in Japan, Europe, and the United States. And get this: in 2015, Marie Kondo was listed as one of *Time's* "100 most influential people" in the world.

Marie Kondo has struck gold because she realizes that people are surrounded by so much complexity and clutter! I like the story of the father who was teaching his three-year-old daughter the Lord's Prayer. She would repeat the lines after him. Finally, she decided to go solo. He listened with pride as she carefully enunciated each word, right up to the end of the prayer. "Lead us not into temptation," she prayed, "and deliver us from email!" Yes! Deliver us from email! Complexity and clutter!

Marie Kondo's method of organizing is known as the KonMari method. It consists of gathering all your belongings, one category at a time, and then keeping only those things that bring sparks of joy. The word in Japanese is *tokimeku*. *Tokimeku* means "flutter, throb, palpitate"—sparks of joy!

Who doesn't need to simplify? Who doesn't need to declutter? Who doesn't want *tokimeku*—sparks of joy?

This Lent, we are meeting witnesses to Christ's Passion in John's Gospel. Today, John introduces us to the Marie Kondo of the Bible. And who would that be? Mary! Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Mary, who helps us simplify and declutter. Mary, who helps us experience *tokimeku*—sparks of joy!

How does Mary do it? Mary replaces get with give. That's it. Replace get with give. Pretty simple! Get only clutters things. Get only confuses things. Get only makes us miserable! Get ahead. Get back. Get even. Get more.

And whatever you do—*get revenge*. Mary replaces get with give. Mary gives freely. Mary gives extravagantly. Mary gives joyfully.

Are you stuck in an emotional rut? Have you lost your zest for living? Do you want to feel alive again? Do you want sparks of joy? Replace get with give.

Here's the context. In John 11, Lazarus dies. Four days later, Jesus stands in front of the tomb and weeps. But then He shouts, "Lazarus, come out." Lazarus comes stumbling out of his tomb—alive—with his shroud still around him like a used cocoon.

As for the Jewish leaders? This was the last straw. By raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus moves from the category of "manageable nuisance" to the category of "serious threat." "So from that day on they made plans to put Him to death" (John 11:53). Christ's days are numbered!

As we come to John 12, Jesus has a price on His head. So does Lazarus. "The chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus" (John 12:10–11). "We must destroy Jesus. And we must destroy all the evidence. That means we must also destroy Lazarus!"

That's the context. Here's the cost. "Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair" (John 12:3). How much did the ointment cost? We're told in John 12:5 that it's worth a year's income. Wow! A year's income! Imagine dropping a year's income just like that? BAM! What's going on here? Get is being replaced with give. *Is it ever!*

The context? Death for Jesus and death for Lazarus. The cost? Everything. The comparison? It's between Mary and Judas. Mary is extravagant. Mary is excessive. Mary's gone way over the top. And Judas? "But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples (he who was about to betray Him), said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it" (John 12:4–6). Judas is threatened;

his entire world comes crashing down. All because Mary lives by one word—give.

The comparison couldn't be more black and white. Mary is a generous disciple. Judas is a greedy disciple. Mary gives with abandon. Judas is miserly to a tee. Mary sacrifices financially. Judas won't give a nickel. Mary shows her faith with actions. Judas talks a good game—giving money to the poor—but we know he doesn't mean it. Mary loves the word *give*. But all Judas can do is get. Get more. Get ahead. And get on top. *And it will kill him.*

It all leads to the cross. “ ‘Leave her alone,’ Jesus replied, ‘so that she may keep it for the day of My burial’ ” (John 12:7). “The day of My burial.” Mary understands the cross. Mary believes these words—John 1:29: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” John 2:13: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John 3:14: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” Mary gives Jesus everything she has. In doing so, she prepares Jesus to give everything He has. And the room is filled with the smell of costly perfume.

Smells are powerful, aren't they? The smell of a rose catches your nose. Suddenly, you remember your first date in high school—when he brought you a dozen roses. Or maybe it's the scent of your grandmother's perfume, and memories of her come flooding back.

While words go to the thinking part of our brain, smells go to the emotional part. That's why a whiff of Grandma's perfume brings back our emotions for Grandma. Smells can stir in us some powerful emotions.

And that's also true for Jesus. Mary's strong perfume lingers with Jesus throughout Holy Week as He makes His way to the cross. Even on Good Friday, the fragrance of Mary's perfume still lingers. And then, perhaps, just perhaps, when Jesus gives Himself completely—all of His love and mercy and grace, holding nothing back for us—He might have still faintly smelled the sweet fragrance. A reminder that Mary had marked Him with one word—give.

Both Matthew 26:13 and Mark 14:9 state, “Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” And why is that? Because the kingdom of God isn’t about hoarding and stockpiling. The kingdom of God isn’t about being chintzy and cheap. The kingdom of God isn’t about get. *Get will kill us.* Always and forevermore, God’s kingdom is about one word—give. Give? Then what? *Tokimeku*—sparks of joy! “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, shows us that the kingdom of God is about giving lavishly, giving generously, giving joyfully, and giving completely. “Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” Jesus never says this about anyone else!

Thanks to Mary, we can boil down life as a child of God to one simple word, one powerful and life-changing word. Try it out. It will change everything. It will create so much joy. The word? You know. G-I-V-E. *Give.* Amen.