

Pure Days: A Brief History of Spring Cleaning

Many Americans observe the practice, to varying degrees of stringency, of 'Spring Cleaning.' As the weather slowly starts to warm up, but before things get too hot and muggy, we bring new life to our homes: with a mop, a broom, and a vacuum cleaner.

Yet what most do not know is that 'Spring Cleaning' has its origin in the Christian Church, in what used to be known as *kathara imera*, or 'pure days,' which generally began right around the first week of Lent, on a day called *kathara deftera*, that is, 'pure Monday.' In preparation for the season of Lent in general, and for Holy Week in particular, Christians were expected to not only cleanse their minds of sinful thoughts and desires, but also to physically clean their homes, as well as their local Church (see, Lent "work days" go back over a thousand years!). By so 'purifying' one's life both inwardly through fasting, penitence, almsgiving, and prayer, and outwardly by washing and tidying one's house, one's property, and one's church, one symbolizes the purification we receive through the sacrifice of Christ on Good Friday, and our justification through His resurrection on Easter.

So perhaps it is true, that 'cleanliness is next to godliness,' or at least Spring Cleaning is next to Holy Week.