

The Episcopal Diocese of West Texas

# *Practicing Lent*

## A Series of Weekly and Daily Reflections for Lent 2015

Tuesday ♫ March 24, 2015

The Rev. Paul Frey

*Repentance*

**Scripture.**

Psalm 51:11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Joel 2:28 "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams your young men will see visions."

Mark 1:8 "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

**Reflection.**

This Christmas, Anne and I gave each other two unexpected Christmas "gifts." First the dryer died, and in short order the washing machine did too. And so we moved them out of their locations. Behind both were dust bunnies, a long missing sock, a few coins, and a few dead bugs.

In preparation for installing the new appliances, we swept and cleaned the space where the new would go.

In Psalm 51 the Psalmist asks God to clean his heart and then put a right spirit in him. In Joel, God promises to send the Spirit. And in Mark's Gospel, John the Baptist says he can get you wet, but Jesus will fill you with the Spirit.

But there is always some preparation. My favorite prayer in the prayer book is the prayer for the fourth Sunday of Advent: "Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself..."

Fortunately for me, the cleaning up part, which we call repentance, isn't something I have to do all on my own. God will help purify me. He actually shows up to help every day. He doesn't take a day off, gets no sick days or vacation days.

And he brings his helper with him. The Holy Spirit. Together they help me move the furniture around, get into the corners and sweep out the dirt. They remind me of the plumber whom I call, who always has his helper following him around.

They crawl into all the nooks and crannies of my heart, mind, and soul, and occasionally my body, and fix things I didn't even know needed to be fixed. And then it dawns on me. They aren't fixing up this broken down soul for me. O my God! They intend to come live here. This repair and remodeling job is because the three of them are planning on moving in. Yes, the Father and the Spirit are planning on the Son moving in too!

There are days when this really excites me. It is like having the guests you want to invite to dinner actually come. You get everything ready, and nothing is a bother. But then there are those days when I really am not excited about having them. Fortunately those guys are faithful and come anyway.

However, they don't expect me just to sit and watch them work. This is a contract job, but like Habitat for Humanity projects the homeowner is expected to put in some of his own work.

We often start thinking about repentance in response to sin, but I made myself a little chart (see below) to remind me that I can start with virtue, and perhaps sin less. The chart reminds me of virtues I can cultivate and the sin they help me avoid or at least shrink. And I added what are known as the seven corporal works of mercy. Things I can do that might help me in a real way with the virtues. Finally, because of my own particular past, I put in some of the correlations that work for me from the 12 steps that Alcoholics Anonymous uses.

While my contribution is always much smaller than God's, it is just as important. And it keeps me centered on others and not just myself. I am not the center of the universe, even though I often am deluded enough to think so.

<u>Virtues</u>	<u>Sin</u>	<u>Works of mercy</u>	<u>12 step correlations</u>
Humility	Pride	Clothe the naked	Admit I need God's help
Kindness	Envy	Drink to the thirsty	Believe God can and will help
Abstinence	Gluttony	Feed the hungry	Ask God to help me want to change
Chastity	Lust	Bury the dead	Ask God to remove my character defects
Patience	Anger	Serve prisoners	Made a list of harm I've done
Liberality	Greed	Shelter strangers	Made amends when possible

Diligence      Sloth

Visit the sick

Seek God through prayer/meditation

**Spiritual Practice.**

Today, make an inventory of the things that must change in your life, the “furniture” of your life that must be moved around, to make room for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to inhabit you and your daily life.

**Prayer.**

Blessed Trinity, you visit each of us daily. You take those beautiful parts of us and make them more beautiful still. And you take that which is craven, despairing, and sometimes even demonic, and with your strong hands, you discipline, restore, and heal. Thank you for never giving up on even the most intractable, broken parts of my life. Let me trust, let me work, let me pray. *Amen.*