

MINISTRY OF PRAISE REFLECTIONS

Dear Friends,

"Lent is, then, not a season of punishment so much as one of healing."

- Thomas Merton

"Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness; in your abundant compassion blot out my offense. Wash away all my guilt; from my sin cleanse me. For I know my offense; my sin is always before me. ... A clean heart create for me, God; renew in me a steadfast spirit. ... Restore my joy in your salvation ..."

- Ps 51: 3-5, 12, 14

During March this year, we are well into the season of Lent – a time to deepen our loving relationship with God. As Thomas Merton observes, Lent is "not a season of punishment so much as one of healing." How can we find healing as we move through Lent? One answer might be by devoting ourselves more faithfully to daily prayer. The Old Testament Book of Psalms is a wonderful resource for prayer. As a devout Jew, Jesus surely memorized the Psalms and prayed them often. Usually attributed to David, the Book of Psalms contains "songs" with a variety of themes: praise, thanksgiving, wisdom, history, kingship, and lament. Psalm 51, entitled "Prayer of Repentance," is a song of lament which is a meaningful and appropriate prayer to use during Lent. Let us reflect, in a prayerful way, upon the themes of mercy and healing expressed in this Psalm.

In the opening verses of Psalm 51, we acknowledge God's "goodness" and "abundant compassion," as we ask for "mercy." We beg God to "blot out" offenses; to "wash away" guilt; to "cleanse" us from sin. Notice how all the actions refer to cleaning something that has been soiled and ruined. Through our sinfulness, we have become figuratively stained and wounded. We need to be cleansed by God's forgiveness and love in order to be healed.

In the next verse of the Psalm, we humbly admit to God that we are guilty: "I know my offense; my sin is always before me." How

true! If we examine ourselves, our thoughts, and our actions honestly, we do know our sins and failings. Only too clearly! We may try to mask our wrongs and hide our offenses; but deep within, we know.

Later in the Psalm, we describe for God the kind of healed person we want to become: one with a "clean heart," "a steadfast spirit," full of "joy" because we have been saved. In order to become this kind of person, we ask God to "create," "renew," and "restore" us. These are all positive, vibrant, hopeful actions which will heal us and lead us back to a loving relationship with God.

So, prayerfully reflecting upon Psalm 51, we have moved from Lenten repentance, toward healing, and onward to become a fresh, new creation for Easter!

+++In your own way, try to use Psalm 51 (or any of the Psalms), as a daily Lenten prayer.

+++Reflect upon how God washes away your sinfulness.

+++Imagine God creating "a clean heart" for you as you continue to journey through Lent toward Easter joy.

PRAYER AND PRAISE INTENTIONS

+++Let us pray that we will find deep inspiration by prayerfully reflecting on the Psalms.

+++Let us pray that we will experience Lenten healing, to help us restore our loving relationship with God.

+++Let us pray that we will be motivated through prayer to bring compassionate healing to our world.

+++Let us pray that our RCIA members will know the healing presence of God as they journey through Lent.

Finding spiritual healing with you
during Lent,

The Blessed Sacrament Parish
Community