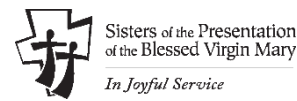


2021 Lenten Reflections



March 21, 2021~ Fifth Sunday of Lent

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. (Psalm 51:10-11)

I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts. (Jeremiah 31:33)

Words have the most amazing power to lead us—and to mislead us from their intended message. I’ve been captivated by the prayer for a *clean heart* since I was asked to write this reflection some weeks ago. Heart, I think I understand: the real me, the innermost part of who I am, the thinking, feeling part of me. According to my NRSV Bible I’m right on; one’s heart is one’s soul, mind, spirit, self, the site of decision making. So far, so good.

But when I pray for a *clean heart* what am I really asking for? My thesaurus helps: pure, spotless, stainless, snow-white. Antonyms: dirty, impure, filthy, soiled, tainted. This takes me back to my growing-up years; strongly focused on original sin and fear of hell, a judgmental God, preparing a list of sins for confession. When a young nun, the emphasis was on eradicating faults and striving for perfection. It seemed to me that having a clean heart meant being scrubbed of all failings; an impossible task as a human being.

Today’s reading from Jeremiah provided me with a clue about a clean heart: *I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts*. So what is “the law” that is written on my heart, in the core of my being, of all humanity’s being? Isn’t an essential part of our basic humanity about being loved and loving; about yearning for connection, for wholeness, about seeking fullness of life for ourselves and for others? This resonates with me. So my prayer for a clean heart becomes a plea for an undivided heart, a heart utterly committed to the Presence who lives within me and within whom I live, move, and have my being, where with gratitude I seek the Holy One with steadfastness and courage.

Holy One,
I am asking, seeking, knocking.
Create in me, please, an undivided heart
That I may love and serve you
With all my heart, with all my soul,
With all my strength, with all my mind
And my neighbor as myself.
I ask this in Jesus’ name.
Amen.

Francene Evans, PBVM
Presentation Sisters

Jeremiah 31:31-34 • Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15 • Hebrews 5:7-9 • John 12:20-33