

Daily Reflections

Journeying through Lent



Center for Spiritual Development

HUMBLENESS OF HEART!

By Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

Today's Responsorial Psalm

A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.

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.

For you are not pleased with sacrifices; should I offer a burnt offering, you would not accept it. My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.

PSALM 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19

I chose this picture for today's reflection because it is a beautiful piece of art that depicts conversion. Today's first reading from Jonah, and the passage from Luke's gospel, are all about conversion. The people of Nineveh turned from their sinful ways and repented. Jesus recounted the story from Jonah and foreshadowed what was to come through his own death and resurrection. As Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, the Son of Man is the sign for his generation and for all generations to come.

The artwork in the photo of the "heart of conversion" is an image that invites reflection on what our own hearts look like. The smooth side of the heart is where conversion has already happened. The rough edges on one side of the heart depict what has yet to be healed. Another way to view this piece of art is to think of the rough side as the inner parts of our heart that hold bitterness, placing within us that refusal to forgive and reconcile; it is a depiction of how sin can erode a heart that longs to be gentle, beautiful, soft, and loving.

Lent calls us to this type of conversion. What are the parts of myself that need healing? How have I hardened my heart toward certain people or places? Perhaps there is someone with whom I need to reconcile. Have I hardened my heart against myself? Are there parts of me that I don't want to own or recognize because they are painful, shameful, or sinful?

Lent gives us a time to repent and pray in ways that draw us closer to God. Psalm 51 is a beautiful prayer to use for just this purpose. It is one that can nudge us toward where the sacrament of reconciliation.

Be Humble and Repent!

O God, I desire a contrite and open heart – a heart that is willing to seek forgiveness and to forgive.

O God, I desire a humble heart – a heart that recognizes my reliance and love for you.

O God, I desire an open heart – a heart ready for conversion through the action of your Spirit.

O God, I desire a generous heart – a heart willing to stretch itself to love the dear neighbor without distinction.

O God, I desire a longing heart – a heart intent in growing ever more deeply in love with you.



"Conversion of Heart," CSJ Welcoming Center, Orange, Calif.
Photo by Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

For Pondering

- In the prayer above, is there one stanza that speaks to you today? Ponder it and search for reasons deep within you.
 - In the prayer above, is there one stanza that makes you sense internal resistance? Ponder it and search for the reasons deep within you.
 - Pray Psalm 51 and speak the words to God that flow from your reflection.
 - How do you interpret the art piece "Conversion of Heart"?
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For Prayer

*O God,
in your goodness, grant us the grace to open ourselves to you.
May our desires intersect with the desires you have for each of our lives.
May we continue to seek forgiveness where forgiveness is needed
and open ourselves to your ongoing conversion
within and among us.
Amen.*

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