

In times past, when people kept their homes shut tight against the cold of winter – and heated them with coal and oil and wood – and lighted them with candles and kerosene lamps --- the coming of spring brought a welcome opportunity to make a dingy habitation fresh again.

On the first warm day of the season, everybody in the family – everyone that is who had survived the ravages of the cold season – would pitch in to pull every stick of furniture and every scrap of cloth outside into the fresh air.

Then, armed with brooms and mops and washrags – one squad of housecleaners would return to the house – sweeping and scrubbing every corner and washing down the walls – while another group would air out linens, remove soot and ash from sofas and chairs, dust books and tabletops – and mend a few things along the way.

The tradition of SPRING CLEANING certainly had some very practical origins. But it had its religious origins, also.

Spring cleaning can be traced to the ancient Jewish practice of thoroughly cleansing the home in anticipation of the great feast of Passover.

In remembrance of the Jew's hasty flight from Egypt following their long captivity there, the seven day observance of the Passover memorial – has strict prohibitions against eating or drinking anything which may have been leavened or fermented with yeast.

Jews are supposed to refrain from leavened food and drink during the Passover --- so they are expressly commanded to rid their homes of even the smallest remnants of leaven for the length of the Passover observance. Therefore, Jews conducted a thorough "spring cleaning" of the house – followed by a traditional hunt for crumbs by candlelight on the evening before Passover begins.

The very word *LENT* is derived from a Saxon word meaning "spring".

So certainly no accident or mere coincidence that we see Lent as a time to clean up our lives a bit – at the same time every year when Jews are preparing for Passover – and people, at least in the northern hemisphere – are engaged in the age-old tradition of spring cleaning.

So ironically beginning with the very messy placement of ashes on our heads on Ash Wednesday – Lent is a time to examine ourselves for anything that clutters and dirties our spirits – things that hinder our spiritual growth and keep us from putting God at the center of our lives. . . >>

Things that distract us from being faithful to our end of the covenant relationship we have with God.

Should we not love God enough - -when even if a mother could forget her child will never forget us, to want to have a clean mind and a pure heart?

So certainly no accident or mere coincidence that the only time we read this story of Jesus cleansing the temple in John's Gospel – is on the third Sunday of Lent in Year B of the lectionary cycle. . .

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Certainly it can remind us that we all have a little housecleaning to do – some cleansing of our own temples of the Holy Spirit.

[Sunday, 10:30 am]. . . the same Sunday Cindy stands before us as one of the many chosen & elect throughout our diocese – for her first scrutiny – to admit in a very public way – she has some cleansing of mind and heart to do – before she enters the Church on Holy Saturday?

To you, Cindy, I say you may be standing before us today – but you are not standing alone. We all have a little house cleaning to do – some cleansing of our own temples of the Holy Spirit – before Easter rolls around.

There once was a woman searching for the clear presence of God in her life. After several years and many miles – she came to the cave of an especially holy hermit and asked for help in her quest.

The holy man invited the pilgrim into his humble dwelling and began to serve her tea. He filled the woman's cup up to the top – but then kept right on pouring so that the tea began spilling over the sides of the cup and flowing upon the floor.

The woman watched the overflow until she could no longer keep still. "Stop" she shouted. "The cup is full. No more can possible go in."

"Like the cup," said the hermit, "you are so full of your own opinions, preconceptions, ideas, problems, sins, hopes and despairs. How can God possible find a home in your heart – unless you make some room for God?"

For the remaining weeks of Lent – and we are at the half way point – let's make some room for God in our hearts. So that when we sing: "O Lord, you are the center of my life," God truly can be.