



Lent reflection for March 26, 2025

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### Psalm 51: 10-19

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right[b] spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing[c] spirit.  
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
and sinners will return to you.  
Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,  
O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.*

*O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.  
For you have no delight in sacrifice;  
if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.  
The sacrifice acceptable to God[d] is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.  
Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,  
then you will delight in right sacrifices,  
in burnt-offerings and whole burnt-offerings;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

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## Today's reflection if from Geoff Kurtz:

What does it mean to have a clean heart? When I think about being clean, I remember the opening sentences of a book I've loved since I was a child. Some of you will know the book, too.

It begins:

The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash; till he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms.

For the Mole in Kenneth Grahame's story, cleaning begins with sweeping and dusting, with removing what doesn't need to be there. To be clean can mean to be plainer, simpler, wiped free of everything that's not essential.

How can my heart become like that? One approach would be to treat cleanness of heart like an all-day housecleaning, to see it as something you do in one big push, with great effort, and then are done with, and are left aching and weary.

But that doesn't seem to be what this Psalm is about. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me." The one taking action here is God, not the Psalmist. The kind of cleaning this Psalm asks for might be uncomfortable, but it's not strenuous. It seems like the role of the one being cleaned is less about effort and more about stopping, or letting go, or allowing a space to empty out, or just waiting, without knowing how long the waiting will last. I want this Lent to be, for me, a spring cleaning, but not like the Mole's spring cleaning. I know that I need to take a break from filling to the brim my limited capacity for attention, for attentiveness. I know that I need pay attention to fewer things so that I can pay attention to them better, to do less so that I can be more fully present where I am, with the people I am with, and so that I can wait for God to do with me or within me whatever it is that God is already beginning to do. I don't know if I am ready for this. I don't know what God will do. I can only ask for a spirit willing to wait, willing to be cleaned, willing to be simplified.



Geoff Kurtz has been part of the Holy Apostles community since 2021. He lives in Kensington with his wife, Alyson, and their children, Asa, Lewis, and Ginger. He spends a lot of time thinking about politics, a little time making music, and never quite enough time walking and biking around Brooklyn.