

Thursday Church Epistle

April 1, 2021

Hello Church!

Here's a quote you probably know well: "Lather. Rinse. Repeat."

It's just shampoo directions. As the idea for this DCE came to mind after reading about Jesus washing Peter's feet (John 13), I went to our bathroom to read the shampoo bottles to confirm my memory before I sat to write. Our bathroom has three bottles of shampoo: the one I use twice a week, a highly perfumed brand Lisa left behind when she moved out, and the 3-in-1 shampoo our oldest son left intentionally for his sons who would never think to pack 3-in-1 shampoo but truly need it as growing boys. It was amazing to read the containers and find not one said, "Lather. Rinse. Repeat."

According to Charles Duhigg in *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* (electronic version, Random House, 2014) those three words "Lather. Rinse. Repeat." were devised to lead us to use more shampoo so we will buy more shampoo, not to get our hair cleaner. According to my stylist, too much shampooing can damage our hair as we mature. Therefore, I was not surprised to read the shampoo from Tangled said "lather once," but I was my grandson's shampoos did not say "Lather. Rinse. Repeat." The marketing goal with young people's grooming products is to gain brand loyalty, thereby selling them more shampoo over time. My grandson's 3-in-1 relies on selling a needed product to parents of smelly adolescent boys who really do need a daily shower by stressing that their product is for "MEN." It worked with my sons, they are very brand loyal and my son buys his sons the brand we bought for him. Those label directions are designed to sell more product by building up your habit in using their product.

What does this have to do with Holy Thursday? First, our Bible reading of the day, John 13, focuses on bathing. In this extraordinarily rich passage of Scripture that has inspired generations with a Christian attitude of service, Jesus took a basin and towel and washed his disciples' feet.

At first Peter refused to participate because he had a fixed idea of how the Christ should behave. Jesus corrected Peter's thinking, only to have Peter decide that just having his feet washed was not enough—he wanted to redo the whole bath! "Lather. Rinse. Repeat." To this Jesus said, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean." (John 13:10, New Revised Standard Version)

One way to think of our Lenten practices is to view them as a much-needed seasonal cleansing. We took up our disciplines for a season to help us grow. Fasting, intentionally giving up something that is a pleasure we enjoy but not necessarily sinful is common. For my public Lenten fast I gave up gluten containing foods. Yesterday one of my regular baristas asked me if I was still keeping my fast rather than suggesting an apricot kolache (she knows I love kolaches) to go with my latte. That was kind of her, and supportive.

But my issues with gluten are very mild, and Sunday is Resurrection Day. What should I do about my gluten fast? What should you do about the Lenten discipline you chose of either fast or service. Lent is over and you are spiritually clean just as you are clean after your shower; too much shampoo will harm your maturing scalp, but it is still a good habit to wash your hands before eating.

Actually, what if rather than “Lather. Rinse. Repeat,” the directions were “Lather. Rinse. Dry off. Go about your life. Repeat as needed.” That is horrible marketing, but good advice for strengthening your spiritual habits. Lent is almost over. Our praise filled worship on Sunday is the same as drying off after your shower. On Monday, go about your life. See what happens because of Lent’s impact on your spiritual discipline. In the past I have shared how one year I gave up Diet Coke for Lent and felt so much better without it that I never went back. Next time I see my barista, I will have a kolache. What that kolache does to my gluten symptoms will be seen. Maybe the consequences will make it my last kolache, but even if that is true it is well worth sharing the joy of living in resurrection.

Last January, Darci Strutt McQuiston wrote a DCE for us on her prayer habit that she attached to her morning pages. I was moved to try copy Darci. I set a timeline. I began a new notebook. I filled that notebook. I learned I am not Darci. Maybe sometime in the future, I will try again, but I just haven’t picked up that second notebook yet.

Just as I finished trying daily pages, a YouTuber I follow suggested doing my daily to-do list in a spiral bound notebook because “do lists are never ending and always cyclical.” (Dawn at *The Minimal Mom*, YouTube) I got out a spiral bound notebook from my office supplies. Because of how morning pages did not work for me, about ¾’s of the way in I wrote, “Buy a new notebook if this is still working.” When I arrived at that page, I did not need to buy a new notebook because I already had. More gets done when with my do-list-in-a-notebook habit than without it. Like my Diet Coke fast, it will probably be a habit that sticks for a long time.

But what about you? What about the Lenten fast or service you selected is working so well for you that you will just keep as a daily habit? Is it Bible reading? Is it a form of journaling? Is it your fast from something that trips you up? Is it your daily prayer walk?

How will you know? That’s easy. Try go without it for a day and see if you need it like you need washing your hands before eating, or if you need it like your shampoo, “Lather. Rinse. Dry off. Go about your life. Repeat as needed.”

Remember your baptism. You are already clean. Christ says so.

Amen.

Rev. Dawn