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The Pastor's Message *March, 2010*

Dear Members and friends,

In spite of the fact that, as of this writing, we're buried in snow, March is upon us and with it comes the promise of Spring and warmer weather. This is also the period of the Christian year called Lent. The forty days between Ash Wednesday and Easter is meant to be a time of reflection, prayer, meditation, and worship. The goal is to prepare ourselves for Easter, so that when we celebrate the Resurrection, we may do so with hearts that are open and able to receive the great gift of Eternal Life in Christ.

While normally we do not go to Socrates for insight into the Christian life, one of his most well known quotations is this: "The unexamined life is not worth living." I think Socrates is right about that. If we do not regularly take inventory of where we are and where we might be or of who we are and who we might be, we cannot grow. For the Christian, this takes daily prayer and meditation, Scripture reading and study, regular worship and fellowship with other believers, fasting and self-denial.

These make up the core of the disciplines of Lent and without them we would not be ready for the Resurrection celebration and the ongoing presence of Christ within us. World renowned author Henri Nouwen makes a comment similar to Socrates' in his book, "Can You Drink the Cup?" when he writes, "a life that isn't reflected upon is not worth living. It belongs to the essence of being human that we contemplate our life, think about it, discuss it, evaluate it, and form opinions about it. Half of living is reflecting on what is being lived." This small book by Nouwen is one I recommend to you, especially in this Lenten season. The title comes out of Jesus question to a few of the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane; "can you drink the cup that I drink?" (See Matthew 20: 20-23) It was an invitation to them to examine their devotion and commitment to Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

The answer was, of course, no. They *thought* they could and even *said* they could, but the disciples were not prepared for what was to come in the days ahead. They didn't understand who Jesus really was and they didn't accept his mission. When the time came for them to demonstrate their faith and readiness to follow, they fled.

The goal toward which we move is to be like Jesus. That is the aim of the Christian life. It takes time for the transformation from helpless sinner to devoted follower to take place. It also takes practice. That is why we say we practice our religion; because we rarely get it right the first time, or the second time...it

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