



Diocese of the
MID-ATLANTIC
Anglican Church in North America

March 2, 2016

Dear Friends,

In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses retells the earlier events of the people of Israel in the wilderness. He wanted them to reflect upon and learn from their experiences. That's a key part of our Lenten discipline—to reflect and allow the Lord to give us new and deeper insights about himself and about us. You see, it's not experience that makes us wise.

If experience alone made us wise, we'd all be brilliant! It's reflection upon experience that opens us to the Holy Spirit's conviction and insight and redirection of our lives.

In Deuteronomy 9, Moses tells the people of Israel to remember their rebellion against God, how, when Moses went up on the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments, they made an idol in the form of a golden calf. He exhorts them to "remember and do not forget" their sin (9:7) so that they will also remember God's mercy. Only by bringing to remembrance their sin and God's forgiveness will they, with deep thanksgiving, truly be able to love the Lord. As Jesus warned, "He who has been forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7:47).

If we don't appreciate what God has done for us, how can we love him? If we don't hold continually acknowledge how much we needed God's mercy and how lavishly he has given it—then how can we be give testimony to God's goodness?

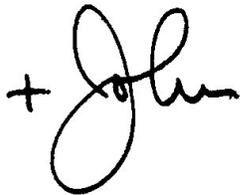
This season of Lent is a time of self-examination and repentance. It is not 40 days for feeling guilty, as if we can't be forgiven until Easter. It is rather to allow the Holy Spirit to bring us to a fuller and deeper repentance.

I liken Lent to spring cleaning. I joke that I can clean my house in 5 minutes: I straighten a few piles, close some doors, kick the dust bunnies under the cabinet and, voilà, I've cleaned house! But I can also spend an hour cleaning the house. Or a whole day. I once spent my vacation cleaning every nook and cranny, every closet, every drawer in the entire house.

If our self-examination and repentance is limited to the 15 seconds between “Let us confess our sins to Almighty God” and the start of the Confession on Sunday morning, well, that’s a 5 minute house clean.

The Lord invites us in Lent to spend time with him, allowing him to show us hidden layers of self-centeredness and pride and greed and deceit. He invites us into a full spring cleaning, that we might know the greatness of his transforming power and that we might love him so much more.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a small cross symbol followed by the name "John" in a cursive script.

The Rt. Rev. John A. M. Guernsey