

February/Winter is full of obstacles. Ice. Freezing rain. More snow. Sleet. Fog. Black ice and the occasional warmer sunny day. Lent has some obstacles too, not the least being a simple understanding of what it's all about. Sin. What is that about? What are our obstacles to understanding sin? First, I think, is our very human tendency to make things far more complicated than they need to be. We tie up sin with all sorts of human values and expectations. It starts as simply as a restaurant offering a chocolate dessert, described as "sinfully" delicious.

It continues with putting expectations on us which aren't real. We strive to be more perfect than Christ, we need to be the best, and so on. We get caught up in shoulds and musts and become enslaved by our guilt feelings, by feelings of not being good enough, feelings of inadequacies. No wonder we don't like the word Sin if we tie all those things and emotions to it. In all of this emotional wrestling with Sin the real Sin is that we look in all of this at ourselves and not to God. (We have been forgiven!)

Have you ever walked into a glass door? Bumped your nose? Knocked your glasses askew? Checked to see if anyone witnessed your bumping? Well, that's a bit like what sin is. The answer is right before us. If you'll permit me, it's very clear, and yet we bump into it anyway.

Sin is plain and simple saying NO to God. Sin is always a separation from God. Sin refuses God. Sin has nothing to do with God. Sin is disconnected from God.

Sin is: to *not* LOVE, Sin is: to not LIVE, Sin is to be disconnected

So Lent is the time for us to examine where we separate us from God. It is kind of a spiritual Spring cleaning.

For this purpose we put a box on the altar. A box which wants to be filled.. Filled with all those thoughts and feelings and deeds we think separate us from God. Think about them, write them down, and put them in the box. Let them go, surrender them ... we have been forgiven. No one is good enough ... let it go. No one is perfect ... let it go!

We will leave the box there for the duration of Lent and let the box walk with us through the Easter week and burn the box with all that is in it on Good Friday. Feel free during the whole time of Lent to add to the box. Scribble our sins - whatever we think separates us from God - on little bits

of paper and leave them here. This is a way to experience a surrender from a NO to a Yes, a surrender from Sin to Love. Love for God, ourselves and our neighbors.

Wherever sin moves out God moves in and where God moves in sin moves out!

WE will have a few minutes of quiet time...../(write Black Box)