

## Wiping Your Slate Clean

Remember the “Magic Slates” you had as a child? You could write or draw anything and then, with a quick flip of the plastic overlay, the slate was clear. There were no remnants of what had been there.

Wouldn't it be nice if life was like that--if you could get rid of the mess and gunk in your life and wipe the slate clean? Actually, it can be, though it may not happen as fast as flipping that plastic overlay. Remember the story of one person asking another, “Why do you keep banging your head against the wall?” “Because it feels so good when I stop,” is the reply. Then why not just stop? That's often a lot easier said than done.



Many of us carry old hurts, fears and grudges that seem to have become part of who we are. We don't know how to think or act without them, yet they interfere with our relationships, our prayer--all aspects of our lives. We say we want to get rid of those burdens, yet they are familiar and we resist and come up with excuses for not doing so. Jesus' words, “Come unto me all you who labor and are heavily burdened and I will give you rest,” seem too good to be true. Besides, they come with a condition, “Take my yoke upon you.” We generally prefer being in control, not relying on others. They just might disappoint us. It's too hard to be like one of our Burundian parishioners who experienced horrors in her life in Africa. She could have become bitter and sullen and hung on to those atrocities, yet she chose another way. “I'm a Christian. I'm mandated to forgive.” It wasn't an easy process, but she allowed Jesus to carry that burden with her and she chose to forgive and wipe that slate clean. Her smile and her devotion light up the congregation.

Often, it's not others, but our own flaws and sins and shortcomings that we can't let go. There's a wonderful story about a little boy in Ireland who told his mother that he regularly saw and talked with God. The mother explained to him that was impossible—it just didn't happen nowadays. When the boy continued to insist he was visiting with God, his mother sent him to the village priest to straighten him out. “Stop upsetting your mother,” Father O'Malley told him. “That just doesn't happen anymore. Now go home and be a good boy.” A week later, mom sent him back to the priest “I really am seeing and talking with God,” the boy said. Going along with him, Father O'Malley said, “If you really are talking with God, ask him what I said in my last confession. Only God would know that.” The boy agreed and when he came back the next week, the priest asked, “Are you still talking with God?” “Yes,” the boy replied. The priest's heart beat faster. “Did you ask God my question about my last confession?” “I did,” said the boy. “What did God say?” “God said to tell you, ‘I forgot.’”

If God forgets and wipes the slate clean, why don't we? None of us likes a dirty slate. Why not start with something small and lift just a small corner of that plastic overlay? Make a list of what's on that slate—what I or others have done or failed to do. Then lift the plastic a bit higher. How important are these? Rate them on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 the most important. You're likely to find that many aren't that important anymore—they're just baggage you've been carrying around. Are there any you can do something about right now—a call, a note, or “I'm sorry?” Then lift that overlay higher and do it. You're almost there. Some imprints on your slate may be deeper and require a listening ear or the grace of the sacrament of reconciliation. What do you have to lose by taking that next step?

Your slate is clean now and you can wipe it clean each day with a few moments of prayer or reflection. What are you going to do now with your fresh new start?

-Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate