

The military has a program called “Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape,” known by the acronym S-E-R-E or as it’s usually called SERE training.

My own experience in this program was spent in the high desert outside of San Diego, California. For several days, we were living off the land, running away from the bad guys, and when we did get caught, trying not to answer any of their questions.

When that simulation was completed, we returned to base, and were told to throw out the uniforms we were issued. That seemed odd, since I had grown kind of attached to the old-style 1940s fatigues we were given for the program.

I peeled them off and took a long, long, long hot shower. I hadn’t realized how dirty I’d gotten living outside for the past few days. But once I was cleaned up, I realized that what I had been wearing while we were outdoors had gotten extremely nasty.

I couldn’t hold it far enough away from my nose on my way to the dumpster; and it almost seemed as if the flies on the garbage were offended by the stench.

In today’s readings we hear about the disease of leprosy, and two miraculous healing - one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament reading, we hear of Naaman the Syrian who bathes seven times in the Jordan as instructed by the prophet Elisha.

Spiritual writers have tied in the seven washings of Naaman with what are known as the “Seven Deadly Sins.”

The seven deadly sins are:

ANGER, ENVY, LUST, PRIDE, GLUTTONY, SLOTH, and AVARICE.

In one particular work, “Bathe Seven Times” by Mother Nadine Brown, these seven sins are tied to a common thread of FEAR.

ANGER stems from a FEAR OF FORGIVING.

ENVY from a FEAR OF BEING HELPLESS.

LUST from a FEAR OF BEING INNOCENT.

PRIDE from a FEAR OF SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY.

GLUTTONY from a FEAR OF SUFFERING.

SLOTH from a FEAR OF COMMITMENT

And AVARICE from a FEAR OF LETTING GO.

Contemporary culture has replaced the notion of sin with psychobabble. A sense that nobody is really responsible for their own actions. Sin has somehow become a four-letter word that isn't spoken about in polite company.

Our own spiritual journey depends, not on feeling good about ourselves - or shirking our responsibilities. But rather of confronting our own fears and weaknesses and finding our strength in JESUS CHRIST.

We need to be FORGIVING ... like we pray in the Our Father.  
We are HELPLESS ... if we try to save ourselves and exclude JESUS from our lives.  
We need the SACRIFICE OF CHRIST if we are to reclaim our lost INNOCENCE.  
We need to submit to God's AUTHORITY and the AUTHORITY of His Holy Church.  
We need to unite our SUFFERING to the SUFFERING of JESUS CHRIST.  
We need to COMMIT our lives to JESUS CHRIST and the GOSPEL.  
And we need to LET GO of anything that stands between us and GOD.

Elsewhere in Scripture, St. John says that "TRUE LOVE CASTS OUT ALL FEAR."

And if we are going to "Bathe Seven Times" and step outside of the Seven Deadly Sins; we need to tap into the LOVE OF GOD - the GRACE that flows from the CROSS of JESUS CHRIST - the SUPERNATURAL GRACE available to us in the SACRAMENTS.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ - let us PLUNGE ourselves into the grace of the SEVEN SACRAMENTS. As we receive the Eucharist, let us receive the INFINITE GRACE that energizes all the other SACRAMENTS we have received or will receive.

So that as our BAPTISM brought us into the DIVINE LIFE of the HOLY TRINITY, we may continue to grow in the DIVINE LIFE drawing closer to GOD THE FATHER through JESUS CHRIST, and in the power of the HOLY SPIRIT.