

Speaking dirt

“For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

Against you, you only,
have I sinned and done
what is evil in your sight,
so that you are proved right when
you speak and justified when you judge.

Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;
you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.”

Psalm 51: 3-6

King David wrote Psalm 51 after the whole ‘Bathsheba’ episode when he did a number of things wrong (read 2 Samuel 11 if you don’t know the story).

The fact is that we sin. We let God down in countless different ways each and every day. Sometimes deliberately, sometimes because we don’t realise what we’re doing, sometimes because we forget ourselves.



When Jesus died, the Bible says that everyone's sin was laid upon his shoulders. He sucked it all up and took it upon himself. Then when he was buried, our sin was buried with him.

In following God, there is a process of death and re-birth that must always happen. It needs to happen with our sins as well. We confess them, we bury them with Jesus in his death, so that they are gone - taken far away from us; never to return.

TASK

In front of you is a large mound of soil and earth.

Bury your hands in the soil. As you do so, confess your sins to God - speak out the things that make you unclean before God.

Rub the dirt between your palms and your fingers as you pray and think about the way in which sin stains and marks you and those around you; whether physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually.

Finally, when you are finished - move onto the second part of this station to see what comes next.

Removing dirt

“Wash me,
and I will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed
rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Psalm 51: 7-10

When Jesus died, we have already said that he sucked up all our sin and, in a manner of speaking, buried it with him in his death so that it was taken far away from us.

That great act means that we can now truly be clean. King David understood that if God would take away his sins, there was a new chance to live a new life. He says ‘let the bones you have crushed rejoice’. Take that which was dying, God, and bring it life.

When Jesus rose from the grave, he rose utterly clean. Our sins were left buried in the ground while he rose to new life. It means that in Jesus, we too can live a new life - free from all the sin and dirt of our past.



TASK

In front of you is a large bowl of water and a set of towels.

As you buried your hands in the soil as you confessed, bury your hands now in the water. Clean them and wipe away every mark and stain.

As you do so, thank God for his great act of cleansing and forgiveness at the cross of Jesus Christ.

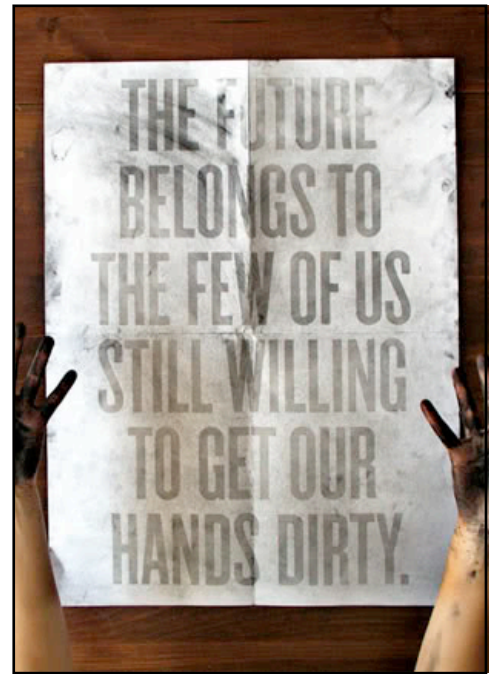
Think about the fact that those things you have just confessed are gone now. They are not remembered. You can walk free.

Finally, when you are finished dry your hands on one of the towels. On the towels is a Bible reference, take your towel to the third station to find out what comes next and what that verse is about.

Free of dirt

“Restore to me
the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit,
to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors
your ways, and sinners will
turn back to you.”



Psalm 51: 12-13

The weird thing is this. When Jesus takes away your dirt, and then makes you clean.... when he takes all your 'death', and gives you new life.... he then asks you to do something that sounds really weird.

He asks you to go back into the world that made your hands dirty.

You would have thought God would want you to stay as far away as possible from anything that makes you dirty. But he doesn't. Quite the opposite - he wants you to go back into that world again but with one crucial difference.

In John 13, the disciples have sat down for dinner. Their feet are dirty and dusty from a hard day's walk and Jesus bends down and washes their feet. A job that should have been done by the servants.

John 13:15 says 'I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.'

God calls us to go back into the world; not so that we can get our hands dirty again but so that we can help other people to get clean too.

We are called to serve, to help others to wash, in order that they too may know the freedom that God can bring.

TASK

In front of you is a large bowl and ladle, and a set of small water bottles.

Stand now before the bowl of water and pray. Ask God to equip you with His Spirit to serve God and serve people as you move back out into the world to work, to study, to live.

You may like to think about particular people or situations where you need God's help.

As you pray, dip the ladle in the water and take a sip as a symbol of drinking the living water of God's spirit into the very essence of your being.

Finally, when you are finished, take one of the small bottles home with you and keep it as a reminder to serve others and help them find God in their lives.

The water in the bottles was blessed by the Bishop of Rochester at the last diocesan conference. It is 'holy water' (if you're into that sort of thing).

Equipment list

Station 1: Speak dirt

A table with a large flower pot full of mud or soil
The page of instructions (blown up to A3 size)

Station 2: Removing dirt

A table with a large bowl of water (a black bottomed bowl is advisable to prevent people seeing how dirty the water can get. Alternatively have two bowls that you can swap out regularly to keep the water fresh).

A set of hand-towels.

The page of instructions (blown up to A3 size)

Station 3: Free of dirt

A table with a large bowl of drinking water and a ladle
Optionally, you can get some small travel plastic travel bottles and fill each with a small amount of water. If you wish, ask a Priest to pre-bless them.

The page of instructions (blown up to A3 size)

The room

A relatively large space is needed to allow people time and space to move between the three stations in order.

In the background, we had a piece of music playing: *It is Done* by John Debney from *The Passion of the Christ* (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack).