



## **Rector's Essay**

By Jarrett Kerbel (04/10/26)

Once I took a retreat at the Jesuit House in Warnersville, outside of Philadelphia. At that time I was working my way through the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises with a Spiritual Director. A silent retreat was just what I needed to meditate on the stories of Jesus that St. Ignatius recommends.

On the second day of the retreat, I am sitting on my prayer stool in my cell meditating, when a vacuum cleaner roars to life just outside my door. At first I tried to maintain focus. Then I became frustrated. Finally, I grabbed my stool, stalked out of the room, and snapped at the cleaning lady.

Now, I am not proud of that moment. Then, I was feeling pretty justified in my anger. After all, it was quiet hours when this disturbance occurred.

Still feeling grumpy, I relayed this event to my Spiritual Director. My wise spiritual friend nodded and took a longish pause. After the silence he said, "I wonder why God sent this woman to you at that moment?"

I was aghast. He wasn't supporting my annoyed petulance? He wasn't applauding my dedication to a regime of silence? I held my tongue, however, and considered my wise friend's query. I knew he loved me and that I loved him. I also knew that he was my spiritual guide and authority. After all, I had come to him because he was so much wiser in the ways of God than I was, so much more advanced in his intimacy with our Lord.

So I paused and examined my heart in the light of his question. And then I saw it: my entitlement, my arrogance, my self-centering. The woman with the vacuum was a child of God doing her job, earning her wages. I was only focused on me, and that is a fatal

condition for a soul intent on spiritual growth. Our gauge of inner growth is the fruits of the spirit: generosity, gentleness, kindness, patience, love, faithfulness, and self-control. Boy, was I off base!

I bring up this story because during Easter Season we celebrate our new life in the Risen Christ. By drawing on the gifts that the Risen Christ bestows, we can grow spiritually and begin to embody the gifts of the spirit more robustly. I will be teaching and preaching on the Baptismal Vows a lot this Season so please continue to review them. Book of Common Prayer 301.