

## **A Christmas Rug, Crown of Thorns, a Hot Summer and Falling Leaves With Autumn Breezes**

What do all four of these things have in common? Absolutely nothing, if you don't keep the Christmas spirit and Lent alive all year long. Let me explain. God loves us so, that He gave us His only Son. God loves us so, that He allowed His Son to suffer and die a cruel death to save us from our sins. God loves us so, that He wants us to live in His love during the sunny days of summer and the crisp fall nights. Several days ago I was in Target glancing through the clearance section, which still had some Christmas items at 90% off. I felt somewhat sad as I picked through those items. ***"I wish we could put up some of the Christmas spirit in jars and open a jar of it every month."*** Pope John XXIII. Many of us say that the Christmas season is our favorite time of the year. But why? What does this season have that the others are lacking? Rarely have I ever heard a fellow Christian say, "Lent is my favorite time of the year." Why? After the liturgical Christmas season is completed, the holiday lights come down. On the street, we walk past dried-out Christmas trees and discarded boxes which just recently held presents from family and friends. And when the post season props have all but disappeared from view, so often does the Christmas spirit that had filled our hearts. But we believe it doesn't have to be that way. This feeling needs to stay alive long after the snow has melted, through the dog days of a hot summer and the turning of the leaves. Now more than ever we need to maintain the loving spirit of the holidays in our desperately needy world. Anyone who walks past my office at church, can't help but notice a Christmas rug in the doorway. From time to time people will jokingly ask me if I forgot to pack a way this rug. I respond with a joyful, No, which is followed by an explanation that I leave the rug up to remind us that the spirit of Christmas lives in our hearts 365 days of the year. And all that enter my office, I ask that they convey that Christmas spirit. The response I receive is one of a big smile. Hanging in my doorway all year long is a crown of thorns produced by the very thorns that grow in the Garden of Gethsemane. Those too are hung as a reminder that we are to surrender ourselves to God through prayer, fasting and discipline. During Lent, we humble ourselves in order to draw closer to Jesus, so we can learn to think and act like Him. Yet, my point is that these "feelings", "actions" and "state of mind" should last the entire year; just as we should live the Christmas and Lenten seasons all year long. If we practice Lent and Christmas 365 days a year, Jesus' way of life will develop in all areas of our own lives. Our activities will mirror that of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. ***-Sherrie Clutts DRE***