



*Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time.*

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2012

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

### Get carried away

In the story of Jesus healing and forgiving the man lowered before him through the roof of a house, Jesus is impressed less with the faith of the needy man—after all, there were many people crowding in—and more with the four friends who carried him there and tore open the roof. Sometimes we need to submit to the care of others and let ourselves be carried by that concern. That is one of the joys of our community of worship. We might come to pray overwhelmed by our own misery, confused, or just bored and disinterested. At such times we can do no better than let the faith of our friends, our sisters and brothers, carry us to Jesus.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 43:18-19, 21-22, 24b-25; 2 Corinthians 1:18-22; Mark 2:1-12 (80)*

*"When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Child, your sins are forgiven.'"*

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20

### Pass along a peace of advice

Peace activists aren't born; they are inspired by others. Longtime Catholic peace worker Kathy Kelly was introduced to the writings of Daniel Berrigan, S.J. and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. while a student at a Catholic school during the turbulent 1960s. "The St. Paul faculty," she says, "gently but consistently showed us hero-figures who had tried to confront injustice and cruelty and who believed in love of enemy as well as love of neighbor." Let's make sure children are exposed to more than comic-book action superheroes writ large on theater screens. Let's introduce them to the real heroes, those who have worked tirelessly for peace and justice.

TODAY'S READINGS: *James 3:13-18; Mark 9:14-29 (341)*

*"The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace."*

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

FEAST OF PETER DAMIAN, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH; MARDI GRAS  
**Get ready to get ready**

Preparation is crucial for a meaningful celebration. Advent prepares us for Christmas, Lent prepares us for Easter, and Mardi Gras prepares us for Lent. These alternating seasons of quiet and celebration help us notice and appreciate the fact that God is found not only in austerity and prayer but also in music and celebration. As a result, we experience the sustaining presence of God in every aspect of our lives. A good Mardi Gras will help us have a good Lent. A good Lent, in turn, ensures a spiritually rich Easter, which is the ultimate goal. So go ahead and celebrate Mardi Gras today! Decorate your home, gather with friends, enjoy some good food. Tomorrow you enter the desert.

TODAY'S READINGS: *James 4:1-10; Mark 9:30-37 (343)*

*"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."*

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22

ASH WEDNESDAY; DAY OF FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

### Be creative this Lent

Is it Lent already? Yes, which means another season of opportunity to grow in faith. Consider how you might wisely spend the next 40 days by focusing on one thing in your life that needs to change. Try a new spin on the traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Prayer can be engaged in many ways: with words, silence, contemplation of icons—or walking a laby-

rinth or the Stations of the Cross for the spiritually fidgety. You can "fast" from more than food: Give up media distractions or idle gossip. Alms can be paid out in other than dollar bills: Offer your time to the lonely, your love to a child.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Joel 2:12-18; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 (219)*

*"Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart."*

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23

 FEAST OF POLYCARP, BISHOP, MARTYR  
**Bring it on**

You have to admire the early Christian martyrs, not only for their courage but also for the defiance, even confidence, with which they faced dying for their faith. The bishop Saint Polycarp had been a Christian his whole life, but for some reason the Romans waited until he was 86—an unheard-of age in the ancient world—to hunt him down. He refused to flee, and when hauled before a Roman official engaged him in lively debate. When threatened with burning at the stake, his eventual fate, he retorted that while the fires of martyrdom last only for a while, the fires of judgment never go out. Polycarp and other martyrs offer the example of those who reckoned their eternal fate more important than their earthly one.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Luke 9:22-25 (220)*

*"If . . . you turn away your hearts and will not listen . . . I tell you now that you will certainly perish."*

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

### Not so fast?

One out of six people in the present generation lives in extreme poverty. Not simply below the poverty line established by government organizations: Extreme poverty means living in danger of death because there is no food. By virtue of living in a country where food is made affordable by subsidies and meal programs are available to make up the shortfall, it's easy to forget and hard to imagine the kind of suffering starvation entails. If one in six neighbors were hungry, wouldn't the other five feed that person? Fasting, even abstaining from meat, reminds us that our neighbor is hungry—and of our responsibility to help.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 58:1-9a; Matthew 9:14-15 (221)*

*"This . . . is the fasting that I wish: . . . Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless."*

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25

 SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY  
**Take the fast track to hunger awareness**

Fasting is a spiritual discipline to which we are called during Lent. It not only helps us become more aware of our dependency on God but also aware of those who experience hunger on a regular basis. The U.S.D.A. estimates that tens of millions of Americans are in that very situation. "It is unacceptable," says Catholic Charities USA, "in a nation as bountiful as ours that children, adults, and senior citizens experience food insecurity that puts their physical, mental, and developmental health at risk." Contact your local office of Catholic Charities, Food for the Poor, or a food pantry or soup kitchen to see how you can be part of the solution. [CatholicCharitiesUSA.org](http://CatholicCharitiesUSA.org) can help you get started.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 58:9b-14; Luke 5:27-32 (222)*

*"If you bestow your bread on the hungry . . . then light shall rise for you in the darkness."*

©2012 by TrueQuest Communications, L.L.C. PHONE: 800-942-2811;

E-MAIL: [mail@takefiveforfaith.com](mailto:mail@takefiveforfaith.com); WEBSITE: [www.TakeFiveForFaith.com](http://www.TakeFiveForFaith.com).

Licensed for noncommercial use. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotes come from the New American Bible.

Contributors: Alice Camille, Daniel Grippo, Caroline Hopkinson,

Father Larry Janowski, O.F.M., Ann O'Connor, Joel Schorn,

Patrice J. Tuohy, Sister Julie Vieira, I.H.M.