



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

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2010

### SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Exchanging woes for blessings

Isn't it wonderful to be wealthy, to be well-fed, and to enjoy the esteem of the community?

And if you don't fit any of those categories, wouldn't it be great if you did? Then why do you suppose Jesus lamented the fate of rich people? Probably because we tend to think that wealth, abundance, and acceptance are for *us*. Actually those good things are *entrusted* to us to be given to the poor, the hungry, and the despised. Lent begins this Wednesday. For 40 days we will work the blessed side of the Lord's teaching by praying for others, feeding the hungry, and giving our money to the poor.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 17:5-8; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20; Luke 6:17, 20-26*

*"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation."*

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15

### Wisdom vs. IQ

The school of wisdom isn't equivalent to a university. If that were so our leaders would be heroes and our economy would be sound. A high IQ and a pile of diplomas can lead to marital and fiscal disasters just as quickly as any other background. Wisdom is an attribute of God, which means we have to go to God to get it. Once gained it's contagious, or as Saint Louis de Montfort put it: "Wisdom gives not only light to know the truth but also a remarkable power to impart it to others." Seek wisdom—for all our sakes!

TODAY'S READINGS: *James 1:1-11; Mark 8:11-13*

*"If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly."*

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16

### Just the facts

At a time in our country when we most need unity, we are divided. We face many difficult issues at one time—war and national security, healthcare, immigration, fiscal policies—each demanding serious attention. Yet our political debate has become toxic. We no longer seem willing to listen carefully, argue dispassionately, or disagree respectfully—much less reach for a compromise of any kind. The internet plays an important role here. One misleading statement plus 24 hours equals the next fracas that distracts us from the real issue. In both bread and politics a little yeast goes a long way. Remember, then, to read widely and pay attention to your sources. Where are your "facts" coming from? Do you trust the person or organization making the statements?

TODAY'S READINGS: *James 1:12-18; Mark 8:14-21*

*"Watch out—beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod."*

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

### ASH WEDNESDAY Readjust your priorities

The season of Lent is here, and that means doom-and-gloom and giving stuff up, right? Not so! Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are three ways the church encourages us to enter into Lent. This season is a time of preparation. It is a time to free ourselves from the things that are not helpful in our lives and move into a deeper relationship with God, our family and friends, and the church community. It is a time to celebrate the gifts God has given us, to examine how well we live those gifts, and to clear away the things that prevent us from being the gifted person we

are. Take time today, right now, to consider how God is inviting you to be free and more present to God and to all the people in your life.

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

*"Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger."*

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18

### THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY Losing it

What does it mean to "lose one's life" for the sake of Jesus? In certain times and places it could literally mean martyrdom. But for many of us the phrase might involve something a little different. Lent is a good time to consider a bit of healthy self-denial as one path we can take toward greater awareness of Jesus and his inspiring message. Something as simple as the proverbial giving up of chocolate can serve as a reminder of our deeper spiritual hunger. Acts of charitable service also help. As we get outside our small world and connect with those in great need, we just might find the road to salvation.

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

*"Those who lose their life for my sake will save it."*

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19

### FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY Not so fast!

Lent is just getting under way, a good time to carefully consider one of its key traditions: *fasting*. What can fasting mean in our health-conscious culture? The fasting of Lent is not about eating less for its own sake. In the Book of Isaiah, God addresses the mistake of settling for the outward trappings of penance. "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free . . . ? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard." Now that's fasting!

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

*"Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"*

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20

### SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY The mark of the sinner

The checkout clerk looked at you kind of funny. "You've got something on your forehead," she said, unaware of Ash Wednesday. We spend the day with a mixture of pride and embarrassment. We're proud to be Catholic, but we're a little uneasy about appearing in public wearing such a strange sign. Some think the ashes mark the righteous, those who go to church. But in reality it expresses our need for repentance. Jesus calls those who need the mercy and compassion of God so that the life-changing power of forgiveness might be experienced. Lent is a time for us to become familiar with that saving power.

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

*"I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance."*

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