



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

SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 2010

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

The sweet smell of prayer

We tend to pray for the people we like. Or at least we pray for family and friends, even—or especially—if they're troublesome. Maybe for Lent we should try praying for the people we don't like, those at work or school or in the neighborhood who just rub us the wrong way. They are like the unfruitful trees in the gospel story: We encounter them hoping for something sweet, but we get something sour. Our prayers for them are like . . . well, fertilizer. A season of prayer would do them—and us—a world of good.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12; Luke 13:1-9*

"Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

MONDAY, MARCH 8 FEAST OF JOHN OF GOD, RELIGIOUS

Love first and ask questions later

Saint John of God (1495-1550) had a habit of jumping in to help whenever he saw the need. During a hospital stay he got up to care for the other patients around him. On another occasion, when the same hospital was on fire, he dropped what he was doing, raced to the scene, and rushed into the burning building to carry out patients on his back and then again to try to save the structure. A prayer to John says: "Saint John, help us to act out of love as soon as we feel the promptings of the Holy Spirit." Have you ever held back when you could have helped? Promise yourself you'll leap at future chances to do something good.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Kings 5:1-15b; Luke 4:24-30*

"Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean."

TUESDAY, MARCH 9 FEAST OF FRANCES OF ROME, RELIGIOUS

Give it up for Frances

Frances was born in Rome in 1384 to wealthy parents. At an early age she wanted to be a nun, but her parents arranged a marriage instead. She would lose two children to the plague, which sensitized her to the needs of the less fortunate. With her sister she visited the poor and took care of the sick, inspiring other wealthy women to do the same. Frances can serve as our inspiration to practice a little good-old-fashioned Lenten almsgiving.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Matthew 18:21-35*

"Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?"

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Each one, teach one

God bless those who take the time and trouble to teach! The neighbor who shares the secret to flaky pie crust; the guy at the hardware store who explains the mysteries of doorknob mechanisms; and the high school history teacher who opens up a love for the treasures of the past—all give us something wonderful for the road ahead. The greatest teachers are those who instruct us not only in how-to-do but who-to-be: loving, compassionate, responsible, and just children of God. Consider the best lessons you've been taught and pass them along.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Matthew 5:17-19*

"Whoever [keeps these commandments] and teaches others to do the same, will be great in the Kingdom of heaven."

THURSDAY, MARCH 11 LENTEN WEEKDAY

It's up to you

Lent's traditional fasting, prayer, and almsgiving can help us slow down and consider whether the thousands of choices we make in a day are in tune with God. In prayer we listen in silence for God's perspective on how to live. Fasting prods us to abandon quick, self-indulgent answers to life's questions and problems. Almsgiving asks what we value and whether we are generous. Tuned in to our often automatic decision-making, we may realize how much each choice matters. The amazing ability of a computer is actually the result of myriad "switches," each set at either one or zero. Change only one, and the result changes. So also we, by paying attention to our choices, may choose to undo some of our scatteredness, our noisiness, our sadness—and soften a stony heart.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23*
"Whoever is not with me is against me."

FRIDAY, MARCH 12 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Now hear this

When challenged by the scribes to name the most important of the commandments, Jesus begins by quoting the prayer that is known as the *Shema Yisrael* for its opening words: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone." To this day observant Jews consider the *Shema* their most important prayer, reciting it twice daily, and it is traditional for Jews to recite it as their last words. If we want to understand the life and times of Jesus, a good place to start is to learn about Judaism. Study up today!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hosea 14:2-10; Mark 12:28-34*

"You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other.'"

SATURDAY, MARCH 13 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Lent, here and now

How's Lent going for you? Has it been easy to enter into this year, or has it not even been on your radar screen? Wherever you are, it's OK. Today is a new day. If you're having difficulty, look to the prophet Hosea. Hosea gives us two things on which to focus our attention and efforts. First, he calls us to be persons of steadfast love. We can express steadfast love by attending a Lenten celebration with our parish community, reaching out to someone in need, or doing something especially considerate for our loved ones. Second, Hosea calls us to knowledge of God; not simply to know about God but to know God, to be in relationship with God. We can do that by being aware, right now, that we are in God's presence.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14*

"For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."

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Scripture quotes come from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

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