



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

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2008

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

The challenge of fidelity

Commitment. That's what it takes. Whether it's the commitment married couples make to each other that we honor on this World Marriage Day or the commitment our RCIA catechumens and candidates will make to Christ that we celebrate in the Rite of Election, a commitment is what puts a life on track and gets it to where it's supposed to go.

Jesus in the desert faced down the devil, even though ole Satan offered some pretty cool stuff. That's because Jesus was committed to the way of the Father. To accept the devil's deal, he'd have to break a sacred pledge. Lent for us is a time when we renew our commitment to God and get back on track to heaven. It's the best way to go.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11*

"The devil said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'"

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11 FEAST OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES; WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE SICK

Healing vision

It's often said you can judge the character of a nation or society by how it treats its weak and vulnerable members. Jesus might very well agree. He gave a list of such people—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the imprisoned, the sick—in whom we are to see Christ himself and treat accordingly. We pray especially for those who are ill today on the World Day of Prayer for the Sick, which is coupled with the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, who has been associated with so much consolation and healing. This year also marks the 150th anniversary of this apparition of the Virgin Mary to Saint Bernadette and so gives us all the more reason to embrace the sick around us in prayer and care.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Matthew 25:31-46*
"For I was ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Our daily bread

In reprimanding the false philanthropy of Judas, Jesus reminded his disciples, "You will always have the poor." While we may always have poverty, organizations such as Bread for the World point out that ending starvation and malnutrition is within our reach. Indeed, the estimated amount needed to end world hunger is less than what Americans and Europeans spend on pet food. So while we may heap up petitions during Mass for the end of world hunger, there are practical steps waiting to be taken at home. This Lent, focus on combining your fasting with the redirection of your unneeded resources to those less fortunate.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15*
"When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases like the Gentiles do."

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Belly ache

Why did Jonah end up in the belly of a whale? If you're not sure, open a Bible to the Book of Jonah and have a good read—it's quite a short book, only a few pages long. There you will encounter a story rich with the candor and humanity of a reluctant prophet. Jonah did all he could to run away from God's call,

but God pursued. It was quite a chase (thus the whale) but in the end, Jonah responded to the call, and so did the people of Nineveh. To be reluctant at times in our discipleship is human; to respond nevertheless, divine.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32*

"The people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth."

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14 FEAST OF CYRIL, MONK, AND METHODIUS, BISHOP; VALENTINE'S DAY

Can you be too careful?

The philosopher Bertrand Russell once said, "Of all forms of caution, caution in love is perhaps the most fatal to true happiness." It would be easy to assume that the love to which Russell was referring is limited to romantic love. But love can and (on a good day) does inform everything that we do.

When we are not "cautious" in giving ourselves to the task at hand, when our duties and responsibilities are grounded in love, then our work—whether it only lasts until the next spill by our child or is destroyed after only 20 years like the liturgical translations of Cyril and Methodius—is an endless source of true happiness. Today is a good day to ask, "Am I too cautious in love?"

TODAY'S READINGS: *Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Matthew 7:7-12*

"Ask and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you."

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15 LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

Leave your gift and go be reconciled

While Lent is about being turned around and setting things right with God, it is not only a matter of regular churchgoing. As a matter of fact, Jesus says that offering a gift, a ritual sacrifice to God, definitely takes second place to being in right relationship with one another. Today's a day of abstinence. Hunger pangs may be useful as physical reminders that we have fence-mending to do: becoming reconciled with family members, friends, co-workers, not only asking forgiveness (which is hard enough), but also offering forgiveness—whether it's requested or not. That, for sure, is a turnaround.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26*

"Lose no time; settle with your opponent while on your way."

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16 LENTEN WEEKDAY

The hardest prayer

Whoa, did you see *that*? The guy in the blue SUV just cut you off! And he didn't even signal! This calls for *road rage*. And regrettably we often answer the call. Anger behind the wheel might be a real mortal sin because its consequences can be deadly.

This Lent, instead of being road ragers, we can become road rangers for the Lord, preserving peace on our highways. Begin the discipline today. Instead of cursing the guy in the blue SUV, bless him. Surrender your spot on the road to him as Christ surrendered his life for you. You'll make the road safer and the world a better place.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:43-48*

"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

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

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