



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

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2008

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

The three-tent solution

Saint Peter's idea at the Transfiguration charms us with its reasonableness. When blessed with the sturdy foundation of the law of Moses, the strong prophetic tradition of Elijah, and the kindly ministry of Jesus, why not build an institution that encompasses all three? Peter's plan wasn't faulty, because the church does honor all these roads to truth in its scripture. But Peter's architectural model envisioned these men as leaders of equal merit. God, the voice that speaks from the cloud, clearly differentiates between the three, calling Jesus alone "Beloved Son." The paths of law and prophecy both lead at last to Jesus.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 12:1-4a; 2 Timothy 1:8b-10; Matthew 17:1-9*

"Lord, if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Real leaders say they're sorry

When we count out the qualities we would like in a leader, rarely would we cite shame. However it is precisely this sense of shame that urges leaders to search out and claim ownership of their faults and mistakes. In this sense, the late Pope John Paul II stands out as an example for both political and religious leaders. In his book, *When a Pope Asks Forgiveness*, Luigi Accattoli cites 94 occasions in which John Paul II acknowledged either personal or institutional culpability for mistakes and social injustices. Far from being a sign of weakness, this vulnerability formed one of his true strengths as a leader. How can the leadership roles you take on become opportunities to practice humility?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Daniel 9:4b-10; Luke 6:36-38*

"O Lord, we are shamefaced, like our kings, our princes, and our fathers, for having sinned against you."

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Lent made simple

Today's gospel reading from Matthew gives us Lent in a nutshell: "Make yourselves clean, cease to do evil, learn to do good." The spiritual rewards for following this Lenten regimen are great. That's why so many of us try—but, sadly, too many of us fail. Our biggest stumbling block seems to be the final step of learning to do good. It's not that we don't know how to be good; we simply fail to make doing good a consistent, regular practice. This Lent, try following these steps toward becoming a daily do-gooder: Volunteer in your parish or community; be helpful and available to family and friends; donate money to charity; act cheerful—even when you're not.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Matthew 23:1-12*

"Make yourselves clean; cease to do evil, learn to do good."

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Eat this bread and drink this cup

Dorothy Day, the cofounder of the Catholic Worker movement, once wrote about a person she knew who wanted to believe in the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist but couldn't bring himself to do so. But if he had, he said, there was nothing that would stop him from running to the altar. This "outsider's" zeal reminds the rest of us who do believe just what's involved with the Eucharist. Do we really act as if we are

communing with the very body and blood of God—and that in this act we accept the challenge to follow Jesus without reservation?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 18:18-20; Matthew 20:17-28*

"Jesus said, 'Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to him, 'We are able.'"

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21 FEAST OF PETER DAMIEN, BISHOP, DOCTOR
Not for sale

Peter Damien (1007-1072) was a generous giver. But simony—the practice of buying spiritual offices or spiritual authority—was one kind of giving he detested. The activity was widespread in the medieval church and did great damage to the church's moral standing, so much so that Dante condemned those who practiced simony to the eighth circle of hell. Perhaps the venue largely has shifted from church to state—where we find corporate lobbyists and other influence-peddlers with lots of cash—but the sin remains the same. Damien would not be amused to see simony persist in any form, and neither should we.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31*

"Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things."

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22

CHAIR OF PETER, APOSTLE; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

Fun facts about the popes

How many popes does the church count so far? From Saint Peter the apostle to Benedict XVI, there have been 263. How many were declared saints? Seventy-six, with eight more lingering in the "blessed" category. Most of the canonized popes (57) lived in the first seven centuries, a large number being martyrs. Only five popes in the past thousand years were made saints—including Celestine V, an 85-year-old hermit elected against his will who abdicated the Chair of Peter in six months. Learn something new about the pope of your choice online. And enjoy a seafood dinner in honor of our first fisherman pope.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 16:13-19*

"Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity . . . He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in showing clemency."

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23

LENTEN WEEKDAY; FEAST OF POLYCARP, BISHOP, MARTYR

Agree to disagree

Sometimes one of the hardest truths to accept is that it is possible for two people of good will to disagree. We prefer to think, "Since I am right, then the other person must be wrong, *right?*" But that mindset always leads to deadlock.

Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna (in present-day Turkey), shows us another way. He was asked to visit Pope Anicetus in Rome to set a common date for the celebration of Easter. The two could not come to any agreement, but what might have resulted in an angry split between east and west ended instead with a respectful "agreement to disagree." To this day the two churches celebrate Easter at different times.

What opinion are you rigidly holding onto today?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32*

"Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet."

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