



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

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2008

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT; FIRST SCRUTINY OF THE ELECT
The water of life

Today, catechumens experience the First Scrutiny, a ritual in which the whole church prays for them as they face squarely the power of evil and open themselves to Christ's saving power. "Grant that these catechumens, who like the woman of Samaria, thirst for living water, may turn to the Lord as they hear his Word and acknowledge the sins and weaknesses that weigh them down." We who are already baptized should feel ourselves in the catechumens' shoes and allow ourselves to be prayed for: "Protect them from vain reliance on self, and defend them from the power of Satan. Free them from the spirit of deceit, so that, admitting the wrong they have done, they may attain purity of heart and advance on the way to salvation."

TODAY'S READINGS: *Exodus 17:3-7; Romans 5:1-2, 5-8; John 4:5-42*

"If you knew who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Pray for your enemies

In the Old Testament story of the healing of Naaman the Syrian, a young Israelite girl, kidnapped and enslaved as a servant to Naaman's wife, expresses compassion for her captor Naaman and suggests a cure for his leprosy—that he go see the prophet Elisha. Sympathy for our enemies does not come easily and is usually considered dangerous. Show courage today by saying this Prayer for Our Enemies endorsed by the U.S. Catholic Bishops:

Jesus, Prince of Peace,
you have asked us to love our enemies
and pray for those who persecute us.
We pray for our enemies and those who oppose us.
With the help of the Holy Spirit,
may all people learn to work together
for that justice which brings true and lasting peace.
To you be glory and honor for ever and ever.

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

"If only my lord were with the prophet in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Forgiveness: more than a nice thing to do

Scripture has a pretty consistent message about forgiveness. It's not only a good thing to do; people are to forgive because God forgave them first. In other words, not to forgive others is a kind of ingratitude. When we don't forgive others, would we really want God to treat us the same way? Of course not. But sometimes we want to receive mercy from God and others without wanting to give it out ourselves—something that ties in with another pretty important biblical idea: Treat others as you want them to treat you. Love one another as God has loved you. In your dealings with people today, step into their shoes for a moment and be aware of how, if you were them, you would wish to be treated and, especially, forgiven.

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

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

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Right before your eyes

Before there was "religion" there was the religious experience.

Sometimes we who inherit a long and great tradition such as the Christian faith forget that the elements that make up that tradition—the beliefs, the rituals, the stories—are rooted in human experiences, actual flesh-and-blood events that our ancestors lived and witnessed. Thus, God directs the Jewish people to make known to their children "the things your eyes have seen." Give thanks that over these many generations the key religious experiences have been preserved and passed down to us. But also remember that God is at work in the world today. Keep your eyes peeled.

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

"Do not forget the things your eyes have seen; make them known to your children and your children's children."

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Listen up!

We tend to think of *obedience* in terms of its verb form: *obey*—as in, "Do what I tell you and don't ask any questions!" But commanding and explaining later is known as compulsion, while true obedience starts with listening that leads to right action. Certainly with children we sometimes have to start with the command. "Don't run out into the street!" is not a debatable topic. With adults, however, and even at times with kids the best way to ensure a course of action is to help someone see the sense of it. That's why God, in speaking to God's people, combines commands with listening. Listen to what God is saying to you, so that you follow God not out of fear but with understanding and joy.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23*

"Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people."

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 29 LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

Turn your anger

Consider a moment in your life when you felt betrayed. Betrayal is different from other injuries because by its nature it can only come from a trusted family member or friend. Now imagine saying to the person who betrayed you the words God said to the Israelites in the Book of Hosea and continues to say to all of us: "I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them." For many of us it is difficult to imagine ever being able to say those words to one who has betrayed us. Toward that end, let us make the intention of our abstinence today healing the memories of past betrayals.

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

"I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them."

SATURDAY, MARCH 1 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Humble prayer

Jesus could be pretty hard on people who seemed to praying for the wrong reasons, like certain Pharisees who made a big show of praying in public so others could see how holy they were. Christ preferred to praise those who stood at the back of the crowd and prayed with humility. Why? Because exalting oneself is the opposite of true prayer. Prayer can't be something that impresses others. It also can't be something you fake or just go through the motions with. Prayer starts with the one who prays but then turns that person toward God and others. And that's the meaning of humility, too: not living for oneself but for others.

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

"All who humble themselves will be exalted."

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