



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

SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 2008

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT; THIRD SCRUTINY OF THE ELECT
Don't miss the meaning

As we celebrate the third and final Scrutiny of the Elect, it's good to remember that these rites are not solely for those who have not yet been baptized. In the scrutinies, as in all sacramental actions, the entire community of believers is transformed. To imagine anything less is to forego much of their power and beauty. In the words of T. S. Eliot, "We [will have] had the experience but missed the meaning."

One way to prepare for the third scrutiny is by asking this question of ourselves: "Where do I experience being bound up like Lazarus and yearning to be free?"

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ezekiel 37:12-14; Romans 8:8-11; John 11:1-45*
"Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'"

MONDAY, MARCH 10 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Lay that burden down

The story of the woman caught in adultery (one wonders: Where was the man?) is another in which Jesus is presented with a false dilemma by those who see life and God in either/or terms: Either condemn the woman as the Law prescribes or let her go and break God's Law. Jesus' challenge, "Let the one among you without sin throw the first stone," defies such an overly simple view of life. Jesus regards the woman. Yes, there is sin here but not condemnation. "Go, and sin no more." When's the last time you presented yourself before such justice and mercy in the sacrament of reconciliation?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; John 8:1-11*
"Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'"

TUESDAY, MARCH 11 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Pledging allegiance

Jesus draws a clear line between those who live in their sins and those who live in the Father above. Yet it seems that the more definitively Jesus uses his terms of either being "of this world" or "not of this world," the more questions his audience throws back at him. The more unambiguous he is, the more incredulous they become. We, as followers of Christ, struggle to accept the choice between this world's demands or those eternal ones. How often we try to question Jesus' bold stance, while seeking a compromise. Try living every part of your day as a clear choice for God.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Numbers 21:4-9; John 8:21-30*
"He said to them, 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.'"

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Chip off the old block?

When we're young, we're often compared to our parents in superficial ways: "You have your mother's eyes." "The way you swing a bat, you can tell you're your father's kid." More significantly, we take on the identity of our parents when we begin to demonstrate their deepest values and defining qualities. That's the kind of resemblance Jesus was looking for when he considered the claim of those around him to be children of Abraham. Abraham trusted in God enough to take a long journey on nothing but a promise. Spiritually complacent people don't come from biblical stock.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; John 8:31-42*
"Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did.'"

THURSDAY, MARCH 13 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Names hurt

"Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me." Most of us don't graduate childhood without learning how untrue that is. Names *do* hurt. Some cause emotional wounds, while others are libelous and destroy lives. And when it comes to the name Jesus uses in John's gospel—"I AM"—the bottom line is blasphemy for many in his audience. It's shorthand for the name "I am who I am," which is how God defines the divine mystery to Moses. The only way Jesus isn't blaspheming is if he actually is divine. To believe that, you have to be ready for stones thrown at you.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 17:3-9; John 8:51-59*
"Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I AM.' So they picked up stones to throw at him."

FRIDAY, MARCH 14 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Good trumps bad

During those dark moments in your life when you are sure God has forsaken you—when you are angry, hurt, and feel God owes you an explanation for your fate—follow this simple practice endorsed by Jesus: Count your blessings. Think about all that you've been given, the love and mercy that God has shown you and others. Did you demand explanations for those gifts—wonder at their fairness or equity? Our suffering may never make sense, but it will be redeemed—in fact it has been redeemed many times over. God's love is stronger than sorrow and death. Abide in that love.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 20:10-13; John 10:31-42*
"I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?"

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

FEAST OF JOSEPH, HUSBAND OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY; PATRONAL DAY OF THE CHURCH

Well done, good and faithful servant!

So what's all this about a "patronal day of the church"—especially in connection with a person, Saint Joseph, who gets no spoken lines in scripture? The word *patron* comes from the Latin for "defender," and as we know, a patron saint is a saint to whose special protection and intercession a person or place or activity is dedicated. In Joseph's case, he gets to protect and pray for the whole church! But this righteous man, who did such a good job protecting his wife and child—Mary and Jesus, that is—is up to the job. Say a prayer to Joseph for the protection and guidance you need.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22; Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a or Luke 2:41-51a*
"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."