



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

SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 2008

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Hail our conquering hero

The palms used in the rituals of Palm Sunday signify victory over one's enemies; yet the scripture reading for today offers an account of Judas' treachery toward Jesus. How odd. Somehow we're saying that despite being betrayed, tortured, and murdered, Jesus is our hope and our salvation. That is the outrageous truth of Christianity. Jesus draws life from a source that conquers death and the death-dealing falsehood that we are defined by our sins. Just consider this: Many of Jesus' most beloved disciples denied and deserted him before his death, but only one is called a traitor. The reason: All but one repented. In your own Christian discipleship, remember that it is your willingness to acknowledge your failings and undergo conversion again and again that is most important.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 50:4-7; Philipians 2:6-11; Matthew 26:14-27:66*

"And while they were eating, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.'"

MONDAY, MARCH 17

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK; SAINT PATRICK'S DAY

Restored to life and bad for business

Every once in a while we meet someone who's back from the dead. Maybe an addiction had robbed them of meaningful existence, or a bout with depression, or a personal crisis like illness, loss, or divorce. When such people reemerge whole and blinking in the light, they remind us that new life is possible. This is precisely why the religious leaders felt obliged to plot the deaths of Jesus and Lazarus together. It's hard to insist that Jesus was not all he claimed to be with the living witness of a fellow whose obituary had recently been annulled.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11*

"The chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many were believing in Jesus."

TUESDAY, MARCH 18 TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Make Peter proud

In memory of Saint Peter, who promised to lay down his life for Jesus—and then shortly afterward denied Jesus three times—take time today to think about what is required of you as a Christian. You will have some hard choices to make over the years—ethical and moral choices that involve your work, your family, your life, and the lives of those you love. You will be uncertain of the right path and may be tempted to take the easy way out. But make a commitment to yourself here and now that you won't act on your fears but instead will seek wise counsel whenever possible and take the time you need to make an honorable decision.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33, 36-38*

"Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.'"

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19 WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Paid in advance

If you want an example of how the gospels tell the same story differently, then you need go no further than Judas' betrayal of Jesus. Only in Matthew does Judas get 30 pieces of silver in advance for handing Christ over to the authorities. That Judas is greedy we know. "What will you give me?" he asks up front.

Here's the lesson: Once you've been paid off, it's a lot harder to back out. Who is currently running interference for something you'd rather not do? Who is fronting for your choices so you don't have to account for them? How do you work up the nerve to say no to these abdications of responsibility

for which you may have to pay a much bigger price later?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 50:4-9a; Matthew 26:14-25*

"They paid him 30 pieces of silver. And from that moment Judas began to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus."

THURSDAY, MARCH 20 HOLY THURSDAY

When you do this, remember me

John's gospel, while moving us deeply with Jesus' long and lovely discourses, does not recount the institution of the Eucharist as we hear in 1 Corinthians. But John does give us, as it were, the implications or the demands of the Eucharist. Paul quotes Jesus as saying his body is "given" for us, and here is Jesus, his young frame bent as he kneels before his friends, his hands busy with the foot-washing work of slaves. "Do you realize what I have done for you? . . . I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do." The body and blood of Christ given for you means that your body must likewise bend at the feet of the poor, your hands touch to refresh and restore them.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15*

"Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!'"

FRIDAY, MARCH 21 GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Peace be with you

The Good Friday Agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement, was a major political development in the Northern Ireland peace process. It was signed on April 10, 1998 (Good Friday) by the British and Irish governments and endorsed by most Northern Ireland political parties. It took a while longer, but opposing parties eventually formed a government, and this past July the British Army formally ended an occupation of Northern Ireland that began in 1969. Peace is slow and arduous work, much more difficult for enemies to accomplish than is violence. As we listen today to the story of how the Prince of Peace was put to death by violence, let us commit ourselves to being peacemakers in our homes, our communities, our world.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 52:13-53:21; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42*

"Put your sword back into its sheath."

SATURDAY, MARCH 22 EASTER VIGIL

Like night and day

"This is the night!" say the words of the Exultet, sung this evening at the Easter Vigil. Indeed this is the night we have been waiting for through these long weeks of Lent. This is the night toward which we have aimed all our preparations, our schooling of ourselves in becoming more prayerful, generous, and focused on God. On this night the many readings of scripture bring us from darkness to light, bondage to freedom. This is the night we welcome new members of the Body of Christ—and rejoice in our own membership. When, in the words of Saint Paul, by being baptized in Christ we are baptized into his death and so into new life. This is the night: Exult!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 1:1-2:2; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15-15:1; Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11; Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4; Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28; Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10*

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. . . . so we too might walk in the newness of life."

©2008 by TrueQuest Communications, L.L.C. PHONE: 800-942-2811; E-MAIL: mail@takefiveforfaith.com; WEBSITE: www.TakeFiveForFaith.com.

Licensed for noncommercial use. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotes come from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Contributors: Father Paul Boudreau, Alice Camille, Daniel Grippo, Father Larry Janowski, Ann O'Connor, Sean Reynolds, Joel Schorn, Patrice J. Tuohy