

Sunday, Mar 10, 2019

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

A devil of a challenge

Take on any challenge, and you quickly discover why few people are willing to walk the route you're on. Not everyone climbs Mt. Everest, completes the Appalachian Trail, or bikes across Death Valley. It also takes special zeal to fight systemic injustice, go on mission to a foreign country, or resist the tiny daily invitations to compromise your values and go along to get along. The test of self-denial this Lent is a dress rehearsal for the real moral challenges that lie ahead. If you can't say no in small ways, how can you resist when the demons come calling?

TODAY'S READINGS: Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Romans 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13 (24). *"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here."*

Monday, Mar 11, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

A value-added tradition

Scripture's dramatic account of the Final Judgment includes powerful statements about the importance of caring for those who are weak, ill, imprisoned—values that are at the core of all Christian social ethics. Over the centuries great movements for human progress and compassion have been inspired by these fundamental Christian values. Western Christianity's shortcomings are frequently on display, as perhaps they should be. But let's not forget the great Christian charitable tradition, which has done so much good for so many. Find a way to make your own contribution to charitable works: From Catholic Charities to Catholic Worker houses, the options are many.

TODAY'S READINGS: Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Matthew 25:31-46 (244). *"What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me."*

Tuesday, Mar 12, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Do you have the will?

One of the many advantages of memorized prayers such as the "Our Father" is that we can say them when we have no words of our own; we don't have to think. That's also one of their disadvantages: We don't have to think. In fact, we may have forgotten exactly what we are saying when we pray the Lord's Prayer. For example, do we really mean, "Thy will be done" or are there unspoken conditions attached: "Thy will be done—as long as it doesn't interfere with my carefully laid plans for my life"? To turn everything over to God is truly the only way to live without fear. It's what Jesus did; it's what we are called to do as well.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15 (225). *"This is how you are to pray: 'Our Father who art in heaven.'"*

Wednesday, Mar 13, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Think small

Children are the first to tell us that it can be tough to be little. Often overlooked or taken advantage of, not always heard or taken seriously, the small ones in this world are at the mercy of the rest of us. In biblical terms the *anawim* ("poor little ones") included children, women, the poor, and the stranger. It's quite unusual when a "rich big one" like the king of Nineveh in the

Book of Jonah surrendered his place of privilege and made himself small before God. Such humility gets results: His kingdom is saved. Consider opportunities today to "get small" in your dealings with others.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32 (226). *"The king of Nineveh . . . rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes."*

Thursday, Mar 14, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Let the children come

Children soak up experiences without having much power to filter. Be it fear or faith, trauma or comfort, loss or joy, whatever goes in, tends to stay with them and affect their lives. Adults have a responsibility to try to shape the experiences of children in positive ways. The almost complete dependence of small children on the adults around them is one of the reasons Jesus was so protective of them in the gospels—and also why scripture holds children up as examples of trust. Whether nurturing children or learning to imitate them in your relationship with God, always remember their importance.

TODAY'S READINGS: Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Matthew 7:7-12 (227). *"If you . . . know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him."*

Friday, Mar 15, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

What's in a name?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church lists five names for the sacrament that many of us grew up calling Confession. That term, still in use, calls up images of kneeling in darkness and recounting sins to a priest who sits behind a screen. There are however other words that perhaps do a better job of describing the grace of the sacrament. These words: *conversion, reconciliation, penance, and forgiveness*, invite us to reflect on and claim our failings, express our sorrow, and, with pastoral guidance, go forth to try again to get it right. Forgiveness of ourselves or others is not easy and reconciliation is a process, but God's own grace is there to guide and strengthen us as we attempt to be people of love and mercy. Is it time to make a good Confession?

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26 (228). *"Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court."*

Saturday, Mar 16, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Less is more

The heading catches our attention because at first glance it seems illogical. How can less be more? They're opposites, and of the two, "more" is usually regarded as better. But taken in a different light, the phrase makes good sense. Maybe we exercise restraint during a tense meeting with a coworker, saying only what is needed instead of saying something further in order to "win" an argument. Maybe we forgive someone who has hurt us with a lie instead of reminding them over and over that our pain is their fault. With less, we become more—more peaceful, more caring, more Christ-like.

TODAY'S READINGS: Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:43-48 (229). *"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."*

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



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