

Sunday, Apr 07, 2019

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Woman, liberated

The church needs a “deeper theology of women,” Pope Francis has acknowledged, one recognizing the “feminine genius.” Religious institutions, no different from secular ones, struggle with issues of gender equality—which often translates into viewing women as problems to be solved. As in the time of Jesus, women continue to be blamed for feelings that arise in men regarding them: from desire to confusion to exasperation to violence. Sexism isn’t just a political football. It’s a sin, as the U.S. bishops declared in 1988, that “violate[s] the basic tenets of our faith.” Like Jesus says, go and sin no more.

TODAY’S READINGS: Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:8-14; John 8:1-11 (36). *“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”*

Monday, Apr 08, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Log on to Catholicism

Thanks to the Internet, we can tell everyone what we think of movies and restaurants, the local plumber or even the parish down the street. Just leave a recommendation on Facebook—or a diatribe on Yelp. Though reviews are sometimes written out of frustration, they’re often (or should be) offered with the good intent of helping others discover something useful or avoid a bad experience. As Catholics, we’re called to offer the world a spiritual testimonial, by the example of our lives and the witness of our faith in action. Aim for a five-star rating!

TODAY’S READINGS: Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; John 8:12-20 (251). *“I testify on my behalf and so does the Father who sent me.”*

Tuesday, Apr 09, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Cross purposes

The idea of homeopathic medicine is that one can use a small amount of a pathogen to fight off what, in full strength, would make you ill. In mainstream medicine a similar idea lies behind immunization. In both cases the very thing that can cause disease becomes the means of healing. The bronze serpent that Moses crafted to cure his people if they looked at it, as well as Jesus lifted on the cross and drawing all people to himself, evoke the same idea: The very instrument of bitterness and death, through grace, becomes the source of life. During your Lenten prayer spend some time simply gazing at a crucifix, not to dwell on the agony of Jesus but upon the “wondrous love” and healing that the sign of the cross has become.

TODAY’S READINGS: Numbers 21:4-9; John 8:21-30 (252). *“When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM.”*

Wednesday, Apr 10, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Is your response programmed?

Pavlov’s dog taught a humbling lesson: how easily behavior can be manipulated and controlled. Ring the dinner bell, you salivate. Pass the donut shop and you reel at the thought of a Bavarian cream. In the biblical book of Daniel, citizens were obliged to worship a statue each time the king’s band played the Idolatry Theme Song. Most folks got into the rhythm. Three men said no and wound up in the furnace. Do you trust heaven enough to

“just say no” when everyone around you embraces the patterns of fashion or materialism?

TODAY’S READINGS: Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; John 8:31-42 (253).

“Be ready now to fall down and worship the statue I had made, whenever you hear the sound of the . . . musical instruments.”

Thursday, Apr 11, 2019

MEMORIAL OF STANISLAUS, BISHOP, MARTYR

An unimpeachable witness

One of the engaging things about saints like Stanislaus from centuries ago (b. 1030) is the legends that spring up about them—perhaps not true in a literal way but often carrying kernels of wisdom of a deeper order. Bishop Stanislaus is said to have brought a man who had been dead three years back to life in order to foil a land-grabbing plot of a nefarious king. Given three days to produce a witness to the church’s claim on the land, he prayed ceaselessly before calling the seller of the land from the grave to testify on his behalf. The take-away? God hears and responds to your fervent prayers.

TODAY’S READINGS: Genesis 17:3-9; John 8:51-59 (254). *“Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.”*

Friday, Apr 12, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

No time like the present

This is the fifth Friday of Lent and Easter is a little more than a week away. As you take stock of what Lent has been for you, do you feel God’s peace, no matter what is happening in your life? Or do you feel you missed the chance to grow closer to God with practices of prayer, fasting, or generosity to others? If you feel peace, be grateful. If you do not, all is not lost. Make the intention to give this day to God, to fast from something that will make you mindful that God is with you, and ask for the strength and peace only God can give.

TODAY’S READINGS: Jeremiah 20:10-13; Ps 18; John 10:31-42 (255). *“My God, my rock of refuge, my shield . . . my stronghold.”*

Saturday, Apr 13, 2019

MEMORIAL OF MARTIN I, POPE, MARTYR

The pitfalls of power

Separation of church and state is a relatively recent idea. For much of its history the church was closely entangled with the secular powers that be. Religious issues were frequently political, and political ones religious. This relationship could be risky for both sides. The seventh-century Pope Saint Martin I, for example, started out as a diplomat. As pope he convened a council to condemn a heresy, but when the Christian emperor weighed in on the matter, Martin refused to accept the imperial decision and on the emperor’s orders he was eventually kidnapped and banished and died shortly thereafter. Over the centuries the church has learned to be careful about becoming too involved with secular power. As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said about his retirement, “The path of power is not the road of God.”

TODAY’S READINGS: Ezekiel 37:21-28; John 11:45-56 (256). *“It is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish.”*

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



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