



SHUTTERSTOCK

SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2017 FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT
Talking to the devil

Temptation is part of the human story, as unavoidable as original sin. Each of us regularly spends a few moments chatting with the devil about the weaknesses that haunt us the most. Should we have another piece of cake or another drink? Why not leave work early (no one’s watching) or say that unkind remark (it will never get back to her) or tell that lie (it will make you look better)? To fortify yourself against those little chats so potentially destructive to integrity, why not spend a few minutes each day in conversation with the Lord? Prayer is the best-known antidote to temptation.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11 (22)*. “Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert.”

MONDAY, MARCH 6 LENTEN WEEKDAY
Less is more

Possessions might seem like blessings but can end up being burdens, and many saints went to great lengths to empty their pockets in order to lighten their hearts. Case in point: Sixth-century Brigid of Kildare, who enraged her Druid dad by giving to the needy everything that wasn’t nailed down. When a nobleman tried to stop her chariot, she charged his blockage, surviving but totaling her chariot. Finally her father decided to sell her at market, but she entered a monastery instead. Give in to the spirit of generosity—and you just might find that the new lighter you can’t get enough of less.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Matthew 25:31-46 (22A)*. “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink.”

TUESDAY, MARCH 7 MEMORIAL OF PERPETUA AND FELICITY, MARTYRS
I am what I am

In 203 A.D., a time of persecution of Christians, 22-year-old Vibia Perpetua put her life in danger by converting. Her father tried to persuade her of the danger of such a move. Perpetua pointed to a water jug, asking, “Do you see that pot lying there? Can you call it by any other name than what it is?” Her father said, “Of course not.” Perpetua replied, “Neither can I call myself by any other name than what I am—a Christian.” She and her friend, Felicity, didn’t let others define who they were or what they believed—even at the risk of death. It takes courage to remain true to one’s Baptism, even in the face of much less extreme challenges. Remember the example of these women and stay strong in your faith.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15 (22S)*. “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”



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

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8 MEMORIAL OF JOHN OF GOD, RELIGIOUS
It’s no trouble

What might be your first thought about a person described as a wanderer, an alcoholic, and a psychiatric patient? “Saint” would probably not be the word, and yet today’s memorial celebrates a person who, despite many struggles throughout his life, oriented himself to God. Saint John of God’s experiences—which often left him as an outcast in society—were transformed through the grace of God and John’s willingness to be transformed by this grace. He opened not only his heart but his door to helping others who were in difficulty, eventually founding the Hospitaller Order in Granada, Spain. How might your own struggles in life be an opportunity for grace?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32 (226)*. “In the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense.”

THURSDAY, MARCH 9 LENTEN WEEKDAY
The original super girl

Looking for teen superheroes? During Women’s History Month, look no further than the Book of Esther. A Jewess orphaned in Persia, Esther was raised by a sympathetic uncle. A kingdom-wide beauty contest obliged her to audition for the position of next Queen of Persia. She didn’t want to be queen, and she didn’t want to be exposed as Jewish—since Jews were due to be systematically eliminated. Esther had no superpowers, but even an Everygirl can find in herself the courage to save a nation. Support the young Esthers you know!

TODAY’S READINGS: *Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Matthew 7:7-12 (227)*. “Help me, who am alone and have no help but you, for I am taking my life in my hand.”

FRIDAY, MARCH 10 LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE
Fast with a light heart

Fasting is a spiritual practice acknowledged across religions. Muslims respect it as a way to grow in compassion for the needy. Jews see it as a way to heighten awareness of God’s many gifts and broaden periods of self-denial to include refraining from bathing, sexual relations, and wearing leather shoes (once considered a luxury). Synagogue attendees could show up feeling quite grubby—and grumpy—for certain observances. We might keep in mind the fourth-century monk John Cassian’s warning: “What we gain from fasting does not compensate us for what we lose through anger.” Food for thought!

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

SATURDAY, MARCH 11 LENTEN WEEKDAY
Honk if you love your enemies

Surely Jesus’ most radical command is to love our enemies. But exactly how are we supposed to do that? One way to begin is by learning from the example of others. A man was waiting in his car at the window of a drive-up Starbucks. His order was taking some time and eventually the person behind him began impatiently blowing his horn. Instead of becoming angry himself, the first man paid for the second one’s order and drove away. With this profoundly simple but powerful act, he turned a negative interaction into a positive one and changed the other man’s day. Today may we pray to offer a loving response to anyone who tries to cause us grief.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:43-48 (229)*. “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?”