

Sunday, Mar 04, 2018

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT; FIRST SCRUTINY OF THE ELECT

All hands on deck

Forty days is a good chunk of time to contemplate the path we're on and whether it's leading in the direction we hope to go. Lent is our annual "periscope up" that helps us survey the moral landscape we're creating with every decision. The Samaritan woman at the well gets the opportunity to frankly regard her life when she runs into Jesus while doing her chores. Our RCIA elect also receive this gift in the prayers we pray for them in today's Scrutiny. Take time to stop living on autopilot, consider what you're thirsty for, and move forward purposefully.

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 17:3-7; Romans 5:1-2, 5-8; John 4:5-42 (28). *"The one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true."*

Monday, Mar 05, 2018

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Be open to the message

Once upon a time in Nazareth, Jesus' hometown community tried to kill him. Did these folks misunderstand his teaching that they felt such rage against him? Or was the problem that they understood Jesus perfectly? Jesus had suggested that his fellow citizens were not prepared to accept God's word, but foreigners might. If a preacher got up and said his words in our churches today, he might also receive a negative send-off. We like to think we're pretty good people and on the right path, but are we really open to the call to change?

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 5:1-15b; Luke 4:24-30 (237). *"The citizens of Nazareth drove Jesus out of town so they might hurl him off the cliff."*

Tuesday, Mar 06, 2018

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Keep counting on forgiveness

Surely forgiveness has its limits! This is the attitude Peter betrays when he asks Jesus for a reasonable cut-off after which he is no longer obliged to forgive an offender. Peter proposes the number seven, which seems generous to him. It is also the Hebrew number for completeness and perfection, combining the indissolubility of three (as in our Trinity) and the all-encompassing four (as in the four directions or elements). Seven is plenty, Peter argues. Surely it's enough? Jesus takes his bid and multiplies it to the doubly significant 77. We cannot put limits on a divine gift.

TODAY'S READINGS: Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Matthew 18:21-35 (238). *"If another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive?"*

Wednesday, Mar 07, 2018

MEMORIAL OF PERPETUA AND FELICITY, MARTYRS

Service is the only security

Not even the deepest, fiercest parental love can secure the future of loved ones or keep them from harm. Take Perpetua, a young mother still nursing, and her pregnant servant Felicity, who were both threatened with martyrdom in third-century North Africa but determined to remain faithful; or Perpetua's father who tried to persuade her to renounce Christianity in order to save her. What parents and children can always do, however, like the Master, is to serve one another by the example of our own fidelity.

TODAY'S READINGS: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Matthew 5:17-19 (239). *"I have come not to abolish but to fulfill."*

Thursday, Mar 08, 2018

MEMORIAL OF JOHN OF GOD, RELIGIOUS

Focus on the bigger picture

If there were ever a patron saint for people who jump to extremes and then find balance in their lives, it would be John of God (1495-1559). First he was a wild-living soldier nearly hanged after being accused of stealing from the army. After a reprieve, he was so grateful he spent two days praying before a roadside crucifix. Going to Granada in Spain, he heard a sermon by Blessed John of Avila that so moved him to repentance he became unhinged. He gave away everything and roamed the streets beating himself and begging forgiveness for his past sins. This behavior landed him in a mental hospital. The compassionate John of Avila visited him and advised him to do something for others rather than only be obsessed with himself. John of God heeded the advice and opened a house for the care of the sick and poor. Next time you feel yourself bouncing around in life, stop, center, and shift your focus from your problems to others' needs.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23 (240). *"Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house."*

Friday, Mar 09, 2018

MEMORIAL OF FRANCES OF ROME, RELIGIOUS; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

Keep the door to your heart open

Saint Frances of Rome founded the order of Olivetan Oblates of Mary. She set up a convent—the only house of the order—that remains the community's sole monastery today. Once a year, on the Feast of Saint Frances, the sisters open their doors to the public. In 2009 Pope Benedict XVI came to call. The sisters, greatly influenced by Saint Benedict, consider hospitality their main ministry and invite young women studying in university to live with them until they obtain their degrees. In the spirit of Saint Frances and the Olivetan Oblates, be open to whoever shows up at your doorstep, from underfunded students to itinerant popes.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 14:2-10; Mark 12:28-34 (241). *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

Saturday, Mar 10, 2018

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Pray, don't pose

Jesus could be pretty hard on people who seemed to be praying for the wrong reasons, like certain Pharisees who made a big show of praying in public so others could see how holy they were. Christ preferred to praise those who stood at the back of the crowd and prayed with humility. Why? Because exalting oneself is the opposite of true prayer. Prayer can't be something that impresses others. It also can't be something you fake or just go through the motions with. Prayer starts with the one who prays but then turns that person toward God and others. And that's the meaning of humility, too: not living for oneself.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14 (242). *"All who humble themselves will be exalted."*

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



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