



## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2016

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### All in the family

During Black History Month, parishes today celebrate National Day of Prayer for African-American and African Families. For more than a quarter-century, this day has been an opportunity to recognize and support the African-American community, which is part of a larger call, reflected in Luke's gospel, for justice and unity in troubled times. When violence and hate rear up in ugliness, turn to your one family, to which each and every one of us belongs in Christ. You and your parish can strengthen and love all your members.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11 (75)*. "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8

FEAST OF JOSEPHINE BAKHITA, VIRGIN

### End injustice with prayer and action

A Catholic sister and former slave, Saint Josephine Bakhita is for many a companion in the fight against human trafficking. Her feast day coincides with the U.S. Bishops' Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Human Trafficking. In 2013 when this day was inaugurated, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo called upon the church to "lift our voices loudly in prayer, hope, and love for trafficking victims and survivors" and emphasized awareness and action on their behalf. Visit the [U.S. Bishops' website](#) for information on how you can be part of the solution.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13; Mark 6:53-56 (329)*. "The LORD intends to dwell in the dark cloud."

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9

### Conserve and recycle

Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si* sends an urgent message that invites you to change your ways and take better care of the earth. The document is a strong testament to our Catholic belief that all creation comes forth from God's goodness and is itself good. God gave us the gift of this home, where we live and breathe, and charged us to take good care of it. This Lent, do something each day to protect this precious gift.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30; Mark 7:1-13 (330)*. "This people pays me lip service but their heart is far from me."

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

ASH WEDNESDAY; DAY OF FAST AND ABSTINENCE

### Lent is a communal act

Lent is an annual opportunity for deep soul-searching. What have I done, and what have I failed to do, to live up to my Baptism? Yet the repentance and conversion called for in this season is a communal decision, not a private one. Together we gather to accept our ashes. Publicly, we remind our fellow citizens that life is short and fragile every step of the way. In our practices of self-denial, greater attention to prayer, and generous almsgiving, we inspire each other with the courage to go the distance these 40 days.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Joel 2:12-18; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 (219)*. "Gather the people, notify the congregation; assemble the elders, gather the children."

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY; FEAST OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES

### Follow me

It's fitting that the day designated as the World Day of the Sick coincides with the liturgical calendar's feast dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes. Lourdes had no claim to fame in 1858, but it was home to a young Bernadette Soubirous. Life in Lourdes changed that year, however, when Mary, the mother of God, appeared repeatedly to Bernadette and, in time, the apparitions and healings gained the attention of the world. Today, 6 million pilgrims travel yearly to Lourdes seeking healing in the spring waters that it is said Our Lady revealed to Bernadette. In solidarity with the pilgrims, offer your day on behalf of those who have lost their health, their livelihood, or their hope.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Luke 9:22-25 (220)*. "Whoever wishes to be my follower, must take up his cross each day and follow in my steps."

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

### Why no meat?

Walk down the aisle of any supermarket these days and you'll find that meat abstinence is no hardship in a world of infinite variety. But it was more difficult back in the second century when the church was already recording the practice of abstaining from meat on Fridays to observe the day of Christ's crucifixion. By the 13th century, Aquinas argued that meat, milk, and eggs incite lust, and fasting bridles desire since all physical pleasures keep close company. The carnivore lifestyle may or may not be good for body and soul—but self-denial does express our willingness to meet Christ at the cross.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 58:1-9a; Matthew 9:14-15 (221)*. "Would that today you might fast so as to make your voice heard on high!"

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

### Turn this thing around!

OK, so maybe Ash Wednesday came and went this past week while you were looking the other way. Here's the good news (yes, we still celebrate good news during Lent!): As long as you have breath to breathe it is never too late for what the Greeks called *metanoia*—we call it repentance but the literal meaning is more like the command "About face!" It's about turning your life around and heading in a better direction. We all have traveled a few highways and byways best left behind. If you're on one now, stop in your tracks, turn around, and get your *metanoia* on!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 58:9b-14; Luke 5:27-32 (222)*. "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do."



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

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