



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2016 FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Love is all around

Love changes everything. Fall in love and watch the world brim with passion, color, and longing that wasn't there yesterday. Often we plod along in search of our daily bread until home and family, God and community, make our labor a noble sacrifice. Our secular celebrations of Valentine's Day and World Marriage Day converge today with another love story: that of Jesus for the great mission he was about to undertake for the sake of his Father and the creation he so loved. Make a joyful sacrifice in love today.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Romans 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13 (24)*. "It is written, One does not live on bread alone."

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Follow the leader

Twentieth-century American Catholic activists Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton took center stage along with Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr. during Pope Francis' historic address to the U.S. Congress in September. Francis held up these four individuals as a way to highlight Catholic social teaching for all Americans. Merton was a Trappist monk, pacifist, and writer. Day was a journalist, laywoman, radical Christian, and cofounder of the Catholic Worker movement whose mission is to show hospitality to those on the margins and live out the works of mercy. Emulate these four examples of leadership.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Matthew 25:31-46 (224)*. "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Moved by the wisdom of God

Years before becoming pope, Pope Francis met an old woman while he was administering holy oil. He asked her if she'd like to go to confession. She said yes. He then said, "But if you haven't sinned . . .," and she replied, "We have all sinned." With great conviction, she said that God forgives everything. "But how do you know that?" If God did not forgive everything, she replied, the world would not exist. Pope Francis recognized the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in her words and allowed his heart to be moved. May we too be so moved by the wisdom of God manifest in our daily lives.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15 (225)*. "So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it."

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

FEAST OF THE SEVEN HOLY FOUNDERS OF THE SERVITE ORDER, RELIGIOUS OR LENTEN WEEKDAY

Whatever you do

The late 13th century saw the dawn of a new kind of religious life with members living not in secluded monasteries or as hermits, but among the poor and serving them. The founders of the Servite Order were successful merchants who left their careers to form such an order under the protection of Mary the Mother of Sorrows. A characteristic of their life was to do penance. What does "penance" mean for you, especially during Lent? Giving up meat or chocolate? Or doing acts of service to the least of Christ's brothers and sisters? The answer seems clear.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32 (226)*. "Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart for I am gracious and merciful."

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Let Esther be your guide

Without supports, you can easily become lonely and wallow in despair. In that place, you can convince yourself that nothing has or will ever go your way. Our God, though, never leaves us alone. Esther, the orphan-turned-queen of the Old Testament, is a perfect example of this. She knew what it meant to feel alone, to be threatened and outcast; yet she realized that only God could help her, and so she named what she needed. Today, pray her words: "Turn our mourning into gladness and our sorrows into wholeness."

TODAY'S READINGS: *Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Matthew 7:7-12 (227)*. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find."

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19

LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

Abstain in an age of indulgence

Advertisers tell us to "just do it" because we're "worth it." They tell us we are entitled, deserving, privileged—and of course in need of their product! Lent is a season for resistance—call it holy resistance if you like, or renunciation, or simply being called to dance to a different drummer. Our lives can still be joyful and full—in fact, even more so when we let go of the myth that endless consumption will bring us joy. It doesn't work that way. Instead, let's put our hands together and give it up for Lent!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26 (228)*. "Go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Free to forgive

Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche, a network of homes for people with developmental disabilities, writes that forgiveness is grounded in loving your enemies. Learning to love those who have hurt you is a long and sometimes painful process. It requires that you not only consider yourself, but also those with whom you're in relationship. Coming to the point of forgiveness, Vanier writes, "is the process of getting out of the prison of our likes and dislikes, our hatreds and fears, and walking to freedom and compassion." It means loving like God does—and finding peace in the process.

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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