



BILL WITHMAN

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2016

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT; FIRST SCRUTINY OF THE ELECT

Scrutinize your intentions

Those wishing to join the Catholic Church go through a process that involves a great deal of reflection and self-examination. The rest of us get to join in on the middle Sundays of Lent when the “scrutinies” are observed. These ancient rites are meant to help heal what is broken and strengthen what is upright. We can all join in, and if you don’t happen to be present at a Mass where scrutinies are observed, you can still take some quiet time today to reflect on aspects of your life that need some renewing. Lent is the season for renewal, so you are in the right time and place!

TODAY’S READINGS: *Year A: Exodus 17:3-7; Romans 5:1-2, 5-8; John 4:5-42 (28).* “*The hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.*”

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Your faithful companion

God is with you (remember, Jesus said he is with you—and all of us—always). Sometimes you might forget that. But God’s presence is evident if you pay attention to the expected and unexpected details of your life. Perhaps you’re struggling with the appropriate response to a conflict and the answer comes from your best friend—expected, but surely a sign of the Spirit’s movement in your life. Perhaps you’re experiencing the pain of loss and you somehow manage to get up and keep going—unexpected, but a welcome sign of God’s grace. Think back over the past few days and consider the certain and surprising ways God has been at your side.

TODAY’S READINGS: *2 Kings 5:1-15ab; Luke 4:24-30 (237).* “*If only my master would present himself.*”

TUESDAY, MARCH 1 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Stand tall in the midst of hardship

Nobody ever wants to suffer or experience hardship. Tough times can’t always be avoided, but we can choose how we react to them. We can turn to God and open ourselves to finding a way (however small or seemingly inadequate) to persevere. Sometimes it might be a friend or inspirational quote, a fond memory or sheer determination that carries us through. For Saint Teresa of Avila, for example, having courage meant a lot. “To have courage for whatever comes in life—everything lies in that.” How does God help you

face hardships? What scripture verses, saints, virtues, or life-giving techniques do you draw upon for strength?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Matthew 18:21-35 (238).* “*Azariah stood up in the fire and prayed aloud.*”

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Learn from the students

Right now, parishes are preparing to welcome new Catholics on Holy Saturday during the Easter Vigil, when adults are baptized into the church. Lent is the final stage of preparation for these candidates, and you are called upon to pray for them as they get ready to become full members and to welcome them into the community. Take time to reflect, too, on what the sacraments they are about to receive—Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist—mean to you. And recommit yourself to the path they are on—one of spiritual discovery and formation.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Matthew 5:17-19 (239).* “*... teach them to your children and to your children’s children.*”

THURSDAY, MARCH 3

FEAST OF KATHARINE DREXEL, VIRGIN, RELIGIOUS FOUNDER

Can money be sacred?

We call money “filthy lucre.” The love of it is the root of all evil, Paul tells us. Yet an American heiress and her sisters found a way to make their wealth a holy thing. The Drexels—Katharine, Elizabeth, and Louise—lost their mother early, and beloved stepmother and father while the sisters were in their 20s. With the Drexel fortune at their disposal, they vowed to provide sound educations and job training to forgotten communities in this country: post-Civil War black and Native Americans. Redeem some wealth to holy purposes.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23 (240).* “*Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper.*”

FRIDAY, MARCH 4 FEAST OF CASIMIR

Gotta hand it to generous Casimir

Traditions sometimes spring from quirky sources. Casimir was renowned for his generosity toward the sick and poor, and it was probably in attending the ill during an outbreak that he died at the tender age of 25. An early painting of the saint depicted him with two right hands, and legend sprung up that the artist tried to re-draw the hand in a different place but was unable to paint over the old hand. Well, perhaps the painter intentionally wanted to leave Casimir with two right hands to emphasize his generosity. We’ll never know, and it doesn’t really matter. Let the extra hand inspire you to follow Casimir’s example and be a handy giver!

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

SATURDAY, MARCH 5 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Pray. Always.

The humble prayer of the tax collector—“O God, be merciful to me a sinner”—in its utter simplicity is the basis of what is called “The Jesus Prayer”: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,” a favorite in the spirituality of the Eastern Churches. This prayer, or words like it, is a way to “Pray always,” as Saint Paul says, since it repeats itself within, even when you don’t think you’re praying. What would be your own slowing-down word or phrase? Let God whisper such words to your heart. Listen. Pray.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14 (242).* “*He beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’*”



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

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