



SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 2017 FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Earthen vessels

When we hear talk of *flesh* in scripture, we usually think of it as the human body, our flesh and bones. Saint Paul often pits flesh against spirit in his Letters. If at those times we understand Paul's references to flesh to be referring to the body only, we would believe our bodies to be rather nasty indeed. But the news isn't that bad. By *flesh* Paul means "self-centeredness" versus *spirit*, or "God-centeredness." Are we oriented toward ourselves or to the ways of God? If the first option is true for us, then our physical existence, bodies included, can be a drag on our spirit. If we look to God, though, before all else, then our material lives, bodies included, become sacred vessels that house the divine.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ezekiel 37:12-14; Romans 8:8-11; John 11:1-45 (34)*. "You are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you."

MONDAY, APRIL 3 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Drop it!

In one of the most dramatic moments in scripture, Jesus comes face-to-face with a woman caught in adultery. But because her accusers are only using her as a tool to trap Jesus, he confronts a second and greater sin: the eagerness to judge. At Jesus' invitation—"let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her"—at least those in the crowd were honest enough to let the rocks drop. Being sinless does not lead Jesus to condemn sinners. It leads to forgiving them, showing them how to live without the sin that can destroy. In Lent we scrutinize ourselves for signs of self-righteousness—something we must drop like a heavy stone.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; John 8:1-11 (251)*. "In response, they went away one by one."

TUESDAY, APRIL 4

MEMORIAL OF ISIDORE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

School yourself in divine wisdom

There are some who would like to add Divine Intelligence theory, or creationism, to the curriculum to counter the teachings of the theory of evolution, which they contend is contrary to the biblical teachings of the origin of man. Saint Isidore 1,500 years ago assured us that there is no contradiction in God's world between so-called book learning and heart wisdom, what we learn about the world and how we experience God. We can see God's presence in all creation and in all that we learn from science and faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Numbers 21:4-9; John 8:21-30 (252)*. "The one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him."

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5

MEMORIAL OF VINCENT FERRER, PRIEST

Gracefully reconcile

Reconciliation means bringing things or people into some kind of harmony. The Dominican Saint Vincent (1350-1419) practiced reconciliation on many levels. He traveled around preaching repentance. "When you have realized your true worth," he said, "you will be able to judge your faults sanely . . . and the faults of your neighbor will remain in shadow." Seeing the shortcomings of others, Vincent reminds us, begins with seeing our own limitations clearly. That perspective can then lead us to gracefulness in accepting criticism and tact in giving it.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; John 8:31-42 (253)*. "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works of Abraham."

THURSDAY, APRIL 6

Pleased to meet you

The second Commandment warns against using the Lord's name in vain. When Jesus refers to himself as "I AM," as he does many times in John's gospel, he is deliberately associating himself with God, who revealed the divine name to Moses as "I AM WHO I AM." This strange-sounding name declares that God's absolute existence depends upon nothing and no one. It puts God in a unique category, because the rest of us are dependent and fragile creatures. Give thanks today for all the ways your life is nourished and sustained by God's unshakeable presence.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 17:3-9; John 8:51-59 (254)*. "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am."

FRIDAY, APRIL 7

MEMORIAL OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE, PRIEST

What to do?

Most churchgoing folks are people of good will. We, like the folks around Jesus, try to do what is right in the eyes of God. But we're not always clear on what the expectations are. Some of us are minimalists who hope that not doing anything really wrong is the same as living right. Some are legalists, comfortable with obeying and enforcing moral laws. Some struggle to shed a few more bad habits every year so as to creep closer to the spiritual ideals over a lifetime. Jesus says if we trust in him, we'll always know what to do.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 20:10-13; John 10:31-42 (255)*. "Understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

SATURDAY, APRIL 8 LENTEN WEEKDAY

The Caiaphas inside us all

Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest who presided at the trial of Jesus, saw Jesus as a threat to his own power and privilege. So he took advantage of his close relationship with Pontius Pilate to persuade the latter to condemn Jesus to crucifixion. Though it is easy enough to dislike Caiaphas based on the biblical testimony, we do well to recognize a bit of ourselves in him. Lent is a good time to reflect on how we protect our power and privilege in ways that hurt others. Before condemning Caiaphas let's make sure we haven't done the same thing to Jesus in our own hearts!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ezekiel 37:21-28; John 11:45-56 (256)*. "It is better for you that one man should die instead of the people."



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

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