

Sunday, Mar 01, 2020

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Count me in

A fresh supply of blood keeps the body nourished, just as children add a new chapter to the story of every family. In the same way, our nation's vitality has always been renewed by the welcoming of immigrants. The church likewise depends on making the way of Jesus attractive to new members. Today we celebrate those entering our church community through the Rite of Election. As they sign their names in the Book of Election, we might ask: What are we doing to keep the Body of Christ alive and well?

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11 (22). *"How much more did the grace of God . . . overflow for the many."*

Monday, Mar 02, 2020

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Heaven all the way

Today's gospel raises the specter of "eternal punishment," better known as hell. In popular imagination, hell is a fiery place of suffering that a punishing God sends people to. Not so fast, say today's Catholic theologians, including the last three popes. God is not a torturer. Hell is not so much a physical place but a separation from God chosen by humans. "It is heaven all the way to heaven," declared Saint Catherine of Siena. To which Father Richard Rohr, O.F.M. adds, "It's hell all the way to hell." Today choose heaven.

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, Mar 03, 2020

MEMORIAL OF KATHARINE DREXEL, VIRGIN

Stand for equality

The first American-born U.S. saint, Katharine Drexel was exactly what the country needed. Born into wealth and privilege in 1858, she learned about charity from her parents and took an interest in serving Native Americans and African Americans, who she saw were unjustly excluded from the American dream. Of all the great things she did, perhaps her biggest accomplishment was the founding of Xavier University in New Orleans, the first Catholic university in the United States for African Americans. Look to her and help everyone get an equal chance.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15 (225). *"Give us this day our daily bread."*

Wednesday, Mar 04, 2020

MEMORIAL OF CASIMIR

Let's be the royal we

It's that day of the year when you can joke about the date also being a direct order—to "march forth." But under whose authority? And for what purpose? In biblical times, of course, it was at the behest of a powerful king or other sovereign. But what about us? If we were baptized as children in the Catholic rite that anoints us "priest, prophet, and king" along with Jesus, we can look to someone such as Saint Casimir. Like this beloved prince of Poland in the 1400s, we act like a sovereign whenever we use

our resources for good and influence those under our direction—be they children, students, coworkers, or fellow citizens—to do the same.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32 (226). *"When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne."*

Thursday, Mar 05, 2020

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Let the body guide you

Prayer takes many forms—mental, verbal, visual, and physical. We speak, sing, reflect silently, stand, kneel, clasp our hands together. One time-honored Catholic tradition that is rarely seen—except perhaps on Good Friday or at ordinations and monastic professions—is prostration, the act of lying facedown on the ground. It symbolizes profound adoration, humility, or sorrow before God, and also expresses the "earthy" connection between God, humanity, and all creation. We "shorten" this prayer form when we bow our heads. As you enter into your own prayer, consider how bowing your head or lying prostrate might assist you in connecting more fully or in a different way with God.

TODAY'S READINGS: Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Matthew 7:7-12 (227). *"Queen Esther, seized with mortal anguish, had recourse to the LORD. She lay prostrate upon the ground."*

Friday, Mar 06, 2020

LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

Be a little more careful

Lent invites us to a conversion of heart; any practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving can be the means of surrendering anger and loving more deeply. How might we do that? Smile at everyone you encounter today. Pray for ourselves and the people (or leaders) with whom we struggle. Ask each morning for the grace to imagine a walk in the shoes of a difficult person. Work to remove the judgment from your heart, and find the courage to mend a broken relationship. As the poet e.e. cummings put it, "be of love (a little) / More careful / Than of everything."

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

Saturday, Mar 07, 2020

MEMORIAL OF PERPETUA AND FELICITY, MARTYRS

Courage can be costly

Questions of conscience tend to get overlooked in the daily demands of work and family. But as totalitarian regimes around the world proliferate, some may face dilemmas similar to that of Perpetua and her servant Felicity. Both martyrs chose fidelity to Christ despite—or because of—their obligations as new mothers. Franz Jagerstatter, centuries later, in fidelity to his Catholic faith and love for his three daughters, refused a loyalty oath to Hitler and was beheaded. The sun rises on evil and good. But death does not have the last word. So risk speaking the truth.

TODAY'S READINGS: Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:43-48 (229). *"For [God] makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good."*

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



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