



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

SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2013

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Forgive as you're forgiven—yourself, too

To be human means to be broken in some way and therefore to need healing of one kind or another. If you've prayed for healing without effect, consider that Jesus' physical healings were often preceded by his forgiveness of the ailing one's sins. In fact Jesus understood that *forgiveness* is the real healing; it's what makes the physical healing possible. Today is a good day to consider whether you have asked for and received forgiveness for your brokenness. More important, have you forgiven yourself? New life cannot emerge from the hard ground of self-condemnation. Because God has forgiven you, how can you not forgive yourself?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:8-14; John 8:1-11 (36)*

"Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more."

MONDAY, MARCH 18

MEMORIAL OF CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

When theology was played for keeps

We tend to think of theology as something that happens in books and classrooms, but in the first centuries the setting for theology was frequently a battleground—literally. Bishops like Saint Cyril and councils of bishops condemned, excommunicated, and exiled one another on a regular basis. In the streets supporters of the various camps attacked one another's churches—all in the name of Christ. The stakes were high: The very nature of what people believed Christ's humanity and divinity to be. It is regrettable, though, that Christians thought violence an acceptable way of settling differences. For Christ, "peace be with you" was a greeting and a mandate; he extended the gift of God's peace for his followers to share.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or 13:41c-62; John 8:12-20 (second choice) (251)*

"Let us be on our guard while the promise of entering into his rest remains."

TUESDAY, MARCH 19

SOLEMNITY OF JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Fathers and sons

One can sense some awkwardness in talking about Saint Joseph. Like a queen's consort, his title is *Mary's* spouse. As those of a certain generation were carefully taught, Joseph was the *foster* father of Jesus. Joseph was daddy. Joseph was *abba*, and Jesus was Joshua-ben-Joseph—Jesus son of Joseph. While the Gospel of Luke emphasizes Mary in the birth narrative, Matthew places Joseph at the center. His *fiat*—"let it be done"—was just as necessary as Mary's. Fathers need to feel confident that Joseph is a patron who understands and a man whom Jesus loved with all his heart.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22; Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a or Luke 2:41-51a (543)*

"I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me."

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20

The founding father set the mark high

Jesus charged his Jewish critics with not doing the works of Abraham, the father they claimed. What were those works? One was Abraham's willingness to uproot his family and follow God's call into an unknown and dangerous land that God had promised as his inheritance. Another was to trust the Lord's promise of de-

scendants more numerous than the stars, even though at the time he and Sarah were childless. Finally, Abraham met the greatest challenge to his faith, the willingness even to sacrifice his beloved son if God had required it. Jesus says you must be ready to risk all and live by faith to be worthy to be called children of Abraham.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; John 8:31-42 (253)*

"Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works of Abraham.'"

THURSDAY, MARCH 21 LENTEN WEEKDAY

Make a name for yourself

In Catholic as well as other religious and cultural traditions, the taking of a new name is symbolic of entering into a new period of one's life. We see this often in scripture. For example, Abram was given the new name *Abraham* and Sarai the name *Sarah* to indicate their acceptance of God's call to a deeper relationship and a significant role in salvation history. We also see this practice in our sacramental tradition when we take on a new name symbolizing our new life in God. As you continue your Lenten journey, what name would you take to symbolize the seeds of new life emerging in you?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 17:3-9; John 8:51-59 (254)*

"I will maintain my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout the ages."

FRIDAY, MARCH 22 LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

Fast for a reason

The saints insisted fasting is useful only if some virtue attaches to it. John Chrysostom preferred that contemplation accompany our fasts. Francis de Sales saw humility as the goal. Robert Bellarmine called the chief end of fasting to strengthen the spirit. John Climacus declared that fasting roots out bad thoughts, and Cyril of Jerusalem said it prepares us for an intellectual feast. Contemporary theologians see fasting as a form of solidarity with those who are hungry or tempted. We join those deprived of the choice to eat and join the spiritual resistance of those who might yield to temptation.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 20:10-13; John 10:31-42 (255)*

"O Lord of hosts, you test the righteous, you see the heart and the mind." (NRSV)

SATURDAY, MARCH 23

MEMORIAL OF TURIBIUS OF MOGROVEJO, BISHOP

"Your mission, should you choose to accept it"

Each episode of the *Mission Impossible* TV series began with an agent getting his assignment from a tape-recorded message that included the words "your mission, should you choose to accept it." One can imagine a similar scene in 1508 when Saint Turibius, who was teaching law, was told by his bishop, "Congratulations, you're the new archbishop of Lima," an 18,000 square-mile diocese. Turibius spent the rest of his life arduously visiting and educating the mostly Amerindian population of his vast territory. Everyone has a mission from God. Choose to accept it.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ezekiel 37:21-28; John 11:45-56 (256)*

"I will take the children of Israel from among the nations . . . and gather them from all sides to bring them back to their land."

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Contributors: Alice Camille, Daniel Grippo, Father Larry Janowski, O.F.M., Ann O'Connor, Siobhán O'Neill, Joel Schorn, Patrice J. Tuohy, Sister Julie Vieira, I.H.M.