



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2015 SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Pray for an outbreak of compassion

Before the latest Ebola outbreak, there was SARS, AIDS, plagues and epidemics of all sorts, and always, leprosy. In every age, people have been ostracized and worse simply because they carry a disease that is not well understood. Ignorance leads to fear, which in turn leads to discrimination and sometimes to measures that in hindsight are seen as unnecessarily harsh. Thankfully, Jesus modeled another way of interacting with those who suffer from a frightening ailment. Compassionate care is called for.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46; 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1; Mark 1:40-45 (77).* "A leper came to Jesus and kneeling down begged him and said, 'If you wish, you can make me clean.'"

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16 FEAST OF POLYCARP, BISHOP AND MARTYR
Deep faith

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* is considered one of the earliest accounts of Christian martyrdom and is one of the very few genuine accounts from the actual age of the persecutions. Polycarp, born less than 50 years after Jesus' death, may have been one of the earliest believers, but he displayed a very mature faith. At the close of his life, as he faced martyrdom, he is recorded to have said, "Eighty and six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior? Bring forth what you will." Though you or I may not face the test of martyrdom, we face small tests of faith daily. How we respond reveals the depth of our own faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 4:1-15, 25; Mark 8:11-13 (335).* "Why does this generation seek a sign?"

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17
FEAST OF THE SEVEN HOLY FOUNDERS OF THE SERVITE ORDER, RELIGIOUS
Quiet down to listen up

Sometimes the burdens of the world seem so heavy and ugly that good souls feel the need to withdraw. The Desert Mothers and Fathers were such persons, and so were many others over the centuries who took the path of isolation. In 1240 seven Florentine nobles did just that, eventually forming the Servite Order. Most people are neither inclined nor prepared for such a radical step, let alone a lifestyle of it. But isn't it possible to withdraw regularly even in a single day, to disconnect from all those electronic wonders, not forever, but for a while? The voice of God is often small, a whispering sound. You need quiet to hear it.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 10; Mark 8:14-21 (336).* "Do you have eyes and not see, ears and not hear?"

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

ASH WEDNESDAY; DAY OF FAST AND ABSTINENCE

Traditions, traditions

The Lenten season is upon us, and with it, many traditions. For instance, though Lent is 40 days, echoing Jesus' 40 days in the desert, the actual number of days until Easter is 46. But the six Sundays, with the celebration of Eucharist echoing Resurrection, traditionally have been considered days on which fasting is not appropriate, so Lent runs Monday to Saturday (six days) for six weeks, and when you add the first four days, from Ash Wednesday to Saturday of this week, the total is 40 days from today to Holy Saturday. Traditions abound. Another example: The ashes used today were made from palm branches blessed last year on Palm Sunday. Cherish the traditions handed down to you.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Joel 2:12-18; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18 (219).* "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them."

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19 THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY
God willing

Choices are a blessing and a curse. You're lucky if you have plenty of options in life, but it's hard to know which ones to pick: Should I go to college? Should I get married? Is this the best job for my career? When should I retire? It's impossible to know what lies ahead, so it helps to let God take the lead. That doesn't mean being passive, but simply trusting in God's will. Relinquishing control to the One who loves you might be the best decision you ever make.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Luke 9:22-25 (220).* "What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?"

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

Abstinence makes the heart grow fonder

Today, like all Fridays in Lent, is a day of abstinence, a day of eating simply and refraining from meat. This simple act can become rote, without much thought about *why*. It calls for intentionality: a clear, thoughtful, informed decision to abstain, but from what? Meat? Perhaps, but how about abstaining—in that same clear, thoughtful manner—from gossip, from rash judgments, from nagging, from teasing others? This personal choice to abstain is not merely about "building character." It is to build up the body of the church.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 58:1-9a; Matthew 9:14-15 (221).* "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?"

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY; FEAST OF PETER DAMIAN, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Your peer group needs a saint

Modern-day sainthood requires endless paperwork before the canonical seal of approval. Not so for 11th-century Peter Damian, who was never formally canonized. As bishop, he was a one-man revolution against "bad priests"—those who took money in return for absolving sins. The rich were always happy to pay for their crimes, and some clerics just as glad to grease the wheels of their patrons' salvation. For his learning, zeal, and integrity, Peter was named a Doctor of the church in 1828. Sidestep the paperwork: Be a saint in integrity of heart!

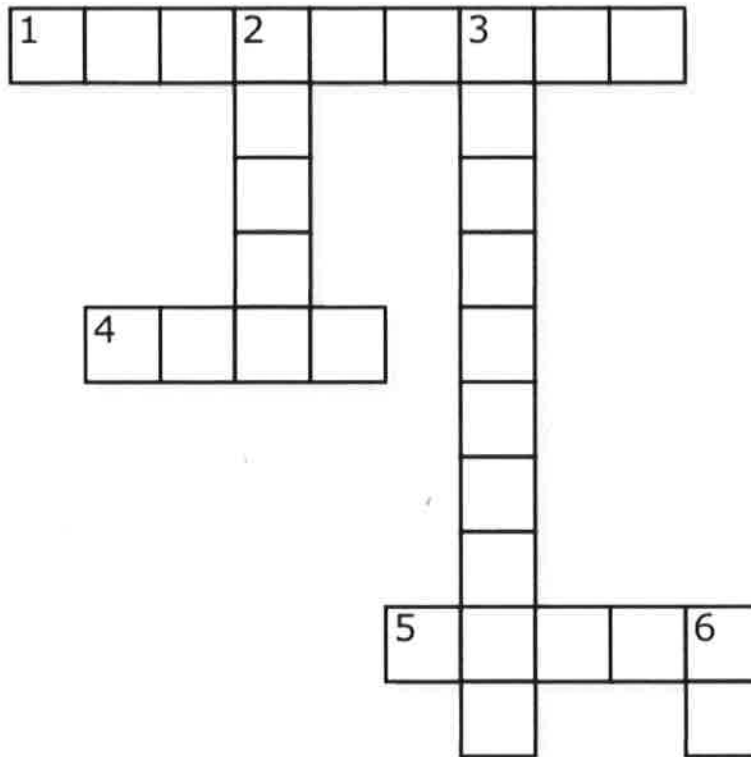
TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 58:9b-14; Luke 5:27-32 (222).* "I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners."



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

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CatholicMom.com Gospel Activities
Mark 1:40-45



Across

- 1) The man went away and began to _____ the whole matter.
- 4) This week's reading comes from the Gospel of _____
- 5) The leper said, "If you wish, you can make me _____."

Down

- 2) A _____ came to Jesus and begged him to help
- 3) It was _____ for Jesus to enter a town openly.
- 6) Did the leper keep his healing a secret as Jesus had requested (yes or no)?