

Sunday, Mar 24, 2019

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

When to be a quitter

In playground rhetoric, a quitter is among the worst things to be. Even in adulthood, none of us wishes to cultivate a reputation for not following through on projects and promises. But sometimes it's good to quit, as any nicotine addict, alcoholic, or gambler will attest. How do we judge "when to hold 'em, and when to fold 'em"? Jesus promotes fruitfulness as the most reliable measure of an effort's viability. Holding on to a fruitless situation that does not respond to herculean efforts toward cultivation is a waste of life's soil. Contemplate what to preserve and what to prune.

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12; Luke 13:1-9 (30). *"So cut [this fig tree] down. Why should it exhaust the soil?"*

Monday, Mar 25, 2019

SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

Do not be afraid

Artist Henry Ossawa Tanner's painting of the Annunciation allows us to imagine the awesome exchange between Mary and the angel Gabriel in a new way. The light in the painting depicts the Divine messenger, but it is the look on Mary's face that reminds us of her humanity and makes us ponder our own. When the unexpected or the confusing complexity of life stops us in our tracks, when we do not understand, and when we feel afraid, it is God's promise to be with us and Mary's model of acceptance and trust that can console and lead and guide us. If there is a doubt, or a struggle to understand, or a fear of the unknown for you today, surrender your worries to Mary and ask for her help.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10; Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38 (545). *"May it be done to me according to your word."*

Tuesday, Mar 26, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Lighten your load

Forgiveness is one of those things that's easier said than done. Even after we've reluctantly uttered the words, "OK, you're forgiven," who among us hasn't secretly carried a grudge against our offender? Judging by the number of lawsuits filed each year, we aren't so good at forgiving our debtors or trespassers. But does "forgiving from the heart," as we are called to do, mean we have to become everyone's favorite doormat? Hardly. It simply means that we accept the fact that others are as human and prone to folly as are we. Lent is the perfect season to practice forgiving from the heart. Give it a try—you'll feel lighter when you no longer have to carry that grudge around.

TODAY'S READINGS: Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Matthew 18:21-35 (238). *"Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?"*

Wednesday, Mar 27, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

School is in session

In his sixth-century *Rule*, Saint Benedict, one of the founders of monasticism, described a monastery to be a "school of the Lord's service." School may not be everyone's favorite place, but in the best sense of the term, a school is a good place to learn, and the Catholic tradition offers a number of them. The liturgy, for example, is a school for prayer—think of all the different kinds of

prayer in the Mass—and also for life: You learn to make yourself a living sacrifice in communion with Jesus. Scripture, the saints, and the church's moral teachings also offer "learning opportunities" to explore. It's time to get some schooling!

TODAY'S READINGS: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Matthew 5:17-19 (239).

"Hear the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you to observe."

Thursday, Mar 28, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

How to be more prophet-able

Many think of biblical prophets as people whom God gave the mysterious power to see into the future. Prophets, however, were not crystal-ball gazers who predicted what was to come. Most of the time they talked about the present—their present—and sometimes about the past as well. They focused on what the People of God were doing—or not doing—in their relationship with God. In bringing God's word to a situation, they called people back to God and showed them that God was still a guiding force in their lives. God summoned a long line of prophets to serve the Israelites, and there have been Christian prophets, too. A few prophets might even be around today. Hear any?

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23 (240). *"I have sent you untiringly all my servants the prophets."*

Friday, Mar 29, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

When will we forgive?

Nobody likes a traitor. From Brutus to John Wilkes Booth to Judas, those who betray ultimate loyalties like patriotism or friendship seem beyond redemption. A deep bond also exists within families that can be trespassed or broken. In times of infidelity, mistreatment, severed trust, or divorce, it can seem that the idea of family itself has been lost. While people often don't feel the capacity to pardon violations, emotion plays only a part in the task of forgiveness. Forgiving is also an act of will, not only of feelings. God models the decision of forgiveness for us, allowing the healing to begin. Abstain from meat today—and from withholding the healing power of forgiveness.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 14:2-10; Mark 12:28-34 (241). *"I will love them freely; for my wrath is turned away from them."*

Saturday, Mar 30, 2019

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Go ahead and ask

While most of us do not commit obviously grievous sins, we still "miss the mark" regularly in subtle ways, for example, by being angry or self-righteous. Although it is not easy or comfortable to admit that we are not perfect, our spiritual well-being depends upon it. May our prayer today be that we are made aware of the times and ways we have sinned so that we can ask for God's mercy. For although God doesn't wait to be asked before forgiving us, we cannot receive that forgiveness if we haven't acknowledged our need for it.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14 (242). *"The tax collector 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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