

## Sunday, Mar 07, 2021

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

### Balancing act

Saint Paul lived in that perilous posture you see in cartoon characters whose feet are on opposite supports that are swiftly gliding apart. As a privileged Roman citizen of Cilicia (modern Turkey), Paul had one foot firmly planted in the reality of Greco-Roman culture. Yet the other was just as securely fixed in his Jewish faith. It was a tough posture to maintain. Then Paul encountered the Risen Lord and understood in the gospel the most excellent way to unite Jews and Greeks in an elegantly reconciling Christian message. Christianity is for uniting, not dividing.

TODAY'S READINGS: Year B: Exodus 20:1-17; I Corinthians 1:22-25; John 2:13-25 (29). *"Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified."*

## Monday, Mar 08, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Sisters act

How fitting that the first day of Catholic Sisters Week is also International Women's Day, celebrating achievements of women in politics, culture, and society. Catholic sisters have been making the world a better place for centuries! By teaching children, healing the sick, fighting injustice, promoting peace, defending the planet, creating community, and empowering other women, Catholic sisters are a powerful gospel witness—and many of us have been on the receiving end of their work and prayers. Celebrate sisters this week—find information and resources at [catholicsistersweek.org](http://catholicsistersweek.org).

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 5:1-15ab; Luke 4:24-30 (237). *"Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place."*

## Tuesday, Mar 09, 2021

MEMORIAL OF FRANCES OF ROME, RELIGIOUS

### A religious life for all

During a week that celebrates Catholic sisters, women religious, we remember an Italian saint who found a way to work and pray like a nun while staying committed to her immediate family. In fact, Frances of Rome—who nursed her sick husband and children, as well as the poor, during a plague in the 1400s—is commonly called a Benedictine oblate. An oblate is anyone who wants to share in the common vision and prayer of a religious community without officially entering religious life. Explore religious communities at [VocationNetwork.org](http://VocationNetwork.org).

TODAY'S READINGS: Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Matthew 18:21-35 (238). *"Let our sacrifice be in your presence today as we follow you unreservedly."*

## Wednesday, Mar 10, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Love will change the world

*"Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."* This quote belongs to Harriet Tubman, who died on this day in 1913. This courageous woman, who escaped the chains of slavery and then led hundreds of slaves to freedom, reminds us that no matter the odds, no matter the restrictions, God gives us strength to reach for the stars and become the Love we were created to be. On this mid-March day, in the third week of Lent, perhaps we could use a

little encouragement to keep reaching for the stars as we respond to our Lenten call to love as God loves. Take one courageous step toward racial healing today.

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

*"But whoever obey and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*

## Thursday, Mar 11, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Stretch your heart

One year ago this week, COVID-19 began to seriously disrupt lives in North America. During this tumultuous year, everyone has suffered, whether from isolation, illness, unemployment, or another pandemic problem. Pope Francis has urged us to grow from these experiences: "If we are to come out of this crisis less selfish than when we went in, we have to let ourselves be touched by others' pain," he wrote. Has COVID-19 stretched your heart? Whether you give to a food pantry or call a shut-in, act on your compassion today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23 (240). *"Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house."*

## Friday, Mar 12, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

### Abstinence makes the heart grow fonder

As we practice Lenten abstinence today, we might keep in mind these words from fourth-century Saint Basil the Great: "True fast is the estrangement from evil, temperance of tongue, abstinence from anger, separation from desires, slander, falsehood, and perjury. Privation of these is true fasting." Being mindful of what goes into our mouths is important today, but being mindful of what comes out of them, even more so. Strive to abstain from the unkind, false, or hostile word today. And if you find you have broken the fast, make amends as best you can. Let this be your spiritual discipline today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 14:2-10; Mark 12:28-34 (241). *"You are not far from the kingdom of God."*

## Saturday, Mar 13, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Pray the mercy mantra

Gregory Palamas, a saint of the Eastern Orthodox, Melkite, and Ukrainian Catholic Churches, taught that the use of the Jesus Prayer—"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"—prepares one to receive the grace-filled light of the Lord. This short, formulaic prayer has its roots in today's parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. Saint John Paul II repeatedly cited Palamas as one of the great spiritual writers of history. Today, join with John Paul II and Palamas in heaven and the multitude of Catholics throughout the world who recite this spiritual mantra over and over again seeking the Lord's mercy.

TODAY'S READINGS: Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14 (242). *"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

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



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## Sunday, Mar 14, 2021

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

### Don't look at me

During Lent, it's easy to imagine we're scoring points with heaven by all this fasting, praying, and almsgiving. Giving up binge-watching for a season, spending 15 minutes daily in contemplation, or funding a different cause each Friday are all worthy activities that may deepen our commitment to faithful living. None of these practices will actually buy us a ticket to paradise, however. Grace is free and unearned, so we can't boast about it. Our Lenten practices are simply our way of saying "Thank You" to the Giver of all good gifts.

TODAY'S READINGS: Year B: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21 (32). *"It is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast."*

## Monday, Mar 15, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Engender cooperation

There have been some famous male/female teams in the history of Catholic religious orders. Benedict and Scholastica, Francis and Clare, Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross. Another team included Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, whose feast day is today. While Vincent founded the Vincentians, together he and Louise cofounded the Daughters of Charity. Today, there are 14,000 Daughters of Charity serving the poor all over the world. Commit to improving gender relations in your daily interactions. When woman and men feel free to make their unique contributions, great things can happen.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 65:17-21; John 4:43-54 (244). *"Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe."*

## Tuesday, Mar 16, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Healing water everywhere

The custom of dipping a finger into holy water and making the sign of the cross upon entering a church serves to remind us of our Baptism, whereby we first entered the Catholic Church. But the waters of Baptism do much more, altering our metaphysical makeup in a profound way. Christians adopted the ritual from John the Baptist, but the practice has even more ancient roots. It's tied to the Jewish use of *mikvahs*, purifying pools—including those mentioned in the Bible, like Bethesda and Siloam—that believers visited to cleanse themselves of sickness and sin. Let your own bathing rituals remind you of your baptismal promises.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12; John 5:1-16 (245). *"They shall be watered by the flow from the sanctuary."*

## Wednesday, Mar 17, 2021

OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF PATRICK, BISHOP, MISSIONARY

### Offer an Irish-inspired blessing

As the church and the Irish, and all who are "Irish for the day," celebrate the feast of Saint Patrick, let's also celebrate what we know of this remarkable fifth-century saint who brought the message of Christ to Ireland. Patrick writes in his *Confession* of his homeland (Roman Britain), his youthful captivity by pirates, his conversion, and his deepening desire to proclaim God's presence. There is no mention of snakes or shamrocks, but there is strong testament to Patrick's missionary zeal: *"That is why I cannot be silent . . . about such great blessings and such a gift that the Lord*

*so kindly bestowed in the land of my captivity."* Look for God's presence in this day and share your own good news.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 49:8-15; John 5:17-30 (246). *"I cannot do anything on my own; . . . because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me."*

## Thursday, Mar 18, 2021

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

### Explore the roots of your faith

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem was a scholar and catechist at heart, but he spent years embroiled in the Arian heresy, which denied the divinity of Christ. He spent 16 of his 35 years as Jerusalem's archbishop in exile over Arianism and political wrangling. Although he died in 386, it took until 1882 for him to be declared a doctor of the church for his significant theological contributions, many written for adults joining the church. In keeping with Saint Cyril's dedication to catechesis, devote some time today to learning more about your faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 32:7-14; John 5:31-47 (247). *"The works that the Father gave me to accomplish . . . testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me."*

## Friday, Mar 19, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

### Try a little tenderness

When God's plans collided with his, Joseph attended to a calling beyond the law or custom of his day. He must have felt angry, betrayed, confused. But he also knew something greater was at stake than simply following rigid Mosaic code, which would have demanded stoning a woman found to be "with child" before marriage. Instead, he trusted Mary and trusted the dream that brought him angelic counsel. As Pope Francis said in his homily on this feast day in 2013, "in [Joseph's] heart we see great tenderness, which is not the virtue of the weak but rather a sign of strength." Practice tenderness—the sign of a strong 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). *"He did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home."*

## Saturday, Mar 20, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Lie low to be raised high

In 1812, six young women joined to devote their lives to providing care and education for Catholic families living in Kentucky. Nineteen-year-old Catherine Spaulding from Maryland was chosen to lead the group that became the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (S.C.N.). Mother Catherine guided the congregation for 45 years, until her death on March 20, 1858. Today 550 S.C.N. sisters serve in 20 states and four foreign countries. Find your own quiet path of humility so that you, too, can be exalted.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 11:18-20; John 7:40-53 (249). *"Never before has anyone spoken like this man."*

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



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## Sunday, Mar 21, 2021

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

### See inside for more information

Sometimes your reputation precedes you. The prophet Jeremiah is famous for lamentations, but he is less known for the centerpiece of his message: that everything we need to know about how to live is already planted in our hearts. On this International Forest Day, let's not miss the forest for the trees on another great truth rooted deeply in our midst. Trees are friends: bearing fruit, shade, and beauty wherever they're planted. They are also necessary allies in achieving planetary sustainability, food security, and poverty eradication. Play your part in protecting God's greenery.

TODAY'S READINGS: Year B: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:7-9; John 12:20-33 (35). *"I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts."*

## Monday, Mar 22, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Tap into the virtues of water

As part of its observance of the 2020 World Water Day, the Vatican published *Aqua fons vitae. Orientations on water: symbol of the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth*. The document, meant to support the human right to clean water, reminds us that "by means of the water made holy by the Spirit," God gives us life and renews us. The way we respect water is an indicator of how we are "taking care of the early garden" entrusted to us. In observance of World Water Day, educate yourself and others about the challenges the world faces in ensuring access to clean water: the holy source of all life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; John 8:1-11 (251). *"Go, and from now on do not sin any more."*

## Tuesday, Mar 23, 2021

MEMORIAL OF TURIBIUS OF MOGROVEJO, BISHOP

### To reveal Christ, go the distance

In 2018, Pope Francis met with the bishops of Peru, invoking the patron saint of Latin American bishops—Turibius of Mogrovejo. "This holy bishop is frequently portrayed as a 'new Moses,'" said the pope. "The Vatican has a picture in which Saint Turibius appears crossing a great river whose waters open before him like the Red Sea, so that he could get to the other shore, where numerous native peoples awaited him." Turibius cast aside life in Spain to live among native Peruvians. What can you cast aside so others might see Christ in you?

TODAY'S READINGS: Numbers 21:4-9; John 8:21-30 (252). *"Their patience worn out by the journey, the people complained against God and Moses."*

## Wednesday, Mar 24, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Be transformed by justice

This is an anniversary of martyrdom. The archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero, was murdered on this day in 1980 as he presided at Mass in the chapel of a church-run hospital for cancer patients and the terminally ill. Romero, an unassuming man who in earlier years had ministered to the country's elite, experienced a late-in-life transformation that took him from quiet acceptance of the status quo to courageous critic of his government's repression of the poor. His weekly sermons championed justice, challenged

the government, and eventually cost him his life: "It is not the will of God for some to have everything and for others to have nothing," he said. "It is not enough to attend Mass on Sunday . . . God wants the garment of justice. God wants his Christians dressed in love." Begin to dress the part by questioning the "way we always do things."

TODAY'S READINGS: Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; John 8:31-42 (253). *"If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

## Thursday, Mar 25, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

### Prepare to say yes

Today we celebrate the Annunciation, that famous conversation between the angel Gabriel and Mary, in which Mary embraced what must have been the frightening prospect of bearing the Son of God. Mary's yes is seen as the model for all Christians in response to our individual callings, and in response to everyday choices to do what is most loving, moral, and just. Perhaps today you will be called to make a choice for faithfulness; prepare yourself now to say yes to God, as did Mary.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:10; Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38 (545). *"Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.'"*

## Friday, Mar 26, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

### Meet violence with hope

Violence has made an all-too-comfortable home in our lives. It's in our TV shows and movies, our politics, our streets, and even our own hearts. In a pastoral message on violence in 1994, the U.S. Catholic Bishops wrote, "Hostility, hatred, despair, and indifference are at the heart of a growing culture of violence." How do we meet these experiences with compassion and offer a safe place for peace? "The path to a more peaceful future is found in a rediscovery of personal responsibility, respect for human life and human dignity, and a recommitment to social justice. The best antidote to violence is hope."

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 20:10-13; John 10:31-42 (255). *"[They] picked up rocks to stone Jesus."*

## Saturday, Mar 27, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### The long history of judicial corruption

We learn more each day about inequities in our judicial system. Justice, it seems, is more often praised than practiced, especially when it comes to treatment of minorities and those who challenge authority. We could include Jesus in the long list of victims of injustice. At this moment in Lent, as we prepare to enter Holy Week, the wheels of injustice are set in motion by Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest who will play a key role in the coming execution of the prophet of Peace. Pray today for forgiveness for the injustices committed in our names, and in our hearts.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 37:21-28; John 11:45-56 (256). *"So from that day on they planned to kill him."*

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## Sunday, Mar 28, 2021

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

### Remember kindly

None of us needs a reminder that life is full of suffering and loss. We'll all have a generous share of sorrow before we're through. What bears constant reminding is that seeds of kindness are sown each hour as well. In the final days before his Passion, an unnamed woman anointed Jesus with costly perfumed oil. It was a symbolic act, signaling his role as God's anointed and one prepared for death. It was also a gentle act in a week that would hold much cruelty. Seed the world with small kindnesses to testify against the darkness.

TODAY'S READINGS: Procession: Mark 11:1-10 or John 12:12-16 (37); Mass: Isaiah 50:4-7; Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1—15:47 (38).  
*"Wherever the gospel is proclaimed to the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."*

## Monday, Mar 29, 2021

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

### A most worthy work of mercy

Among the corporal works of mercy, there's one you might take for granted: bury the dead. We bury our own friends and family, but what about those in your community who die with no one to bury them? There are pallbearer ministries—sometimes named after Saint Joseph of Arimathea, who provided a tomb for Jesus' burial—for the homeless, often veterans, and others left alone in the world who need someone to see them home one final time. See what your parish and local funeral home does for those who die alone. Can you offer them the dignity of your presence or, at the very least, during this time of COVID, your specific prayers?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11 (257). *"Let her keep this for the day of my burial."*

## Tuesday, Mar 30, 2021

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

### Can I get an amen?

We know the word *amen* typically ends a prayer. It's there to signal a shared agreement to what's been said, as in: "Yes, it's so." But what about an *amen* at the beginning of a statement? And what if it's used twice, as is common in the Gospel of John? "Amen, amen, I say to you," Jesus says repeatedly. According to scripture scholar Raymond Brown, Jesus uses the phrase to show he speaks with the authority of God. Jesus speaks God's truth—which is why some translations say "Truly, truly" instead. Listen closely for God's truth this Holy Week.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33, 36-38 (258).  
*"Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me."*

## Wednesday, Mar 31, 2021

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

### Patience, people

Tomorrow being Holy Thursday, today is the last full day of Lent. And how was our Lent? Do you feel relief that your Lenten resolutions can be set aside? Saddened to lose the extra time set aside for prayer? Perhaps regret that your anticipated Lenten practices got lost in the daily commotion of the past six weeks? Here is the important question: Is your heart open to God and God's love? Lent is a gift of time, to be sure, but the opportunity to

fast, pray, and give alms, to grow in the love of God is ours every day. The words of Saint Francis de Sales come to mind: "Have patience with all things, but first of all with yourself."

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Matthew 26:14-25 (259).  
*"Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear."*

## Thursday, Apr 01, 2021

HOLY THURSDAY; EVENING MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

### Get down and dirty

Some parishes have trouble finding parishioners willing to have the priest wash their feet at the Mass of the Lord's Supper. The idea of washing hands instead has been proposed. But the church has been firm: The stooping down to wash lowly, possibly dusty feet sends the message of humble, loving service that Christ intended when he performed this act himself. The next time you are called on to wash dishes, take out the garbage, or do a bit of dirty work, see it as a chance to live the spirit of Christ's act of washing his disciples' feet.

TODAY'S READINGS: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15 (39). *"If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet."*

## Friday, Apr 02, 2021

FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION (GOOD FRIDAY); DAY OF ABSTINENCE

### Mercy me

Mercy is not always something we think about—until we are in need of it. Mercy refers to God's compassion and kindness toward us, especially when we have not been our best selves. On Good Friday, we see clearly, though painfully, the extent of God's mercy in a love so great that Jesus, God's beloved, is willing to go to the cross. We keep ourselves ever mindful of mercy as a way to understand a God whose fundamental "disposition" is one of loving kindness—no matter what. As you pray through this holy day, remember your own experiences of God's mercy.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 52:13—53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1—19:42 (40). *"And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit."*

## Saturday, Apr 03, 2021

HOLY SATURDAY; EASTER VIGIL

### This holy in-between time

Scripture commentator John T. Squires calls Holy Saturday a "liminal space" marked by waiting and not knowing. This is the quiet, uncertain day between Crucifixion and Resurrection. In some sense, this entire past year has been a liminal year, as we are caught between the emergence of a history-changing virus and its hoped-for suppression. What can we learn from the disciples who waited and prayed? They prayed that life would emerge victorious over death. Let that be our prayer as well.

TODAY'S READINGS: Vigil: Genesis 1:1—2:2; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15—15:1; Exodus 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18; Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11; Baruch 3:9-15, 32—4:4; Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28; Romans 6:3-11; Mark 16:1-7 (41). *"Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."*

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