

Sunday, Mar 29, 2020

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT; THIRD SCRUTINY OF THE ELECT

The nightmare is over

The moment of waking from a nightmare is suffused with relief. Whoever was chasing you dissolves, and whatever threatened harm has vanished. Grief and loss, however, can be living nightmares from which we're unable to shake ourselves awake. Yet as the Scrutiny prayers for our Elect this Sunday affirm, the "horror of sin, which distorts life" is indeed an evil from which we can escape. Death has an end, and love will have its victory. We pray with our Elect for freedom from all paths that lead to death and a greater attraction to the ways that restore life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 37:12-14; Romans 8:8-11; John 11:1-45 (34). "Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live."

Monday, Mar 30, 2020

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Get into the Spirit

On this day in 1990, Sister Thea Bowman, F.S.P.A. died but the voice that nurtured countless thousands was not silenced. Before Sister Thea, black Catholics were expected to give up their music, dance, and spiritual testifying because these were suspiciously "Protestant" customs. She restored their identity, shaped it through the Institute of Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University, and shared it with those of other backgrounds. Shortly before her death, Thea spoke to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops from her wheelchair. In the last five minutes of that talk, Thea leads the visibly moved bishops in singing "We Shall Overcome." Thea called the spirituals she grew up with "bonfires to warm chilly nights." Such songs of hope warm a few hearts as well. Sing a spirit-filled song, today, in honor of Sister Thea.

TODAY'S READINGS: Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or 13:41c-62; John 8:1-11 (251). "Neither do I condemn you."

Tuesday, Mar 31, 2020

LENTEN WEEKDAY

I am vs. I AM

John's gospel uses the term "I AM" to identify Jesus. That's a reference to the Exodus story when God revealed the divine presence to Moses using the name "I AM." So the presence of Christ in us, in our humanity, is the "I AM" who is with us. Of course there's another "I am" who is the self, our ego. That's the conflict. Just as John the Baptist said, "He must increase and I must decrease," the best thing we can do is surrender the "I am" in us to the "I AM" who is Christ.

TODAY'S READINGS: Numbers 21:4-9; John 8:21-30 (252). "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM."

Wednesday, Apr 01, 2020

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Freedom's not just another word

"Truth will set you free" and other heady thoughts about freedom are abundant in today's gospel. Across the centuries, the Catholic Church has had a lot to say about freedom (though, admittedly, it also has remained silent at times when it should have spoken out). A foundation for much of that thought springs from the concept that God has granted human beings freedom to choose between good and evil, and the "more one does what is good, the freer one becomes," as the Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it

(1733). In a world that often glorifies power and money, it is hard to believe that truth and goodness are the keys to freedom. But have a little faith and see where it gets you.

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, Apr 02, 2020

MEMORIAL OF FRANCIS OF PAOLA, HERMIT

Vegan before vegan was a thing

The movement toward organic farming and more humane animal husbandry has helped raise our awareness of the impact of our food production on the vast chain of creation. Saint Francis of Paola intuited all this more than 500 years ago, when he founded the religious order of Minims, "the least," in the spirit of the "Lesser Brothers" of Saint Francis of Assisi. In addition to the usual monastic vows, Minims take a fourth vow to abstain from meat, eggs, and all dairy products, not only to practice a "Lenten way of life," but also in an effort to "do no harm" to other living beings. Bring a bit of the spirit of the Minims to your dining table and daily life.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 17:3-9; John 8:51-59 (254). "They picked up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid and went out of the temple area."

Friday, Apr 03, 2020

LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

Banish the bullying

Growing up, it seemed that every school, every playground had that kid—you know the one, the bully. That child taunted, picked on, and terrorized others. Unfortunately, as adults, we see bullies too in our workplaces, our relationships, on social media, in political life, and so on. As Catholics, we have a religious duty to take a stand against bullies. "Life, especially human life, belongs to God; whoever attacks human life attacks God's very self" (*Evangelium vitae* §9). The church calls us to stop bullying in all its forms, including the ways we might bully others. Pope Francis challenges us: "What is it within us that pushes us to mock and mistreat others weaker than we are?" Be especially conscious today of the way you treat others.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 20:10-13; John 10:31-42 (255). "I have shown you many good works from my Father. For which of these are you trying to stone me?"

Saturday, Apr 04, 2020

MEMORIAL OF ISIDORE OF SEVILLE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Go down in history

It is amazing the impact one learned person can have on the course of history. Because sixth-century Isidore of Seville was a dedicated scholar and shared his erudition with others in dictionaries, encyclopedias, and great histories, much of the ancient world's wisdom was preserved during the chaotic Middle Ages. He was sometimes called the "Schoolmaster of the Middle Ages" because his writings were used as textbooks for nine centuries! Perhaps more remarkable, he combined this great learning with an equal sense of compassion and charity toward those less fortunate. Be wise and kind and you will earn your place in salvation history.

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 37:21-28; John 11:45-56 (256). "What are we going to do? This man is performing many signs."

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



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