



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

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2012

### FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT Follow the rainbow

The rare and beautiful event of a rainbow usually lasts only a short while, but its colors and soaring form make a lasting impression. It follows storms as if to show the incredible beauty and peace of creation after a demonstration of its awesome power. In Hebrew scripture the rainbow symbolizes God's promise to Noah never to destroy the earth and all its creatures again with water, but just as important it was a sign of the wonderful re-creation of the world after the destruction of the biblical Flood. The season of Lent offers a unique opportunity to make a course correction on the path toward God. The goal is clear: the new life of Easter, fixed before your eyes like a glorious rainbow.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 9:8-15; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15 (23)*

*"I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth."*

## MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27 LENTEN WEEKDAY

### The least we can do

The vivid biblical descriptions of the Last or Final Judgment are designed to impress upon us the importance of taking our obligations to the less fortunate very seriously indeed. "But where to begin?" you might ask. The Corporal Works of Mercy are a pretty good place. If we each do our part, we can hope for the day when there will be no more hungry to feed, homeless to shelter, prisoners to visit, and the like. Then we can welcome that Final Judgment with confidence. But let's get started today—after all, none of us knows the day or the hour.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Matthew 25:31-46 (224)*

*"Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."*

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28 LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Listen with your heart

One of the cornerstones of Lent is prayer, something we often consider *our* job: talking to God, pouring out our hearts, asking for what we need. It is all that, but more. If we compare prayer to the living intimacy between people who love each other, we will see clearly that if their conversation is one-sided, if they do not let the other speak, if they do not listen with the same intensity with which the other pours out their needs, then something is wrong. Someone put it this way: *Show up. Shut up. Pay attention.* Crude, but true. To spruce up one's spiritual life is to consider how one prays. Is there room in my time with God just to be? Must I always be talking or reading or planning? Can I simply wait? Listen?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15 (225)*

*"My word . . . shall not return to me void."*

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 29 LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Take a leap this year

Pope Gregory XIII established the calendar we use to count our days, weeks, and years in 1582—and there have been calls for its reform more or less continuously ever since. There are differences in the details, but in general the reform advocates say every month should have the same number of days and every date should fall on the same day of the week. These appeals for a new

ordering of days always fail, partly because humans resist change and partly because an unchanging calendar seems a little too rigid, a little too perfect. Logic and perfection have their place, to be sure. But so do flexibility and imperfection. February 29 is a good date to celebrate the latter.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32*

*"There is something greater than Solomon here."*

## THURSDAY, MARCH 1 LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Persistence pays off

The story of Queen Esther told in the Bible book that bears her name is a fascinating novella filled with subterfuge and intrigue. Esther uses her wit and wiles to get what she wants from the king, but her masterstroke is to use prayer and petition to get what she needs from God: namely a plan for deliverance for herself and her people. As we begin our Lenten journey, our first step should be to ask God to help us chart our course. Then, like Esther, we must fast, pray, and wait, and soon God's plan for us will be revealed.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Esther C 12, 14-16, 23-25; Matthew 7: 7-12 (227)*

*"Turn our mourning into gladness and our sorrows into wholeness."*

## FRIDAY, MARCH 2 WORLD DAY OF PRAYER; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

### Out of the depths I cry to you

For some, prayer seems like a natural talent. For others, pulling teeth is easier! But for all, prayer is a necessary component of the life of faith. We seek a vital relationship with our Maker, and no relationship is complete without deep and meaningful communication. God begins the conversation with the words of scripture. You add your part in interceding for needs, offering thanks for gifts received, and singing praise for a world of wonders. As you abstain from meat on this global day of prayer, recommit yourself to the ways of fairness in family, work, civic, and international relationships.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26 (228)*

*"Hear now, house of Israel: Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?"*

## SATURDAY, MARCH 3 FEAST OF KATHARINE DREXEL, VIRGIN

### Share your gifts

When you think about Catholic stewardship, does your mind go to collection envelopes and fundraising appeals? While certainly that is part of what it means, stewardship goes far beyond financial contributions. The U.S. Catholic Bishops wrote that stewardship is a call to receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly with others, and return them with increase to God (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*). We see examples of such stewardship in the church through people like Saint Katharine Drexel. She made good use of her education and financial resources, and she also made it her life's work to help people in need, an effort that continues through the religious community she founded, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. How can you create a legacy of stewardship?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:43-48 (229)*

*"The Lord . . . is to be your God and you are to walk in his ways and . . . hearken to his voice."*

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