

## Sunday, Feb 21, 2021

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

### Doing the rite thing

Today, some of our neighbors are going to make a countercultural choice. They're going to sign the Book of the Elect, signaling their decision to be baptized, confirmed, and to receive First Eucharist at this year's Easter Vigil. These Elect have been studying for months or years to embrace the life of the church. Why would anyone make this choice in the 21st century? For some, it may have begun as intellectual curiosity. For others, it's a journey of the heart. For all, it's what they've seen in folks like us that make Catholic Christianity an inspiring choice. Let's help keep the inspiration going!

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 9:8-15; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15 (23). *"The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

## Monday, Feb 22, 2021

FEAST OF THE CHAIR OF PETER, APOSTLE

### Recognize the chair

Jesus loved us so much that he entrusted us to someone he trusted deeply. In fact, in the Gospel of John, Jesus asked Peter three times if his devotion was assured. He named him "rock" so he would be a solid foundation upon which to build the church, and for 2,000 years Peter's successors have had the responsibility of tending his sheep. Today we celebrate the seat of the pope's authority as Christ's representative on Earth, the protector Jesus wanted for his flock. Ask the Holy Spirit to always guide the one who sits in Peter's chair.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 16:13-19 (535). *"I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven."*

## Tuesday, Feb 23, 2021

MEMORIAL OF POLYCARP, BISHOP, MARTYR

### Words to live forever by

Polycarp's death in 155 is one of the first accounts of Christian martyrdom in a public arena. The elderly bishop was resolute and serene even as he was burned and stabbed before a frenzied crowd. Included in the accounts is the two hours of prayer Polycarp began upon his arrest, so powerful it unnerved his Roman guards. But Polycarp was also an Apostolic Father, specifically a disciple of Saint John the Evangelist. Thus, he had firsthand knowledge of John's words from Jesus: "Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 6:7-15 (225). *"Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

## Wednesday, Feb 24, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### A good day to make amends

We are one week into this Lenten season, so perhaps it is time to have a conversation with our Lord. Imagine you are walking with Jesus, side by side, and he asks you, "Is there any person you think of who you have hurt or judged, or any action that comes to mind that you know was wrong? Anything you repent?" You take a moment, and standing next to him, you feel his love for you. Regret and sorrow arise as you admit the mistakes that come to

mind. You ask for the grace to make amends in whatever way possible. Find a way today to make something right.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jonah 3:1-10; Luke 11:29-32 (226). *"At the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here."*

## Thursday, Feb 25, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Has prayer moved you?

It is tempting to think about prayer in a transactional way: I ask, therefore God gives. Today's gospel may even appear to encourage this form of thought: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find." But Catholic teaching urges us to see God's response to prayer broadly. Pope Francis explains: "Prayer always transforms reality: if things around us do not change, at least our hearts are changed. Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to every man and woman who prays." If you have a prayer that seems unanswered, consider how your heart was moved by the mere act of praying.

TODAY'S READINGS: Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Matthew 7:7-12 (227). *"For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds."*

## Friday, Feb 26, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY; DAY OF ABSTINENCE

### The low rumble within

Anger is one of our human "passions," the Catechism of the Catholic Church instructs, neither good nor bad in and of itself. Anger can provide us with helpful information that we feel wronged by someone or something. It may be intense or a low rumble within. Lent is an opportunity to become still, listen to our anger, and examine its source. How might we invite God into these rough spaces for healing? Desiring healing does not disregard hurt or suffering; rather we seek to "unhook" from anger to live in peace. Unhooking might mean talking with a loved one who hurt us. It might mean protesting against injustice. It might mean forgiving ourselves. What might be rumbling within your heart?

TODAY'S READINGS: Ezekiel 18:21-28; Matthew 5:20-26 (228). *"Go first and be reconciled."*

## Saturday, Feb 27, 2021

LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Agree to disagree

There is no more timely message for our divided age of partisan politics than "love your enemies." But how is that even possible? One perspective that some find helpful is that "you don't have to like someone to love them." Love in this context is not a warm, fuzzy feeling but a decision to treat with respect, to "do unto others." A tall order, but it does help to remove the expectation that we have to become fast friends with those we oppose. And maybe it will lead to a time when we can see difficult folks as people with whom we happen to disagree, rather than mortal enemies. Jesus was all about reconciliation. Let's take up the mantle.

TODAY'S READINGS: Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:43-48 (229). *"But I say to you, love your enemies."*

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



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