



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

## SUNDAY, MARCH 27, 2011

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT; FIRST SCRUTINY

### Your life bears examination

Today we celebrate the first of three “scrutinies”: powerful ancient rites to heal and strengthen those who are preparing to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. They comprise four parts: silent prayer, intercessions, a prayer of exorcism, and a laying on of hands. While the scrutinies are for the Elect, they are also an opportunity for each of us to examine, or scrutinize, our own lives in light of the gospel. The story of the Samaritan woman at the well encourages us to consider for ourselves, “What am I thirsting for? Where am I looking for refreshment? How can I tap into that infinite well of blessing Jesus talked about? What’s keeping me from doing so?”

TODAY’S READINGS: *Exodus 17:3-7; Romans 5:1-2,5-8; John 4:5-42 or 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42*

*“Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty.”*

## MONDAY, MARCH 28 LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Children should be seen and heard

Jesus loves the little children, according to the Sunday school song. But, sadly, the world loves them less. Children the world over are routinely neglected, abused, underfed, and under-educated by their adult stewards. When it comes to little girls, the statistics are alarmingly higher. “More girls have been killed in the last 50 years, precisely because they were girls, than men were killed in all the battles of the 20th century,” say the Pulitzer Prize-winning authors of *Half the Sky*. Naaman the general once took the advice of a child slave he’d kidnapped from an enemy and was cured of leprosy. Spend timing loving—and listening to—a child today.

TODAY’S READINGS: *2 Kings 5:1-15ab; Luke 4:24-30*

*“The Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel.”*

## TUESDAY, MARCH 29 LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Greed is definitely not good

In the 1987 movie *Wall Street* corporate deal-maker Gordon Gekko gives a speech in which he says that “Greed is . . . good. Greed is right. Greed works.” Looking back from the perspective of the Wall Street crash of several years ago, we can see where that kind of thinking leads. Greed is one of the seven deadly sins for a reason. It can wreak tremendous destruction in personal lives as well as in society and the natural environment. Saint Thomas Aquinas said of greed that it was a “sin against God, just as all mortal sins, in as much as man condemns things eternal for the sake of temporal things.” Take time for a quick internal evaluation to make sure your own “desire to acquire” is under control.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Matthew 18:21-35*

*“Seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’”*

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30 LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Know the rules

As teenagers many of us had regular disagreements with our parents. Much of what we wanted earned their thumbs down. When they said no, we’d lay on our oh-so-logical arguments like a budding lawyer. Sometimes our whining wore them down, and they’d say, “Oh, all right. Do what you want.” And then came a strange and terrifying letdown. On the one hand was the “Yes! I got my way,” but on the other was the fear that perhaps the

oldsters had not only given in but given up on us. Lent reminds us that the “rules” of religion are not to keep us in line and get on God’s good side but rather to serve as concrete guidance. God will never cut us loose to drift away without him.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Matthew 5:17-19*

*“What other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?”*

## THURSDAY, MARCH 31

### Discover something about demonology?

Gospel accounts of demonic possessions, and of Jesus casting out such demons, are quite common. Should these stories be taken literally or perhaps as descriptions of symptoms of diseases that were as yet unidentified in biblical times? There is no clear-cut theological answer, but the questions continue to intrigue—so much so that the Discovery Channel has gained Vatican cooperation in an effort to recreate stories of demonic possession based on cases investigated by the Catholic Church. Perhaps this series can spark some thoughtful discussion about an often misrepresented phenomenon.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23*

*“He was casting out a demon that was mute . . . the one who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed.”*

## FRIDAY, APRIL 1 LENTEN WEEKDAY

### Get a line on Lent

In parks and gardens and other places where there are no sidewalks, people make their own (invariably straight) paths, which urban and landscape designers call “lines of desire.” In many ways our very lives are “lines of desire”: We are continually moving toward what we want or what we think will fill a need or longing. Lent is a good time to reflect on the path we are on, our own line of desire. We might begin by asking ourselves, “What is my one, true desire? Am I heading in that direction, or have I veered off somehow? Am I now wandering around in the desert? What are the fears that keep me off my path? What can I do to correct my course?”

TODAY’S READINGS: *Hosea 14:2-10; Mark 12:28-34*

*“The ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.”*

## SATURDAY, APRIL 2 FEAST OF FRANCIS OF PAOLA, HERMIT

### Compose yourself!

What the world needs now is another saint. Care to apply for the position? Saint Francis of Paola did. His parents couldn’t have children for a long time. After praying to Saint Francis of Assisi they had three, naming the first after their patron. This son became a hermit, founder of a religious community, prophet, miracle worker, mind reader, and hero of the oppressed. Francis stood up to kings and restored peace in times of conflict—which just goes to show that “hermits” are mightily engaged with the world around them. Franz Liszt wrote a piano score around his exploits. Choose the way of humility and become a work of art!

TODAY’S READINGS: *Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14*

*“All who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

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Scripture quotes come from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

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