



Ministry of Praise

21-27
February

Weekly Intentions:

~That through the ministry of the Church, people of all nations will believe and profess that Jesus is Lord...

~That governments may foster justice by acknowledging God as supreme over every human law and activity.....

~For the strength to resist the temptation to discriminate against the poor, the immigrant, the elderly, and the unborn....

~For those who are will, that God's love and our care may bring them healing and strength....

~That all who have died may be purified of sin and blessed with the eternal vision of God.....

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2010

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

These 40 days

Fasting for a day can seem an eternity. Imagine doing so for 40! To say Jesus was "famished" at the end of that time is an understatement. Some of us use that phrase to describe how we feel when dinner is late. The lessons Jesus learned in the wilderness stayed with him throughout his ministry. He knew keenly and personally how hunger makes us weak and susceptible to temptation. Is that why he chose the eucharistic feast to share his presence with us? Fast on Fridays. Feast every day.

TODAY'S READINGS: Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Romans 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22

**FEAST OF THE CHAIR OF PETER,
APOSTLE**

Thou art Peter

The church celebrates a couple of feast days for buildings, but today is the only one dedicated to a piece of furniture! Of course the "chair" of Peter is a symbol of the pope's authority, much like a "chairperson" has charge of a meeting. Peter and his successors, the popes, ensure the unity of the church. Because the pope is the "rock" of Matthew's gospel, it is he who affirms what is believed. He holds the "keys to the kingdom" in that he teaches the world the way of life that leads to fulfillment.

**TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Peter 5:1-4;
Matthew 16:13-19**

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23

**FEAST OF POLYCARP, BISHOP,
MARTYR**

Living memory

We can be sure that the practice of venerating the relics of saints began very early in the church. The first evidence for it comes from a letter dated around 150 A.D. concerning the martyrdom of Polycarp. The letter relates that following Polycarp's execution the Romans refused the Christians his body, deciding rather to burn it. The Christians then gathered together his bones, "being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold." They put these bones in a place of distinction where they would gather together and revere them, especially on the anniversary of Polycarp's martyrdom. Remember the sacrifices of Christian martyrs and give yourself wholeheartedly to a life of faith.

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

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24

LENTEN WEEKDAY

The sign of Jonah

Jesus comparing himself to Jonah may sound a little mysterious to modern ears, but his original audience would have known what he was talking about pretty quickly. You remember Jonah, don't you? Rescued by God from the belly of a great fish after three days and nights (sound familiar?). Sent by God to read the riot act to the wicked city of Nineveh. Walked around the place crying, "Forty days more, and Nineveh will be overthrown!"—and lo and behold



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~“He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.”

~“You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.”

~“My word . . . shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

~“The people of Nineveh believed God.”

~“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you.”

~“If . . . your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled.”

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?”

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everyone from the king on down repented as fast as they could, and God decided to spare them. Jonah was so spectacularly successful that he got mad—wasn't this supposed to be harder? Like Jonah, Jesus calls his hearers to change their lives and return to God. Lent could not have a better goal.

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

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25

LENTEN WEEKDAY

As good as gold

The Golden Rule of “do unto others,” the ethic of reciprocity Jesus summarizes in the gospel, shows up in one form or another in many cultures and religious traditions. Perhaps that happens because it seems to be such a logical and self-evident truth—who among us does not wish to be treated with respect, fairness, dignity, and kindness? Why, then, is it so hard at times to do the same for others? Evidence, perhaps, that each of us is a work in progress. Pray for a generous heart today.

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

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Beyond the law

Jesus was a master at turning ideas upside-down and inviting folks to see things from a new perspective. His teaching on reconciliation is a good example. People knew that they should follow the law “you shall not kill.” But Jesus took it further. He urged people to do

more than follow laws in order to be free. He urged them to heal divisions, to reconcile with one another so as not to be held captive by anger or vengeance. That can be a very challenging thing to do. It requires us to face the hurt or bad feelings that we have and move forward in our relationships, finding healing and freedom. Consider your own relationships and ask God for the grace to right a broken one.

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

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27

LENTEN WEEKDAY

Honk if you love your enemies

Surely Jesus' most radical command is to love our enemies. But exactly how are we supposed to do that? One way to begin is by learning from the example of others. A man was waiting in his car at the window of a drive-up Starbucks. His order was taking some time and eventually the person behind him began impatiently blowing his horn. Instead of becoming angry himself, the first man paid for the second one's drink and drove away. With this profoundly simple but powerful act he set off a chain reaction that lasted the entire day. Today may we pray to offer a loving response to anyone who tries to cause us grief.

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