



*Homiletic starters
and scriptural
reflection points for
each day of the month*

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The Lectionary provides a kind of spiritual script for the universal church that keeps us, literally, all on the same page as we journey through the liturgical seasons. These short reflections, written by four authors who meet regularly to share the readings, are intended to help daily preachers and others who pray from the assigned scriptures each day to orient themselves to the Living Word addressed to the church in the world. Authors are identified by their initials, with short bios provided on the last page.

March 2010

Second Week of Lent

Mon., March 1: Dan 9:4b-10; Luke 6:36-38

Give and gifts will be given to you. Especially now during Lent, we resonate with Daniel's words: "We have sinned ... done evil ... rebelled." This is the season of repentance and rebirth, time to confess our sins and experience the Lord's forgiveness. We pray that we will have the grace to empty ourselves of selfish desires and offer our hearts to God and our hands to our neighbor. God urges us to share with others the good things we have received, including divine mercy and forgiveness. Let us offer to those in need the spiritual and material goods we have been given, so that we may have room in our hearts and our lives for God to live within us and enrich us. *Lord, teach us that it is in giving that we receive.* MEW

Tues., March 2: Isa 1:10, 16-20; Matt 23:1-12

Those who exalt themselves will be humbled; but those who humble themselves will be exalted. There's good reason for pride to head the list of the seven deadly sins. Pride underlies every other sin we commit. Belief in our own entitlement is a serious danger stalking us in our Christian lives. If we are making a sincere effort to follow Jesus closely and to collaborate in the building of God's kingdom on earth, we may begin to think that we are earning our place in heaven through our own efforts. During this Lent, let us reflect on our Lord's great love and generosity in giving us infinitely more than we deserve. *Lord, we thank you and praise you for your salvation and grace.* MEW

Wed., March 3: Jer 18:18-20; Matt 20:17-28

Katharine Drexel, virgin

Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant. Telling the truth, especially God's truth, may be hazardous to your health. Both Jeremiah and Jesus suffered much for speaking God's message. If we hope to share in the resurrection, we must be prepared to share in the crucifixion by bearing our own cross. The most effective witness to the Gospel is in our actions, especially how we respond to human need with our concern and loving sacrifices. We may not be called to die for the Gospel, but we are all called to live for it and to respond with a total commitment of our selves and our lives. Nothing less. *Lord, grant us the zeal, courage and love to serve you in word and deed.* MEW

Thurs., March 4: Jer 17:5-10; Luke 16:19-31

Casimir, patron saint of Poland, Lithuania, and youth

Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord. If we had to be someone in this story, we'd probably pick Lazarus. But isn't there a lot of the rich man in us? We may not be rich in money, but aren't we better off in health, friends and material goods than many, many people? We don't know how much good we can do until we trust God, take a leap of faith and act. Whether it's a few dollars, an invitation to share a meal or just a sympathetic ear, we can give to the "Lazarus" in our midst. Our kindness will always come back a hundredfold; we've got God's word for it. *Lord, teach me that the best way to thank you for my blessings is to share them.* MEW

Fri., March 5: Gen 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Matt 21:33-43, 45-46

Here comes that master dreamer! Come on, let us kill him. Today we consider another of the seven deadly sins: envy. We all envy, a little. Our envy of things is not the hardest kind to bear. After all, fortunes and possessions change hands. But how painful to envy the intrinsic qualities of another: high position, beauty, talent, popularity, the power to move others. Envy can corrupt friendships, destroy marriages, alienate children, divide churches, cripple groups trying to make a difference, and it can even be the fundamental cause of wars. Let's focus on using our own gifts. It's amazing what God can do through even the least of us. *Lord, teach me to rejoice in your gifts to others and to recognize and be grateful for your gifts to me.* MEW



Sat., March 6: Mic 7:14-15, 18-20; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Who is there like you, the God who pardons sin and delights in clemency? Each of the characters in the parable of the prodigal son offers material for reflection. The father shows us that God rushes eagerly forward to embrace us when we even *desire* to repent. The younger brother demonstrates two rare but essential characteristics of repentance. First, humility — he must swallow his pride if he is to taste the food for which he hungers. Second, honesty — he admits his sin without rationalization or self-justification. The elder brother reminds us not to resent those who return to God but to remember that we, too, are loved beyond measure. Therefore, we welcome them to the eucharistic banquet. *Lord, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.* MEW

Third Week of Lent

Mon., March 8: 2 Kgs 5:1-15b; Luke 4:24-30
John of God, friar, patron saint of hospitals

With this, he turned about in anger and left. We all know the frustration of being afflicted with injury, illness or disease. We know, too, how that aggravation is compounded when a cure seems unreasonably hard to come by. Red tape, waiting, expenses, vile medicines, irksome side effects, slow-to-work therapies — so many things add insult to injury. Like Naaman, we may need to realize that our bad attitude is only adding another impediment to the healing process. When we are ill, may we be patient, trusting and grateful for whatever is available to aid our healing. When we are well, let us make it our special care to cheer on those who are not in good health. *For the sense to cooperate with the grace of healing, we pray.* ECW

Tues., March 9: Dan 3:25, 34-43; Matt 18:21-35
Frances of Rome, religious

Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you? We have all been the poor servant in today's parable: We've had the slate wiped clean, have been forgiven without deserving forgiveness, forgiven only because of another's compassion. Like him, we know that forgiveness received with a less-than-fully-repentant heart leaves us disconcerted, feeling as if we have gotten away with something. Forgiveness is meant to be so much more. Forgiveness properly sought and received fills us with gratitude. Freedom from our debt carries with it the happy charge to become likewise compassionate. Let us seek the Lord's forgiveness with all meekness and sincerity. *For hearts truly humble and repentant ... for gratitude that transforms us, we pray.* ECW

Wed., March 10: Deut 4:1, 5-9; Matt 5:17-19

I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. The Law was a great gift that marked Israel as God's chosen people, set apart from other ancient peoples who had little in the way of a moral code. Yet in time, some came to see the Law as a burden rather than a gift. It was something to be endured rather than embraced. Some followed it fastidiously, but only

out of obligation, carrying out its minimal requirements. Jesus illustrates the fuller understanding of the Law that calls us to practice virtue and maximizes the Law's potential for good. Let us make God's law, with all its implications, our happy discipline. *For God's law written on our hearts ... for love that permeates all that we do, we pray.* ECW

Thurs., March 11: Jer 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23

But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. People responded to Jesus in a variety of ways. Today's Gospel features a crowd that is amazed by his mighty works. But within that crowd are skeptics. Some are so suspicious of Jesus' power that they denounce it as demonic. Others ask for a sign from heaven — as if they have not witnessed one in the exorcism he has just performed. The wonders of God surround us every day. What will it take to open our eyes to God's kingdom come, to the finger of God at work in the everyday miracles of our lives? *For eyes to see God's care and presence in our lives, we pray.* ECW

Fri., March 12: Hos 14:2-10; Mark 12:28-34

Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone. Israel's great prayer, the *Shema*, begins with the injunction to hear. Have we really heard Jesus' commandments of love? Have we tried loving God with all we've got — heart, soul, mind and strength? The more fully we give ourselves to God in love, the more we comprehend the depth of God's love for us, and the more capable we are of loving ourselves. In turn, the love we have for ourselves becomes the standard we use in loving our neighbor. Love generates love. God has loved us first. As we respond fully and faithfully, we become ever more effective instruments of God's love in the world. *For ears that hear God's law and hearts that obey all God commands, we pray.* ECW

Sat., March 13: Hos 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14

O God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Like the Pharisee in today's Gospel, we may feel self-righteous. In our faithfulness to God's law, we may look down on and even despise others whom we judge as less faithful. Yet we can never know what is going on in others' hearts and minds. We know our own failures. We know our own meanness — the kindnesses unoffered, the just deeds undone, the limits we've set on our forgiveness. God alone is righteous. God alone knows our hearts. May our judgment of others cease as we learn to approach our merciful God with contrite hearts. *For humility to see our sinfulness ... for graciousness to accept all people as beloved brothers and sisters, we pray.* ECW

Fourth Week of Lent

Mon., March 15: Isa 65:17-21; John 4:43-54

Your son will live. Jesus speaks healing words, and a child begins to recover, a father to hope. Isaiah speaks of a new heaven and a new earth, and those who listen envision a better world. Is there anything more powerful than the human voice? We create the world we want — workplace, neighborhood, church, family — first by speaking it. If we



speak words of derision, ridicule and hatred, we create a world of sadness and violence. If we speak words of kindness, gentleness and love, we create a world of joy and peace. Too simple? Try living it for a week and see if your world doesn't seem brighter. *Creator God, you who created the world with a word, give us the grace to speak the world for which we long. Amen. PBS*

Tues., March 16: Ezek 47:1-9, 12; John 5:1-16

They began to persecute Jesus because he did this on the Sabbath. The short answer to why Jesus was killed is: "He healed on the Sabbath." Healing on the Sabbath — doing right when it will cost; telling the truth to power; refusing to hurt others when the battle cry is sounded. It's always difficult. It always requires discernment to decide whether to obey the law or make the exception for a greater good. It requires honesty, courage, humility. Lord Jesus, you call us to follow you, to be your disciples. Give us what we need when we need it so that we may be worthy of your friendship. Amen. PBS

Wed., March 17: Isa 49:8-15; John 5:17-30

Patrick, bishop

*I do not seek my own will, but the will of the one who sent me. These are the words of Jesus, a soul perfectly aligned with his Father's will. They are also the words of a saint, or lacking sainthood, a person just trying to live through the day without hurting anyone too badly. In Graham Greene's novel *The Power and the Glory*, the main character — a "whiskey priest" — bitterly laments at the end of his life that it would have been so easy to be a saint, that indeed it was the only thing that mattered. Living well now so that we die without regrets is a one-day-at-a-time task. We pray with St. Patrick, "Christ be with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me." Amen. PBS*

Thurs., March 18: Exod 32:7-14; John 5:31-47

Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop, doctor

You do not want to come to me to have life. That just about sums up the whole nature of sin, doesn't it? We don't want what's good, for ourselves or for others, at least not always. Lent is the season of conversion. While we know a great deal about the biological, psychological and sociological origin of our misbehavior, this is the season to confront our personal responsibility for choosing death and rejecting life. While there is truth in all the other explanations for sin, taking responsibility is the only way we make a better world for ourselves and for those we are called to love. Lord Jesus, from the beginning of this day until the end, help me to choose life. Amen. PBS

Fri., March 19: 2 Sam 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22; Matt 1:16, 18-21, 24a, or Luke 2:41-51a

Joseph, husband of Mary

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him. I wonder how difficult it was for Joseph to hear and heed the angel. I have known the experience, not of an angel appearing to me in a dream, but of being faced with a problem and "sleeping on it." Sometimes I awaken with the

*answer to whatever dilemma I am facing. It doesn't always work. I have to be open to guidance, truly seeking *the* way rather than *my* way. This requires a kind of surrender not unlike the reported prayer of Blessed John XXIII: "It's your church, Lord; I'm going to bed." If before we go to sleep we ask for God's guidance, the angel and the answer often come to us. For the grace of surrender and humility — St. Joseph, pray for us. Amen. PBS*

Sat., March 20: Jer 11:18-20; John 7:40-53

Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee. My first scripture professor at Saint Louis University explained that to the Pharisees, a prophet from Galilee would be like an Ozark hillbilly appearing in a St. Louis classroom and beginning to teach, complete with rural accent. (Apologies to all from the Ozarks and all with rural accents.) When the ordinary folks claimed that "Never before has anyone spoken like this one," they were not referring to his accent but to the simple truth of his teaching. Prejudice stops up our ears and prevents us from hearing the truth, whether it is spoken by a 70-ish pastor or by an associate pastor the age of my youngest son. Truth is truth in whatever accent it is spoken. Lord Jesus, help us to hear your voice and recognize your truth, even from unexpected sources. Amen. PBS

Fifth Week of Lent

Mon., March 22: Dan 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or 13:41c-62; John 8:12-20

I know where I came from and where I am going. Jesus dispels all doubt and darkness; he forges ahead on his divine path. Even though no one else seems to get it, Jesus has the clarity of understanding who he is, who has sent him and what he must do. In the face of the Pharisees' challenge, Jesus is not defensive; he is assertive and certain. Indeed, Jesus cannot be tentative as he approaches his Passion, nor can we. We must face the reality of Jesus' last days and find the answers to the Pharisees' questions. We must testify to who Jesus is and to the one who sent him. There's no better way to know Jesus and, in turn, his Father than to be with him when his hour comes. Lord, give us the confidence to trust in your divine plan for us, we pray. PR

Tues., March 23: Num 21:4-9; John 8:21-30

Toribio de Mogrovejo, bishop

So the Jews said, 'He is not going to kill himself, is he, because he said, "Where I am going you cannot come"?' The Jews have misinterpreted Jesus' words in a way that is ironic. They fail to understand his point. They cannot see in Jesus' words the fear he has for them and the end against which he attempts to warn them. They cannot see that their own loss of salvation will be self-inflicted due to their sinfulness. It isn't that they can't follow him because he's about to die, but that they won't choose what they need to have eternal life. Will we? Heal us in our disbelief, O Lord, we pray. PR

Wed., March 24: Dan 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; John 8:31-42

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. The truth can only set us free if we allow the truth to be revealed as truth. We cannot substitute our own ideas — as hopeful or harmless as they may seem — if real truth is divinely to be revealed. Truth is not open to interpretation or debate. It's been clearly spelled out for us: Believe in Jesus, remain in his word, live as disciples, avoid sin and do the work of the Father. This is truth. This is freedom. *Merciful Jesus, show us your truth and set us free, we pray.* PR

Thurs., March 25: Isa 7:10-14, 8:10; Heb 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38

Annunciation of the Lord

Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you. Mary's confusion at this greeting is understandable. She is young and naive and taken off-guard. Who's truly prepared for an angel's salutation? Still, she trusts in God's will. We may not have an actual angel speaking to us, but we're being called. Luckily for us we have Mary's example and response to guide us. Through Mary, we have been fully prepared to recognize the grace we need to accept the Lord's will for us. It's as if she has created a manual for us to follow: Do not be afraid, allow the Holy Spirit into our lives, trust in the power of the Most High and simply accept that nothing is impossible with God. *Lord, let us be like Mary, your humble servant, and faithfully follow your word, we pray.* PR

Fri., March 26: Jer 20:10-13; John 10:31-42

... but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works. Jesus is accused of blasphemy when the Jews believe he elevates himself to the position of God. They fail to recognize that he acts under the authority of the Father. Jesus dutifully performs his Father's works. He only has power through the Father. We, too, are sons and daughters of God and must act with that conviction. If we come from the Father and hope to return to him, people must see the Father in our actions. *May our deeds allow others to see the wonders of our Father, we pray.* PR

Sat., March 27: Ezek 37:21-28; John 11:45-56

So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, 'What are we going to do?' Faced with the many signs Jesus performs, his detractors react defensively. They fear losing power and possessions. Their only concern is self-preservation. It's a natural reaction. Change is difficult. During Lent, we often choose to deny ourselves something desirable for a few weeks — sweets or dining out — rather than adopting a truly penitential practice or challenging ourselves to change an unhealthy attitude. As we approach Holy Week, we cannot cling to the status quo. We must be willing to let down our defenses and allow the Lord to show us the way. What are we going to do? *Lead us, Lord, we pray.* PR

Holy Week

Mon., March 29: Isa 42:1-7; John 12:1-11

Here is my servant whom I uphold ... he shall bring forth justice to the nations. Yesterday we welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem,

waving palm branches and shouting, "Hosanna!" Today the Hosannas are silent, the palm branches trampled underfoot. Jesus, the silent and suffering servant, enters into the week of his solitary degradation, condemnation, torture and death, a time when his friends and disciples and seemingly even God will abandon him to his lonely ascent on Calvary. We are called to accompany him in love and trust, focused on his mission of bringing God's justice and salvation to all people. Let us remember to join our work, prayers, sufferings and setbacks to the great work of Jesus. *Lord, grant me the grace to join you this week in your work of salvation.* MEW

Tues., March 30: Isa 49:1-6; John 13:21-33, 36-38

Though I thought I had toiled in vain ... yet my reward is with the Lord. Jesus must have felt terribly alone sometimes, but most poignantly during his last week on earth. He sits at table with his disciples, whom he has chosen, loved and patiently taught by word and action. Now one of them is about to betray him, and night closes in on the Light. We pray to be like Peter, willing to follow Jesus unconditionally. Like Peter, we may be a little too sure of our fidelity and courage. Let us ask forgiveness for our failures, especially for our pride and our cowardice, and seek the courage to follow Jesus wherever he leads. *Lord, grant me your grace and your strength that I may follow you.* MEW

Wed., March 31: Isa 50:4-9a; Matt 26:14-25

One of you will betray me. At this time, perhaps more than any other, we reflect on sin and how it seeps through our lives. Every sin is some sort of betrayal of the Lord, from the most "innocent" gossip to the greater acts of pride, greed, lust, anger, wasteful consumption, neglect of those in need. Maybe we simply indulge in a selective disregard of God's will when we find that will inconvenient. In so many, many ways, we all betray our Lord. Judas betrayed Jesus by selling him for personal gain; Peter betrayed Jesus by denying him for fear of losing face and even getting into trouble. How do I betray Jesus? *Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.* MEW

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