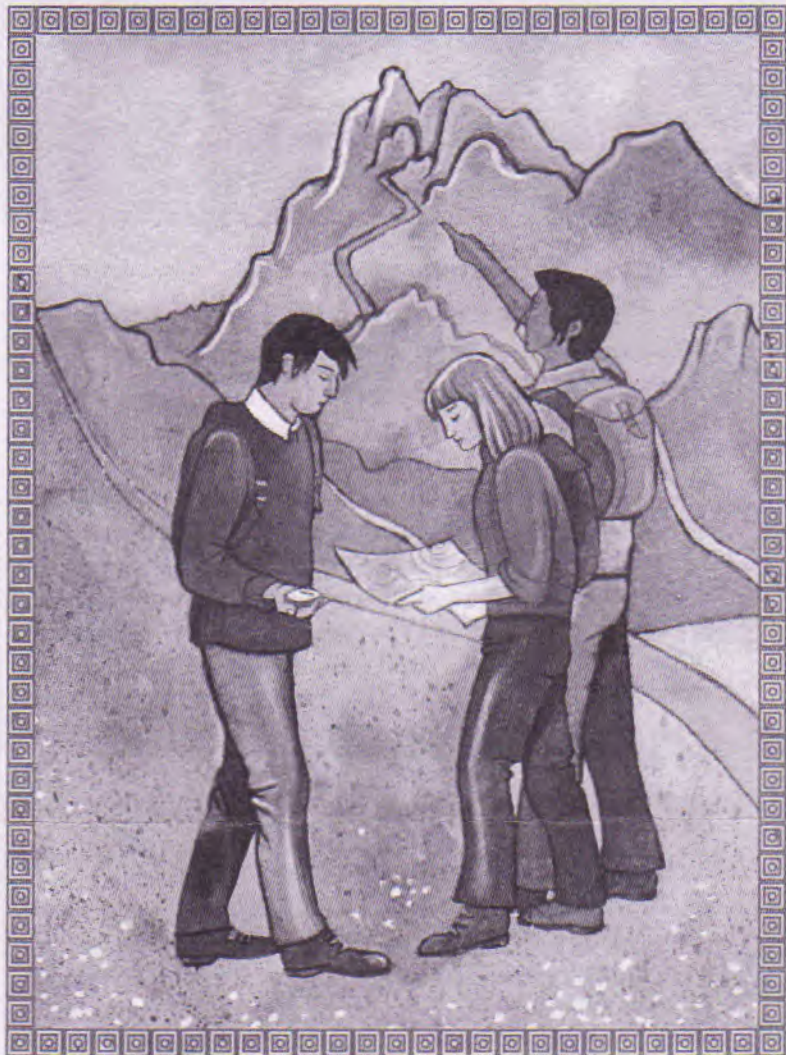


First Sunday of Lent



Prayer of God's Beloved Children

God our Father,
your affirmation of Jesus
as your beloved Son gave him clarity,
even when the devil tempted him
to choose pride, power, and possessions.
Help us also to hear your voice,
calling us your beloved.
Direct our steps during Lent
onto the path of Jesus.
Lead us into service, fulfillment,
and your eternal embrace.
Guide us with your grace.
We ask this through our Lord
Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, February 17, 2013
Standing Firmly in His Truth

Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 26:4–10; Psalm 91:1–2, 10–11, 12–13, 14–15 (See 15b); Romans 10:8–13; Luke 4:1–13. Travelers must set a direction before embarking on a trip. How much more important this becomes when the journey is one's life. Yet most of us waste time meandering: in dead-end jobs or relationships, in ill-defined goals, in lazy habits or the unexamined, "default" drive. It might be embarrassing to calculate the time we waste on junk television, trash novels, or computer games. How appropriate, then, to have a whole season for reflection: to clarify goals and reset directions. In today's Gospel, Jesus models how to utilize the next six weeks.

First, though, a note about his tempter. When the devil tells Jesus, "Command this stone to become . . . bread," he strikes the wrong note. Jesus resists the manners of power:

loud demands and expectations of mindless obedience. His gentle invitation never insults the person's inherent dignity and intelligence. The devil underestimates his opponent, even engaging in proof-texting, a battle where he and Jesus exchange Scripture verses. Their *interpretation* of the Bible differs radically, however.

Jesus is no distant guru focused on self-promotion. After forty days he is hungry—some of us whine when dinner is delayed forty *minutes*! Fully human, he feels hunger pangs and wrestles with temptation. But he stands firmly in his truth. Nothing can move him from his security in God. His focus is as clearly and sharply set as ours should be. If we're feeling wobbly, now is the time for firm steps on the path of following Jesus.



This Week at Home

Monday, February 18

Starting Off Right

Which of the traditional Lenten practices will you focus on first: almsgiving, fasting, or prayer? Each person's answer is different. If you want to try all three, you could devote two weeks to each one. Lent also presents an opportunity to focus on gratitude. If you haven't already started a journal where you list things you're grateful for, now is the time. You'll have a cascade of thanksgiving by Easter. Or, send a note each day during Lent to people you appreciate. Again, the gratefulness will grow into Easter joy. Today's Readings: Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15 (John 6:63b); Matthew 25:31-46.

Tuesday, February 19

Say It Slowly

Jesus's encouragement to avoid empty words and pious platitudes in prayer comes at a good time if you chose to focus on prayer. Turn to today's Gospel in your Bible. Try taking each phrase of the Our Father and saying it slowly, pausing to think what it really means. Choose one phrase a day and call it to mind whenever you can. This may offset our tendency to rattle it off quickly and thoughtlessly. Today's Readings: Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 34:4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19 (18b); Matthew 6:7-15.

Wednesday, February 20

No Easy Answers

Before we rush to condemn the "evil generation" Jesus describes in today's Gospel, we might first look at ourselves. How often do we ask God for a magical sign? We may want the easy answer; God may work out a dilemma over time. We may push the responsibility onto God; God in turn wants us to use our creativity and intelligence to solve the problem. Only in retrospect can we see how things worked out, but that perspective should increase our trust next time we're in a fix. Today's Readings: Jonah 3:1-10; Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19 (19b); Luke 11:29-32.

Thursday, February 21

St. Peter Damian and Bl. John Henry Newman

All he wanted to be was a monk, but Peter Damian soon became an abbot and eventually cardinal-bishop of Ostia. In that role, he initiated many Church reforms. Blessed John Henry Newman, born this day in 1801, was a philosopher, writer, and priest of the Church of England. He converted to Catholicism and became a cardinal; many campus ministry centers are named for him. Two of his best-known works are *A Grammar of Assent* and *The Idea of a University*. Because of his foresight, Pope Paul VI named the Second Vatican Council "Newman's Council." Today's Readings: Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Psalm 138:1-2ab, 2cde-3, 7c-8 (3a); Matthew 7:7-12.

Friday, February 22

The Chair of St. Peter the Apostle

When Jesus asks the disciples who people say he is, they report readily. Only Peter takes the risk of answering the more probing question, "who do *you* say that I am?" Verses 17-19 of today's reading were likely inserted later for a community in Syria led by Peter. Jesus himself seemed uninterested in founding a church, or in its leadership. Yet the question put to Peter comes to us. At different times in our lives, we may answer it differently. Perhaps he is parent, friend, brother, or guide. How do we respond *today*? Today's Readings: 1 Peter 5:1-4; Psalm 23:1-3a, 4, 5, 6 (1); Matthew 16:13-19.

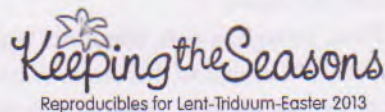
Saturday, February 23

St. Polycarp, Bishop and Martyr

A leader in the early Christian church of Turkey, martyred at age 86, St. Polycarp was a disciple of St. John the Apostle and a friend of St. Ignatius of Antioch. He was a bridge between the age of the Apostles and the later generations. Today's Gospel introduces the teaching that was and is to set Christians apart from others: they are to love their enemies as well as their neighbors. Today's Readings: Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8 (1b); Matthew 5:43-48.



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 Keeping the Seasons
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