

## **2015 Daily Reflections for Lent—The Second Week**

### **March 2 –Monday of the Second Week**

Scripture Passage: Matthew 25: 31-46

Scripture Verse: All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at

his right hand and the goats at his left. Matthew 25: 32-33

Today's gospel tells us what questions will be asked on our final exam. In the end, what will matter in God's eyes are kindness and compassion. Jesus talks about kindness and how what matters most is how we treat others. The way in which we treat others...especially those in need... is the way we treat Jesus and the way we treat God. If we pay attention to how Jesus treated others and try to allow his way become our way, we will be well prepared for the final exam.

When Jesus was in conflict between the Sabbath Laws and the paralysed man in need of forgiveness and healing, the man in need came first. Whenever he saw people in need, Jesus responded to them by helping them. We are called to do the same. In Lent we are invited to be more attentive to taking advantage of the opportunities that come our way, to be compassionate and kind as we respond to those less fortunate than ourselves.

Prayer: Loving God, in your son Jesus' ministry people always come first. Help us to put the needs of the less fortunate in our community and in your world before society's biases.

### **March 3 –Tuesday of the Second Week**

Scripture Passage: Matthew 6: 7-15

Scripture Verse: When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Matthew 6: 7

People sometimes think that prayer is primarily a matter of asking God for things.

Certainly there is nothing wrong with bringing our personal concerns and the needs of the world to God. Yet sometimes our praying can come close to giving God our opinion about some event(s) and then issuing instructions to God on how we want the issue resolved. This is obviously a distortion of what prayer is to be. Jesus makes this quite clear in today's gospel.

When we pray, Jesus says, we should begin by focusing not on ourselves but on God's holiness...not on our will for life but on God's will. When we pray we should do so knowing that God desires what is good for us, that God is involved in our prayer and that prayer is a conversation involving listening as well as talking. Keeping the emphasis on God's will for our lives and that of all humanity, we ask

God to give us what we need to help God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We can ask for our daily bread and to be delivered from the power of evil. We can tell

God all our desires, concerns and anxieties. The “Lord's Prayer” is properly prayed slowly and reflectively always remembering that it is a gift from Jesus that guides us to being centred on God.

Prayer: Loving Father, help us to pray.

### **March 4 –Wednesday of the Second Week**

Scripture Passage: Luke 11: 27-32

Scripture Verse: When the crowds were increasing Jesus began to say, “This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah” Luke 11:29

Jesus resisted the idea that his miracles were to be used to boost his popularity or provide proof of his divine nature. At the beginning of Lent, we listen to him reject Satan's suggestion that Jesus impress the world into belief by jumping from the top of the Temple. (see Matthew 4:5-7). During Holy Week, as his earthly ministry began to conclude and his death became immanent, Jesus refused to perform a miracle for King Herod. (see Luke 23:8).

Jesus speaks today of the “sign of Jonah”. The ancient people of Ninevah had recognised Jonah as God's messenger and had repented whereas many people in Jesus' time neither recognised him nor heeded him as God's messiah.

We can still succumb to seeking “signs” today even though the ultimate sign of God's work among and presence with us has already been given to us in Jesus. The Risen Jesus is present and active in our midst. He is as intent on teaching us and guiding us today as he was two thousand years ago. He speaks

to us through Scripture and worship, through conversational and meditative prayer and through the Holy Communion. He speaks to us through the prophets of justice and peace in our time, through the beauty of creation, through the needs of the world God loves, through our encounters with the poor and those in need, through our neighbour etc.

God's greatest gift to us is the ongoing presence of Jesus. In Lent we are invited to look for Jesus in the ordinary events of life.

Prayer: Loving God, help us to trust that Jesus is present with us. Open our eyes and hearts to his presence in our daily lives.

### **March 5 –Thursday of the Second Week**

Scripture Passage: Matthew 7:7-12

Scripture Verse: In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. Matthew 7: 12

There is a law in physics that states: the angle of incidence equals the angle of refraction. This law is a human law as well: the way we approach people influences the way they respond to us. If we approach people in anger, they respond angrily. If

we accuse people, they respond defensively. What could be more simple to learn or more difficult to learn.

There is a story about a man who was transferred to a new job in a new town. As he approached his new town he stopped at a gas station and asked the attendant what the people were like in his new town. The attendant asked what the people were like in his old town. The man said that he was happy to be leaving his old town behind as he experienced the people of his old town as unfriendly and uncaring. The attendant said, "That is what they will be like in your new home."

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you have blessed all people with the dignity of being created in your image. Help us let that dignity guide the way we treat others.

### **March 6 –Friday of the Second Week**

Scripture Passages: Deuteronomy 26: 16-19; Matthew 5: 43-48

Scripture Verse: This day the Lord your God commands you to observe these statutes and decrees. Be careful then to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. Deut. 26:16

The passage from Deuteronomy can be a wake-up call if we are slipping into a half-hearted Christianity. To experience as fully as possible the love, peace and redemption offered to us by God, we are to respond with all our heart and soul. The good news, however, is that, even with all our shortcomings in our response, God is committed to us. We are not left on our own even when we find it difficult to love God and neighbour with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Lent provides us with an opportunity to reflect on how generous God is with us and all people. The God we meet in Jesus "makes his sun rise on the bad and the good and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). Since God is such a whole-hearted lover of us and of every person, Jesus says we should be whole-hearted in our response and are to try to love, not just our friends but also our enemies and those who are neither friend nor enemy (see Matthew 5:44). Obviously this will be challenging and we will need to depend on God's Spirit for guidance but it will also be life-giving.

Prayer: Loving God, your Son Jesus reached out to all people including his enemies and offered them your forgiving love. Help me to be more respectful of and caring for all the people you bring into my life.