



Bringing Home the Word



Third Sunday of Lent

March 8, 2015

Staying Focused

By Janel Esker

I don't relish trips to the eye doctor, but ever since I was a child I've actually enjoyed one of the tests. It's a test of peripheral vision in which your head is surrounded by a dome of dots that periodically light up as you stare straight ahead at a central dot of light. When a peripheral dot lights up, you press a button. It's always felt like a video game. The hard part is continuing to focus on that center light when your eyes want to wander toward the peripheral

Sunday Readings

Exodus 20:1–17

God delivered these commandments to Israel: you shall not worship idols; you shall keep holy the Sabbath and honor your parents; you shall not lie, cheat, steal, or covet.

I Corinthians 1:22–25

The crucifixion and resurrection are a mystery, beyond all human logic, wisdom, or understanding. Those with faith receive strength, but those who seek proof will stumble.

John 2:13–25

Going to the temple, Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers, saying, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."

lights. The machine is so sophisticated that it gives a gentle alarm when your eyes wander from the center light.

Maintaining our focus on God as the center of our lives can be similarly difficult, yet it's what God has asked of humanity for ages. Listen to the length of the First Commandment in Exodus today—God wants us to clearly understand that we mustn't have any gods but him. He knows how easy it is for us to lose focus on our relationship with him. In the Gospel, Jesus indicates that he is the new temple—the new place around which people should center their lives.

Many in our culture lose sight of God while focusing on the pursuit of money, power, or fame. But we can also get distracted from God in simpler ways—by making a loved one into a "god" who consumes all our attention, by wallowing in self-pity despite the presence of many blessings, and by letting work, TV, or socializing consistently take the place of regular prayer.

Lent sounds a gentle alarm to refocus our vision on that center of divine light and make God our first priority. †

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I live as a partner of God's covenant, following the commandments?
- Where am I looking for God this Lent?



Lord, you instill within me your power and wisdom. Help me to discern more clearly how to use your power and wisdom in service of my brothers and sisters.

—*Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

Plain Talk: Walk the Talk

By Fr. Rick Potts, CSsR

Every week, Catholics recite a common creed that binds us in one faith. It's one of those prayers most of us find easy to recite from memory while we're in the midst of the congregation but a little more difficult to recite when we're alone.

In a congregation we can lean on the memory of the presider or the person beside us, and there is confidence and courage in being one of many. It's a different story when we stand by ourselves and begin to think more intently about the words we're reciting. *What does that mean? Do I really believe that?*

What is it we each believe? What lies at the core of *my* faith? Maybe more important, what creed do I *live*? What creed do you infer from my actions, words, and deeds?

If I believe God created the heavens and the earth and all life,
And yet I fail to care for the environment, the unborn, or the oppressed,
Then I am abusing the offspring of God.

If I believe Christ will judge the living and the dead,
And yet I spend my days judging the faults of others,
Then I have surely usurped the throne of my King.

If I believe in the Incarnation and the resurrection of the body,
And yet I fail to care for this earthly tabernacle or proclaim flesh is sinful,



Then I will surely be disappointed on that last day.

If I believe we are all sisters and brothers in Christ,
And yet I fail to share my time, talent, and treasure,
Then I surely deny that Christ is my brother.

I know you know what we believe...
But what do *you* believe? †

Beyond the Forty Days: Spiritual Exercise

By Fr. Rick Potts, CSsR

Seven minutes into a fifteen-minute stress test, the nurse told me to stop. Before I knew what was happening, the room filled with nurses and doctors. Forty-eight hours later I was lying on a surgical table with my chest split open.

Friends and family were as shocked as I was. Wasn't I too young for a heart attack? But I had to admit I hadn't taken very good care of my tabernacle.

Sure, I'd heard the warnings. I saw my father go through quadruple-bypass surgery, but I didn't change my diet. When I was diagnosed with diabetes, I followed a strict diet—for the first few years. But after a while I slipped into my old habits.

Sound familiar? Each Lent, we're challenged to improve our prayer life, practice self-sacrifice, and do good works. Lent is a period of preparation, forty days to renew ourselves and get right with God. Most of us do this by giving up a sweet treat we enjoy. Many pray more during Lent. Some follow the Stations of the Cross and a few do extra works of charity.

The problem: As soon as Easter arrives, we gorge ourselves on chocolate and soda and abandon our prayers and works, as if we've reached our goal. But the true challenge of Lent is to make our Lenten practices a new way of life, a healthier and holier way of life. Instead of thinking, *I can do this for forty days*, we should be thinking, *I can do this for one day for the rest of my life*.

Our bodies *are* tabernacles of the Spirit, so living a healthy lifestyle isn't only prudent, it's moral. As stewards of God's creation, we must care for ourselves. As I lay in my hospital bed recovering from double-bypass surgery, I knew I'd taken only the first step. What I truly needed was a lifelong change—and I knew my journey would need a spiritual dimension. †

WEEKDAY READINGS March 9–14

Mon. *St. Frances of Rome:*
2 Kings 5:1–15 / Luke 4:24–30
Tue. *Daniel 3:25, 34–43 / Matthew 18:21–35*
Wed. *Deuteronomy 4:1, 5–9 /*
Matthew 5:17–19

Thu. *Jeremiah 7:23–28 / Luke 11:14–23*
Fri. *Hosea 14:2–10 / Mark 12:28–34*
Sat. *March 14: Hosea 6:1–6 / Luke 18:9–14*