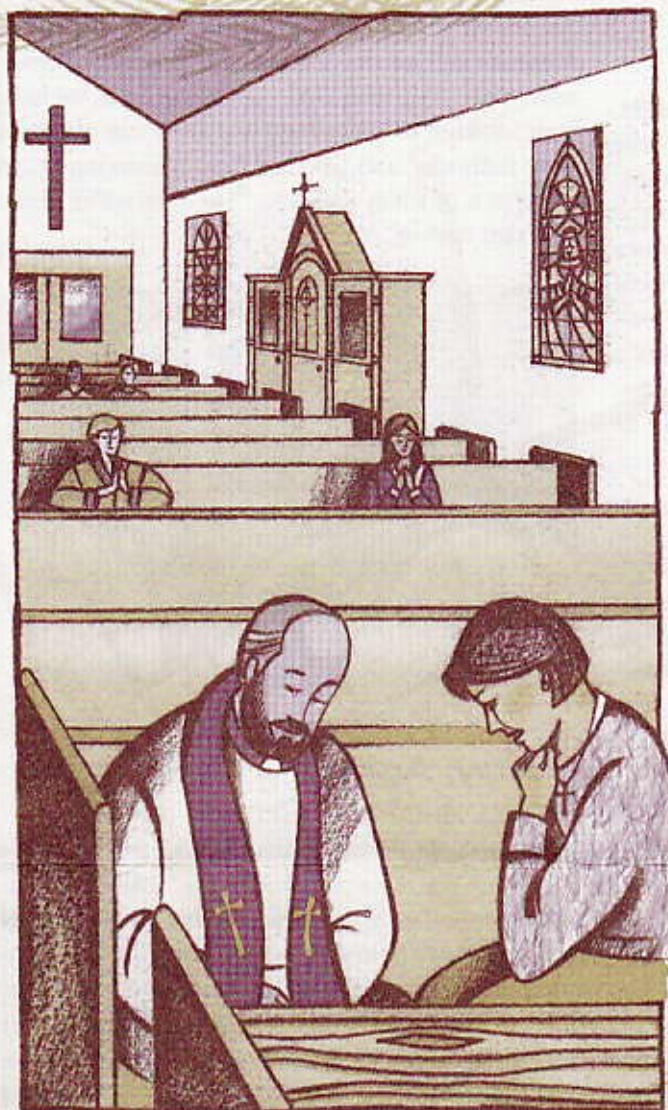


Fifth Week of Lent



Prayer for Forgiveness

Merciful God,
we have hurt each other,
sometimes with harsh words,
sometimes with suffocating silence.
We have been thoughtless,
nurtured resentments,
and lacked the courage to face our sins.
Forgive us.
Let us forgive each other.
Let us forgive ourselves.
Help us to let go of grudges and
resentments.
Only love matters now,
your love for us, our love for you,
and our love for one another.
We thank you for this love,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

March 29, 2009 A Season of Healing

Thomas Merton has called Lent "a season of healing." It is a time of reconciliation, when we right our relationship with God, with our family and neighbors. We take time now to reflect on our relationships. Which of them is in need of healing? Acts of reconciliation may be very personal and private, such as changing a behavior that causes pain to another (yelling, lying, drinking too much, withdrawing, interrupting). Or we may make more communal acts of reconciliation. It has long been customary to make an "Easter confession" during Lent. This is done privately in the sacrament of Penance when the penitent prayerfully confesses and seeks absolution. This may happen during the weekly time your parish schedules

confessions, by appointment, or as part of a parish penance service with individual confession. You might wish to use the prayer on this page as a prayer of reconciliation for your household, along with Psalm 51, a beautiful prayer for forgiveness.

This Sunday, or perhaps on the Third or Fourth Sundays of Lent, you witnessed the Scrutinies of the elect, those people preparing for Baptism at the Easter Vigil. In these rites, the assembly, the elect and their godparents, and the priest pray earnestly that the elect "will be given a spirit of repentance, a sense of sin, and the true freedom of the children of God." We, the already baptized, who are also penitents, support those who are learning this new Christian skill.

This Week at Home

Monday, March 30

Judging Each Other

Today's scriptures are bursting with food for thought. From Daniel (13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62) we hear the compelling story of the falsely accused Susanna, her prayer to God, and her vindication. From the Gospel according to John (8:1-11), we hear the story of Jesus' confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees who bring him a woman caught in adultery. In both readings, we are pressed to ponder the difference between God's judgments and human judgments. How can we come to see how sin is working in us even as we think we see it in others?

Tuesday, March 31

Other Rituals of Reconciliation

Some families have rituals of reconciliation observed before receiving the sacrament of Penance, or before a communal penance service. In Russia, it was traditional before leaving the house for your Easter confession to bow before each member of the household, saying, "In the name of Christ, forgive me if I have offended you." To this, everyone responded, "God will forgive you." After confession and communion, the family returned home to share breakfast at a table decorated with flowers.

Wednesday, April 1

Making Amends

If we have taken time to pray and reflect this Lent, we will have received the grace to see ourselves more clearly by now. We may not like everything we see. It is time to act with faith in the healing power of God's love. Make a long overdue amend. Ask for someone's forgiveness. Let go of a resentment. Pray for someone who hurt you. It's been said that we should give until it hurts. Perhaps we need to forgive until we heal.

Thursday, April 2

Keeping the Covenant

Today's First Reading from Genesis (17:3-9) describes the moment when God made the covenant, or solemn agreement, with Abraham, promising to make him "the ancestor of a multitude of nations,"

our ancestor, and to always be our God. In return, Abraham and his descendants are to keep the covenant relationship with God. All during Lent, we have been working to understand and keep that covenant more faithfully, and God has been reassuring us, as in verse 8 of today's psalm: "He is mindful of his covenant forever"



Friday, April 3

Stations of the Cross

Walking the footsteps of Jesus to Calvary became a popular devotion of pilgrims to the Holy Land during the crusades. Those who couldn't go to the Holy Land, or those returning home who wished to continue the devotion, prayed the Stations of the Cross. Attend your parish's observance of the stations, or pray on your own before the stations at your church. You could even set up stations around the living room. At each station pray: "We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you [genuflect], because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."

Saturday, April 4

Memorial of Saint Isidore of Seville

A sixth-century Spanish scholar and bishop, Isidore strengthened the Spanish church, establishing schools and monasteries. But he is best known for his extensive writings, especially the encyclopedia of ancient learning he compiled, which was used as a textbook all over Europe. Remember this saint today by selecting a good spiritual book to read in the coming week.



© 2008 Liturgy Training Publications, 1-800-933-1800. Written by Mary Caswell Walsh. Illustrated by Tony Heron. Scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible, Catholic Edition, © 1993 and 1989 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. The quotation of Thomas Merton is from *Seasons of Celebration*, New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1950, p. 113. The quotation from the Invitation to Silent Prayer in the First, Second, and Third Scrutinies of the Elect is an excerpt from the English translation of *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* © 1995, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. (ICEL). All rights reserved. Printed with Ecclesiastical Approval.

PASCHAL MISSION
LENT • TRIDUUM • EASTER • 2009