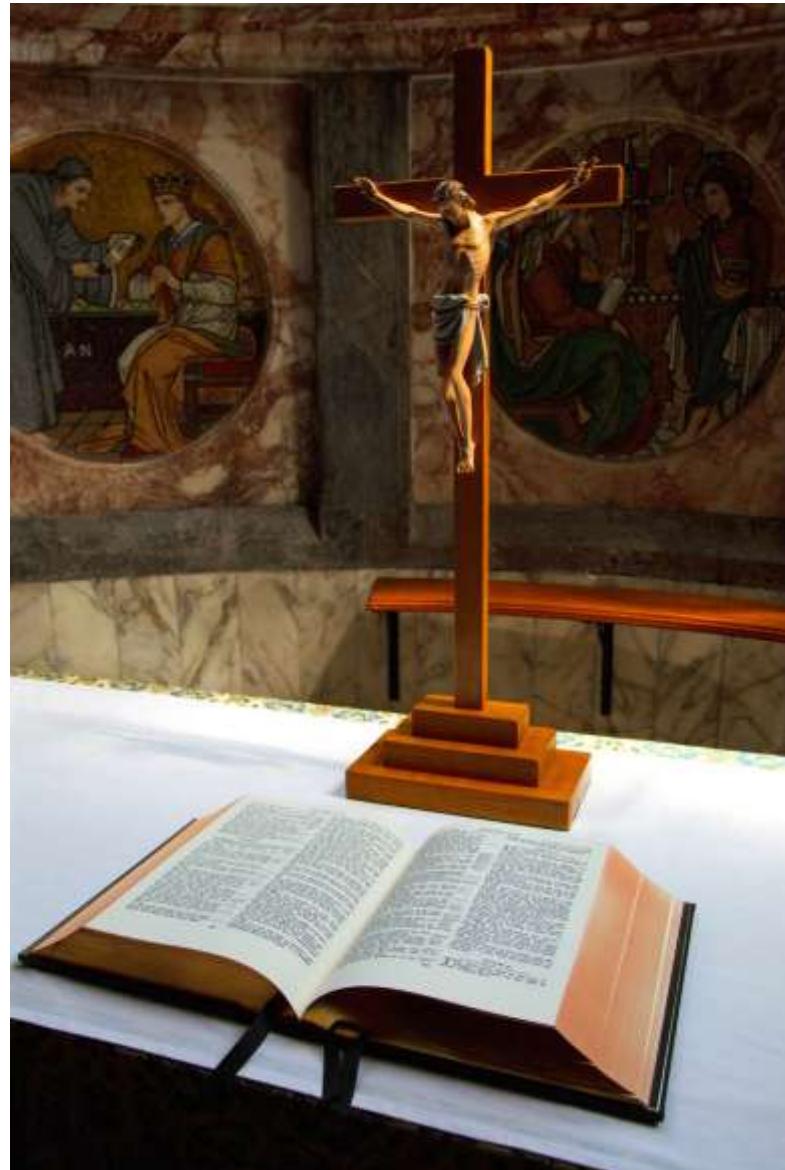


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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 2026



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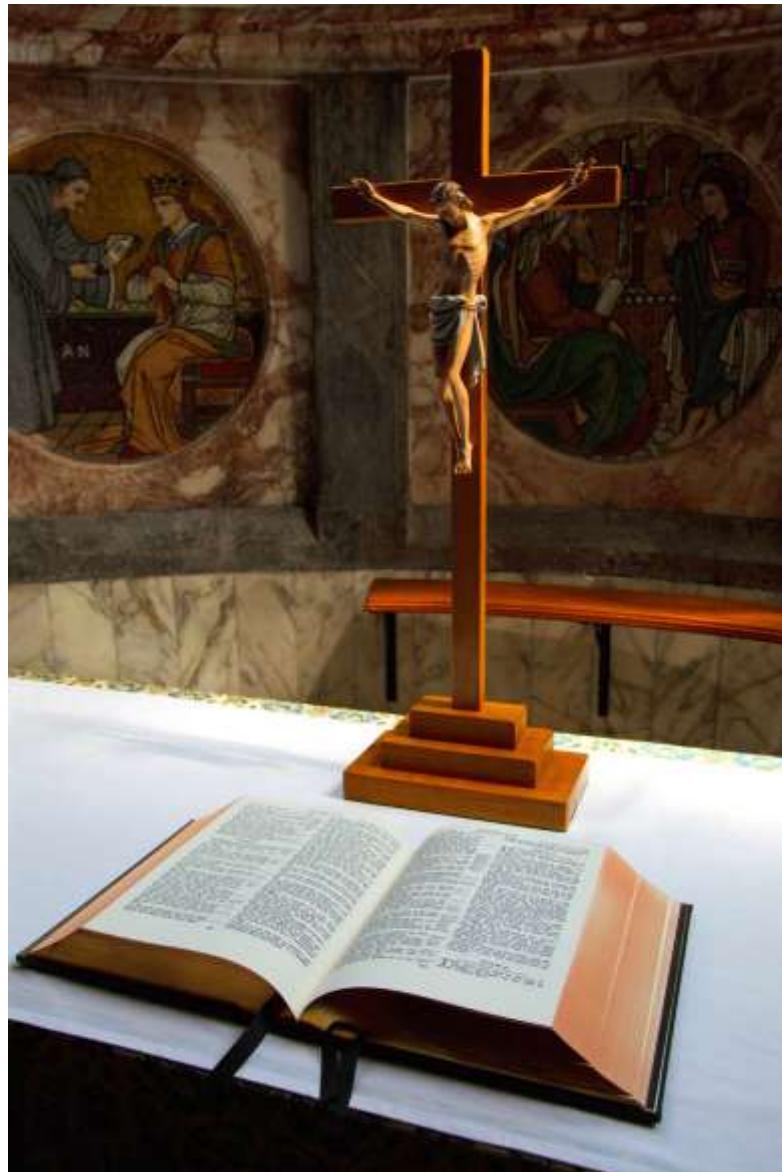
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 1, 2026



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Daily Reading for Sunday, February 1st, 2026

Reading 1, Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

3 Seek Yahweh, all you humble of the earth, who obey his commands. Seek uprightness, seek humility: you may perhaps find shelter on the Day of Yahweh's anger.

12 But in you I shall leave surviving a humble and lowly people,

13 and those who are left in Israel will take refuge in the name of Yahweh. They will do no wrong, will tell no lies; nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths. But they will be able to graze and rest with no one to alarm them.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

6 who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them. He keeps faith for ever,

7 gives justice to the oppressed, gives food to the hungry; Yahweh sets prisoners free.

8 Yahweh gives sight to the blind, lifts up those who are bowed down.

9 Yahweh protects the stranger, he sustains the orphan and the widow. Yahweh loves the upright, but he frustrates the wicked.

10 Yahweh reigns for ever, your God, Zion, from age to age.

Reading 2, First Corinthians 1:26-31

26 Consider, brothers, how you were called; not many of you are wise by human standards, not many influential, not many from noble families.

27 No, God chose those who by human standards are fools to shame the wise; he chose those who by human standards are weak to shame the strong,

28 those who by human standards are common and contemptible -- indeed those who count for nothing -- to reduce to nothing all those that do count for something,

29 so that no human being might feel boastful before God.

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30 It is by him that you exist in Christ Jesus, who for us was made wisdom from God, and saving justice and holiness and redemption.

31 As scripture says: If anyone wants to boast, let him boast of the Lord.

Gospel, Matthew 5:1-12

1 Seeing the crowds, he went onto the mountain. And when he was seated his disciples came to him.

2 Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

3 How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

4 Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance.

5 Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill.

7 Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognised as children of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

11 'Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you falsely on my account.

12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.



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Questions for Reflection for February 1, 2026

1. Our first reading is an excerpt from the Book of Zephaniah, the ninth of what are called the "minor prophets" in the Hebrew Scriptures, what Christians call the Old Testament. The Lord used Zephaniah as his mouthpiece during the reign of King Josiah of Judah.

Gods people had been led by evil Kings and had fallen away from the Lord. The Prophet warned that the judgment of the Lord was coming.

The prophet challenged them to repent and turn back to the true God. He also offered a message of hope, for those who turn from evil and do good. The passage offers one verse from chapter two, and several verses from chapter three.

The message was not only for ancient Israel, it is a message for the Church of our time. The way to happiness is to turn back to God, to reject idols, and to live in humility.

Will we listen?

2. Our Psalm response continues the theme. The man or woman who turns to the God of Jacob and puts their hope in the Lord, will be happy, in the biblical sense of the word.

"Happiness" or true joy for the believer is more than an emotion. It is the fruit of living faith.

One of the Psalms we chant in the Liturgy of the Hours, the official prayer of the Catholic Church, reminds us of this bedrock truth, "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed. Many are the troubles of the just, but the LORD delivers from them all." (Psalm 34:19,20)

Christian joy is a fruit of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a believer (Galatians 5:22). It is meant to be reflected in a new way of living. It also reveals the character of Christ being formed in a believer. It does not mean smiling all the time - though for many of us a bit more smiling would be a good idea.

Rather, Christian joy, Gospel Joy, means living as though we know that Jesus never leaves us. He meant it when he said, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Mt. 28:20)

Do we believe this?

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3. Our second reading is taken from the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. It is one of my favorite passages among all of the letters which St Paul wrote to the early Christian churches. It gives me hope. God has chosen the foolish and the weak.

So, I qualify, and so do all of you.

When we say "yes" to his call to be disciples of Jesus, and we each received that call when we passed through the waters of Baptism, he gives us His wisdom and strength and uses us for his purpose.

4. Finally, our Gospel for today's Holy Mass is an excerpt from St. Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount. We also refer to this sermon as Jesus giving us the Beatitudes.

The word translated "Blessed", from the Greek, can also be translated Happy. Jesus, the new lawgiver, speaks this powerful message from the mountain.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church has a wonderful series of paragraphs on the Beatitudes (Paragraphs 1720-1729) Here is a summary:

The Beatitudes take up and fulfill God's promises from Abraham on by ordering them to the Kingdom of heaven. They respond to the desire for happiness that God has placed in the human heart.

The Beatitudes teach us the final end to which God calls us: the Kingdom, the vision of God, participation in the divine nature, eternal life, filiation, rest in God.

The beatitude of eternal life is a gratuitous gift of God. It is supernatural, as is the grace that leads us there.

The Beatitudes confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods; they purify our hearts in order to teach us to love God above all things.

The beatitude of heaven sets the standards for discernment in the use of earthly goods in keeping with the law of God.

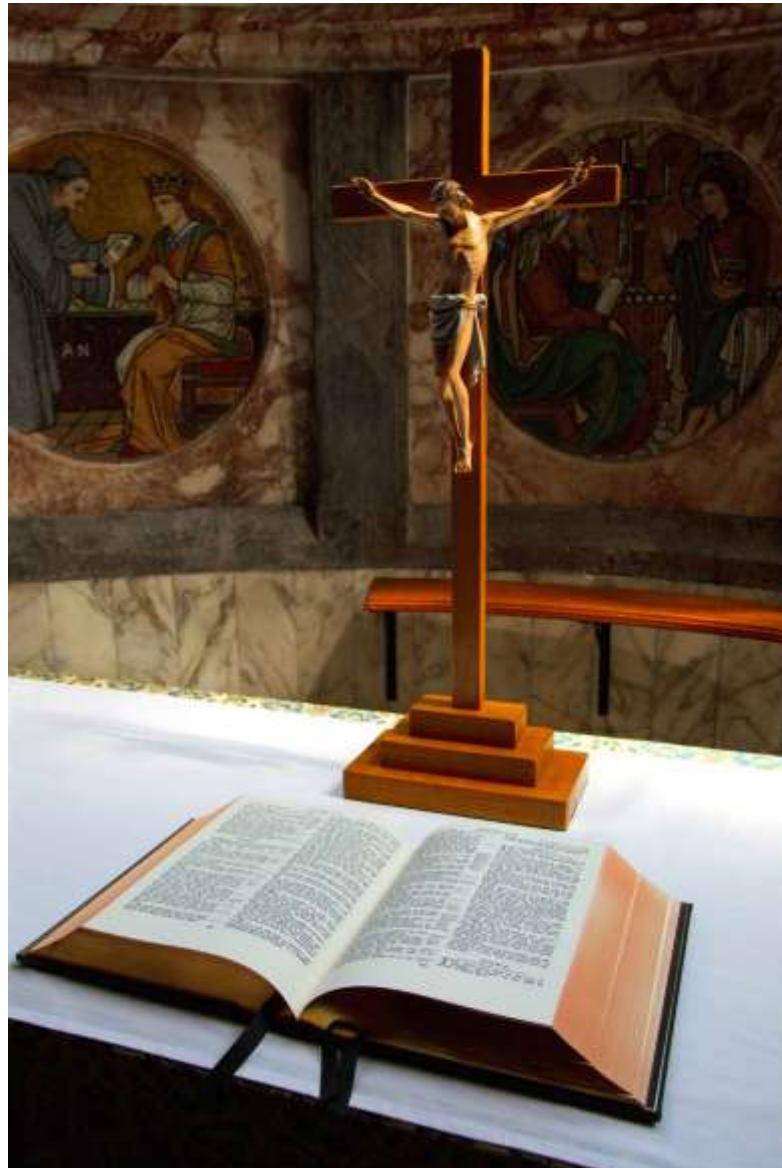
How are we doing in living this way?

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 2, 2026



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Daily Reading for Monday, February 2nd, 2026

Reading 1, Malachi 3:1-4

1 'Look, I shall send my messenger to clear a way before me. And suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come to his Temple; yes, the angel of the covenant, for whom you long, is on his way, says Yahweh Sabaoth.

2 Who will be able to resist the day of his coming? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire, like fullers' alkali.

3 He will take his seat as refiner and purifier; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they can make the offering to Yahweh with uprightness.

4 The offering of Judah and Jerusalem will then be acceptable to Yahweh as in former days, as in the years of old.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 24:7, 8, 9, 10

7 Gates, lift high your heads, raise high the ancient gateways, and the king of glory shall enter!

8 Who is he, this king of glory? It is Yahweh, strong and valiant, Yahweh valiant in battle.

9 Gates, lift high your heads, raise high the ancient gateways, and the king of glory shall enter!

10 Who is he, this king of glory? Yahweh Sabaoth, he is the king of glory.

Reading 2, Hebrews 2:14-18

14 Since all the children share the same human nature, he too shared equally in it, so that by his death he could set aside him who held the power of death, namely the devil,

15 and set free all those who had been held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.

16 For it was not the angels that he took to himself; he took to himself the line of Abraham.

17 It was essential that he should in this way be made completely like his brothers so that he could become a compassionate and trustworthy high priest for their relationship to God, able to expiate the sins of the people.

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18 For the suffering he himself passed through while being put to the test enables him to help others when they are being put to the test.

Gospel, Luke 2:22-40

22 And when the day came for them to be purified in keeping with the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord-

23 observing what is written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord-

24 and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is prescribed in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

25 Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to the restoration of Israel and the Holy Spirit rested on him.

26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord.

27 Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required,

28 he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

29 Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as you promised;

30 for my eyes have seen the salvation

31 which you have made ready in the sight of the nations;

32 a light of revelation for the gentiles and glory for your people Israel.

33 As the child's father and mother were wondering at the things that were being said about him,

34 Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Look, he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed-

35 and a sword will pierce your soul too -- so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'



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36 There was a prophetess, too, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years

37 before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer.

38 She came up just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

39 When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

40 And as the child grew to maturity, he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.



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Questions for Reflection for February 2, 2026

1. On this day, in the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church, we commemorate the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord.

The Feast was first observed in the Eastern Church as "the Encounter". Then it spread to the West in the sixth century with special solemn blessings and processions of candles symbolizing the Light of Christ entering the temple.

It became known as Candlemas.

Under Jewish Law, the first-born male was to be presented to the Lord forty days after his birth.

This male, presented in the temple, was more than a child, He was Himself the Lord and Messiah. That is why our first readings is a part of this Liturgy. The Holy Spirit was seen as speaking through Malachi in these words,

"The Lord whom you seek will come to His Temple".

And David the Psalmist, likewise, in speaking of the King of Glory entering the gates of the Holy City, was seen as pointing to and prophesying the entry of the Jesus, who, though still a child, was the King of Glory.

The early Christians saw the fulfillment of every prophecy of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament, in Jesus the Christ. They had the lens of living faith as their guide. They had encountered Him and everything was different because of that encounter.

Not only intellectually, in their profession of faith on the Lord's Day, but in their whole person, and the way they lived their daily lives.

What does our Catholic Christian faith mean to us? Is it the foundation of our life, the lens through which we view everything?

If not, it can be...

2. Our second reading, from the letter to the Hebrews, reminds us that this child whom we recall being presented in the temple on this Feast Day, grew up, and, as the letter states, was like us in all things but sin. (Hebrews 4:15 and 16)

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By sharing our human nature and voluntarily offering Himself to save us from sin and death, He has reopened heaven for all who believe, and made us, as the Apostle Peter would later write in his second letter to the whole church, "partakers of the divine nature". (2 Peter 1:3,4)

He is now our eternal High Priest. And, by His suffering He not only won for us freedom from sin and for a new way of life, He helps us in our own suffering and weakness. He is able to give us the grace we need to be made new.

Do we turn to Jesus regularly throughout the day? Do we ask Him to help us in our struggles and weaknesses?

WE Can. We should...

3. The Gospel passage appointed for today's Mass from the Gospel of Luke gives us an account of the Presentation of the Lord Jesus in the temple.

In this encounter, we are introduced to Simeon, and to Anna. Both of whom prophesy - and stand for the fulfillment of all of the prophetic promises of God made to Israel. The Longed for Messiah has come.

He has been presented in the temple. The great Messianic age has come.

The prophetic word spoken to Mary, the Mother of the Lord, that a sword will pierce her heart, will certainly be fulfilled - as she enters into the pain of watching her beloved baby grow and then, suffer, and die...

From the very moment of conception, Jesus was saving the world.

The years spent in Nazareth are not spoken of in the Gospels. But we know that Jesus spent 30 of his 33 earthly years in Nazareth.

Some spiritual writers have called these the hidden years, because there is so little written about them in the Gospel narratives. However, they reveal the holiness of ordinary life and show us how it becomes extraordinary for those baptized into Christ.

Every moment of his time among us Jesus was saving, redeeming, and re-creating the world. From his conception, throughout His saving life, death and Resurrection, the One whom scripture calls the New Adam was making all things new.

The Fathers of the last great Council of the Church, the Second Vatican Council, put it this way:

"The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord.

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Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.

"He Who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), is Himself the perfect man.

"To the sons of Adam, He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too.

"For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin." (Gaudium et Spes # 22)

On this day of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, let us reflect on the meaning of this great event.

Have we presented ourselves, our spouses, our children, our grandchildren, before the to the Lord?

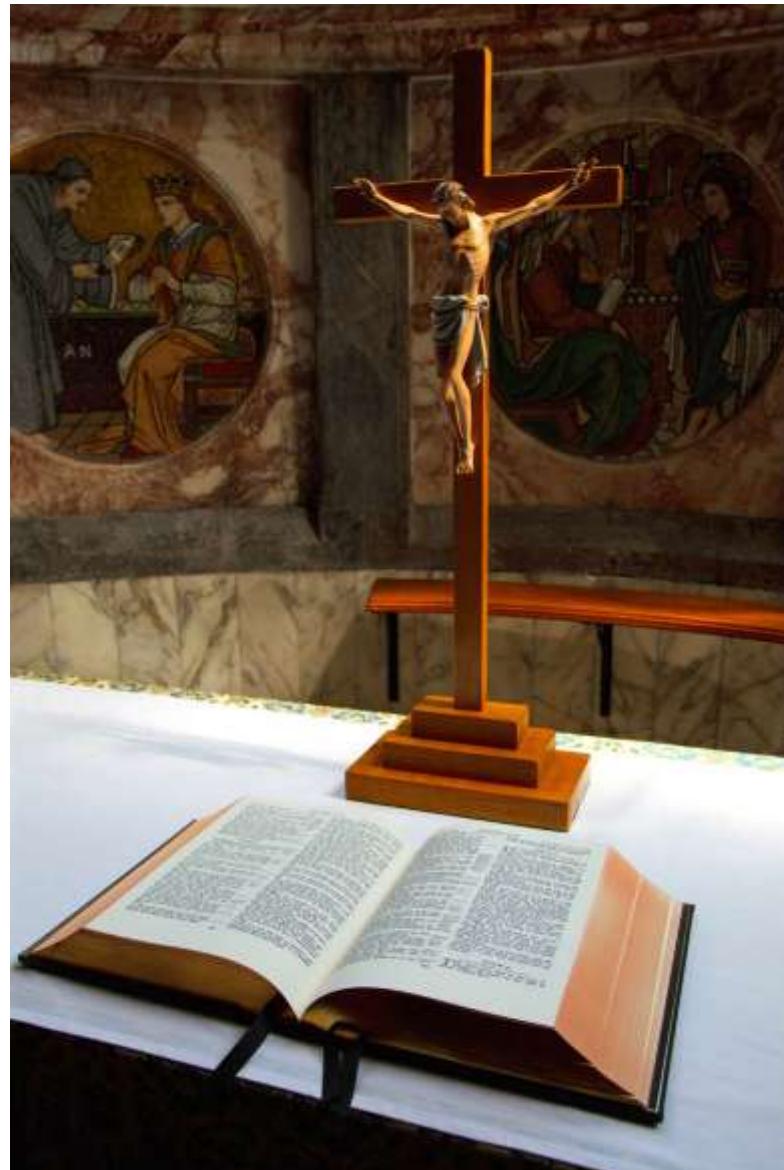
We should.

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 3, 2026



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Daily Reading for Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026

Reading 1, Second Samuel 18:9-10, 14, 24-25, 30-19:3

9 Absalom happened to run into some of David's guards. Absalom was riding his mule and the mule passed under the thick branches of a great oak. Absalom's head got caught in the oak and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule he was riding went on.

10 Someone saw this and reported to Joab, 'I have just seen Absalom hanging from an oak.'

14 Joab then said, 'I cannot waste time arguing with you!' And, taking three darts in his hand, he planted them in Absalom's heart, while he was still alive, deep in the oak-tree.

24 David was sitting between the two gates. The sentry, having gone up to the roof of the gate, looked out from the ramparts and saw a man running alone.

25 The sentry called down to the king and told him. The king said, 'If he is alone, he is bringing good news.'

30 The king said, 'Go and stand over there.' He stood to one side and waited.

31 Then the Cushite arrived. 'Good news for my lord the king!' the Cushite shouted. 'Today Yahweh has vindicated your cause, by ridding you of all who had risen up against you.'

32 'Is all well with young Absalom?' the king asked the Cushite. 'May the enemies of my lord the king', the Cushite answered, 'and all who rise up to harm you, share the fate of that young man!'

1 The king shuddered. He went up to the room over the gate and burst into tears; and, as he wept, he kept saying, 'Oh, my son Absalom! My son! My son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! Oh, Absalom my son, my son!'

2 Word was brought to Joab, 'The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.'

3 And for the entire army that day, victory was turned to mourning, the troops having learnt that the king was grieving for his son.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 86:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

1 [Prayer Of David] Listen to me, Yahweh, answer me, for I am poor and needy.

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2 Guard me, for I am faithful, save your servant who relies on you. You are my God,

3 take pity on me, Lord, for to you I cry all the day.

4 Fill your servant's heart with joy, Lord, for to you I raise up my heart.

5 Lord, you are kind and forgiving, rich in faithful love for all who call upon you.

6 Yahweh, hear my prayer, listen to the sound of my pleading.

Gospel, Mark 5:21-43

21 When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered round him and he stayed by the lake.

22 Then the president of the synagogue came up, named Jairus, and seeing him, fell at his feet

23 and begged him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter is desperately sick. Do come and lay your hands on her that she may be saved and may live.'

24 Jesus went with him and a large crowd followed him; they were pressing all round him.

25 Now there was a woman who had suffered from a haemorrhage for twelve years;

26 after long and painful treatment under various doctors, she had spent all she had without being any the better for it; in fact, she was getting worse.

27 She had heard about Jesus, and she came up through the crowd and touched his cloak from behind, thinking,

28 'If I can just touch his clothes, I shall be saved.'

29 And at once the source of the bleeding dried up, and she felt in herself that she was cured of her complaint.

30 And at once aware of the power that had gone out from him, Jesus turned round in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?'

31 His disciples said to him, 'You see how the crowd is pressing round you; how can you ask, "Who touched me?"'



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32 But he continued to look all round to see who had done it.

33 Then the woman came forward, frightened and trembling because she knew what had happened to her, and she fell at his feet and told him the whole truth.

34 'My daughter,' he said, 'your faith has restored you to health; go in peace and be free of your complaint.'

35 While he was still speaking some people arrived from the house of the president of the synagogue to say, 'Your daughter is dead; why put the Master to any further trouble?'

36 But Jesus overheard what they said and he said to the president of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid; only have faith.'

37 And he allowed no one to go with him except Peter and James and John the brother of James.

38 So they came to the house of the president of the synagogue, and Jesus noticed all the commotion, with people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly.

39 He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and crying? The child is not dead, but asleep.'

40 But they ridiculed him. So he turned them all out and, taking with him the child's father and mother and his own companions, he went into the place where the child lay.

41 And taking the child by the hand he said to her, 'Talitha kum!' which means, 'Little girl, I tell you to get up.'

42 The little girl got up at once and began to walk about, for she was twelve years old. At once they were overcome with astonishment,

43 and he gave them strict orders not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.



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Questions for Reflection for February 3, 2026

1. In our first reading, we continue to hear of the life and travails of King David. In this particular passage, we hear that Absalom, his rebellious son, who plotted against him, was killed. His army thought he would be relieved, but instead, David grieved in anguish over the death of his son.

He retreats to his room over the City gate to grieve crying out "Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you. The bonds of family are so extraordinarily deep. That even when we are hurt by a son or a daughter, they never stop being our son or daughter. So, it is in our relationship with God. He is our Father. And, even when we are unfaithful, He remains faithful.

2. In our Psalm for today's response, we ask the Lord to incline His ear and listen to us. Again, these are the words of David. Notice what follows "Yahweh, answer me, for I am poor and needy. Guard me, for I am faithful, save your servant who relies on you. You are my God, take pity on me, Lord, for to you I cry all the day."

"Fill your servant's heart with joy, Lord, for to you I raise up my heart. Lord, you are kind and forgiving, rich in faithful love for all who call upon you. Yahweh, hear my prayer, listen to the sound of my pleading." Through the hardships and pain of his own life, David learned humility.

How do we respond to the hardships of our own life?

3. In the Gospel passage we heard proclaimed at Mass, Jesus is approached by a Father, a synagogue official named Jairus, whose daughter was dying. The heartfelt petition of the Father, revealed great faith, and moved Jesus to response.

Then, He was approached by a desperate woman who had bled for twelve years and been severely mistreated by Doctors. So great was her faith, she wished only to touch the hem of his garment. And, she does and flow of blood stops. She is healed.

As the passage continues, notice it is the faith of both of these persons which brings the compassionate healing power of Jesus to their assistance. Word comes that the daughter of the official had died but Jesus tells him "Do not be afraid, just have faith". He enters the house of the official and raises his daughter from the dead.

Faith is the most powerful weapon we have to wield as we follow the Lord. It still moves the heart of the Lord and brings His miraculous intervention.

Do we wield this weapon in our own lives? Do we use it in praying for others? Faith is a theological virtue, yes. But it is also an act, a response to the Lord. It is like a muscle. It must be used, or it atrophies.



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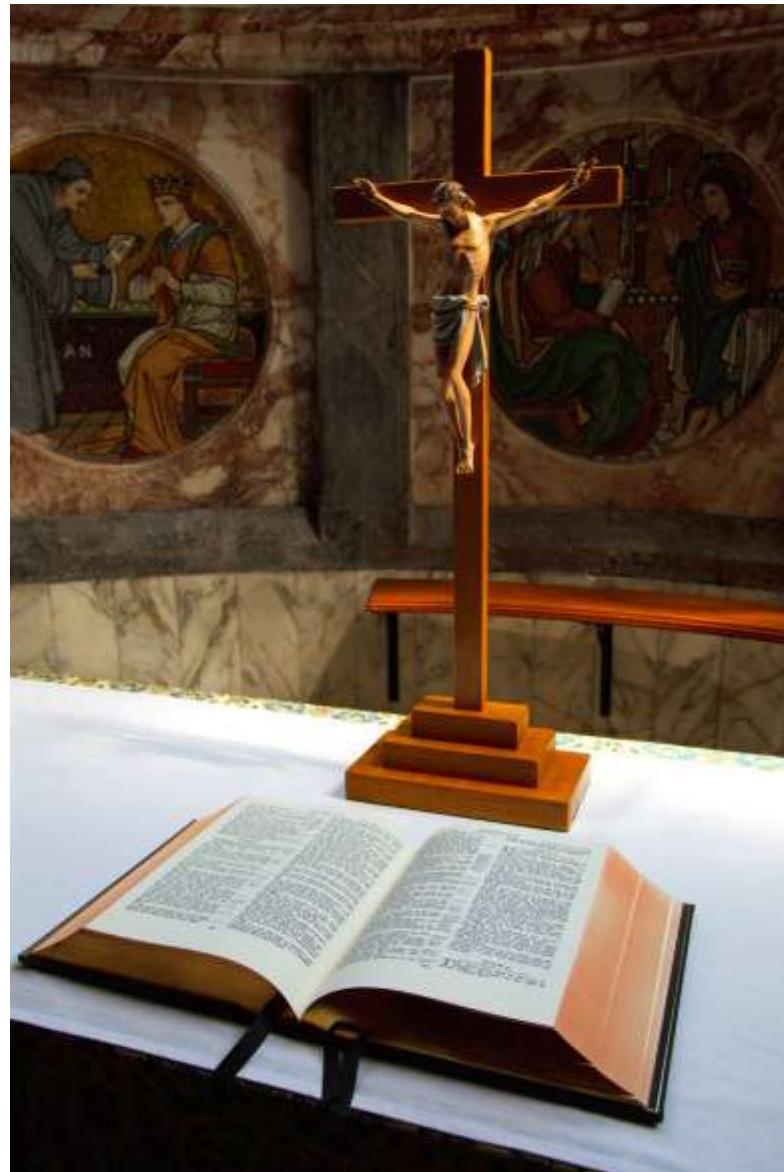
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 4, 2026



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Daily Reading for Wednesday, February 4th, 2026

Reading 1, Second Samuel 24:2, 9-17

2 The king said to Joab and the senior army officers who were with him, 'Now, go through all the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, and take a census of the people; I wish to know the size of the population.'

9 Joab gave the king the census results for the people; Israel had eight hundred thousand fighting men who could wield a sword, and Judah five hundred thousand.

10 But afterwards David's heart misgave him for having taken a census of the people. David then said to Yahweh, 'I have committed a grave sin by doing this. But now, Yahweh, I beg you to forgive your servant for this fault, for I have acted very foolishly.'

11 When, however, David got up next morning, the following message had come from Yahweh to the prophet Gad, David's seer,

12 'Go and say to David, "Yahweh says this: I offer you three things; choose which one of them I am to inflict on you." '

13 So Gad went to David and said, 'Which do you prefer: to have three years of famine befall your country; to flee for three months before a pursuing army; or to have three days of epidemic in your country? Now think, and decide how I am to answer him who sends me.'

14 David said to Gad, 'I am very apprehensive . . . Better to fall into Yahweh's hands, since his mercies are great, than to fall into the hands of men!'

15 So David chose the epidemic. It was the time of the wheat harvest. So Yahweh unleashed an epidemic on Israel from that morning until the time determined; plague ravaged the people and, of the people from Dan to Beersheba, seventy thousand died.

16 But when the angel stretched his hand towards Jerusalem to destroy it, Yahweh felt sorry about the calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, 'Enough now! Hold your hand!' The angel of Yahweh was standing by the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

17 When David saw the angel who was ravaging the people, he said to Yahweh, 'I was the one who sinned. I was the one who acted wrongly. But these, the flock, what have they done? Let your hand lie heavy on me and on my family!'



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Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 32:1-2, 5, 6, 7

1 [Of David Poem] How blessed are those whose offence is forgiven, whose sin blotted out.

2 How blessed are those to whom Yahweh imputes no guilt, whose spirit harbours no deceit.

5 I made my sin known to you, did not conceal my guilt. I said, 'I shall confess my offence to Yahweh.' And you, for your part, took away my guilt, forgave my sin.

6 That is why each of your faithful ones prays to you in time of distress. Even if great floods overflow, they will never reach your faithful.

7 You are a refuge for me, you guard me in trouble, with songs of deliverance you surround me.

Gospel, Mark 6:1-6

1 Leaving that district, he went to his home town, and his disciples accompanied him.

2 With the coming of the Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and most of them were astonished when they heard him. They said, 'Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles that are worked through him?'

3 This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not here with us?' And they would not accept him.

4 And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is despised only in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house';

5 and he could work no miracle there, except that he cured a few sick people by laying his hands on them.

6 He was amazed at their lack of faith. He made a tour round the villages, teaching.



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Questions for Reflection for February 4, 2026

1. All of our readings for today's Holy Mass speak to us about Faith.

Once again, in our reading from the Hebrew Scriptures, David does not trust the Lord to be with him in battle. Instead, he falls back onto his own plan, rooted not in faith, but in doubt. Joab, the commander of the Army even tries to assure the King that the Lord could add men to the army. But David relies on himself and he suffers the consequences.

This is the same David who, as a very young man, trusted the Lord enough to take a slingshot into a battle with a Goliath. And, the Lord intervened miraculously. God had not changed. David had. How had his life, with all of its difficulties, and his own poor choices, brought such erosion to this once mighty man?

Well, that is what sin does, it corrodes. It separates, it clouds over our capacity to see clearly.

Afterward, David immediately sees he had made a wrong choice.:

"David then said to Yahweh, 'I have committed a grave sin by doing this. But now, Yahweh, I beg you to forgive your servant for this fault, for I have acted very foolishly.'

This is the right response. And, it is never too late.

So, the Lord gave David a choice in punishment for his sin, his wrong choice, his lack of trust. Rather than fall into the hands of men, he chooses to fall into the hands of God, and an epidemic strikes the people whom he was responsible for. But, our biblical account doesn't stop there.

Notice, however, David pleads with the Lord, on behalf of the people, and offers to take all of the consequences upon himself. "He said to Yahweh, 'I was the one who sinned. I was the one who acted wrongly. But these, the flock, what have they done? Let your hand lie heavy on me and on my family!'

That is how a leader of people should act. It also reveals the character of David. Yes, he sinned, he made wrong choices...but, he repented and learned from those mistakes and wrong choices. Do we learn from our wrong choices?

2. The Psalm response for today's Holy Mass continues to teach us lessons from David. He was certainly not a perfect man. He sinned. He erred. But, he was a man who repented and always turned back to God. He was a man who understood the power of faith. Listen to his words. Let us make them our own.



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"How blessed are those whose offence is forgiven, whose sin blotted out. How blessed are those to whom Yahweh imputes no guilt, whose spirit harbors no deceit.

"I made my sin known to you, did not conceal my guilt. I said, 'I shall confess my offence to Yahweh.' And you, for your part, took away my guilt, forgave my sin.

"That is why each of your faithful ones prays to you in time of distress. Even if great floods overflow, they will never reach your faithful. You are a refuge for me, you guard me in trouble, with songs of deliverance you surround me."

3. In the Gospel appointed for today's Mass, St Mark shows us how Jesus is rejected in his own hometown. Why? Because he was a carpenter. Because he was the son of Mary and had extended family just like his listeners. How could he be any different than them?

And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is despised only in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house'; and he could work no miracle there, except that he cured a few sick people by laying his hands on them."

Notice the connection the scriptures reveal between the lack of faith of the townspeople and the lack of miracles, of God's intervention in their own lives. That relationship should move every one of us to examine where we are in relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we have faith? Is it living faith? Do we act on it?

Jesus is not dead. He has been raised from the dead and walks among us. He still speaks His word. He calls us to respond. Are we listening? Are we growing in our faith?

Hear the words of the Lord. They should move us deeply: And Jesus said to them, '...and he could work no miracle there, except that he cured a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith."

Lord Jesus, please, by your grace, increase our faith!



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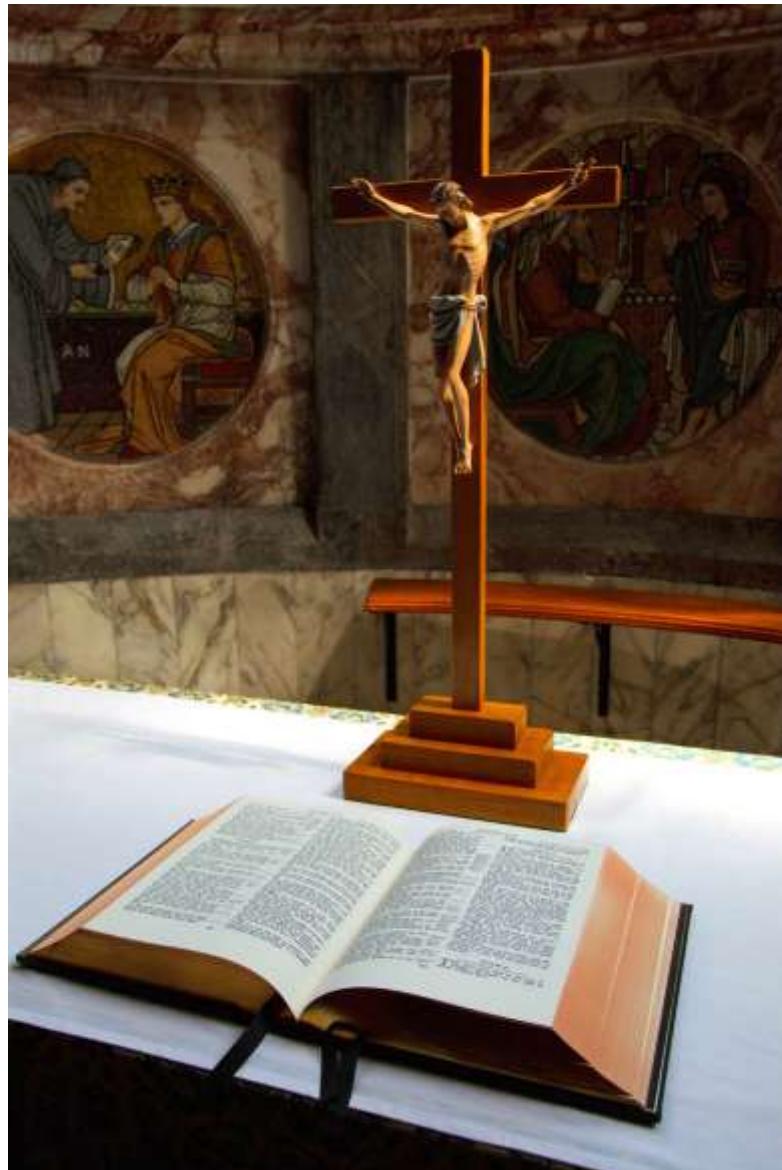
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 5, 2026



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Daily Reading for Thursday, February 5th, 2026

Reading 1, First Kings 2:1-4, 10-12

1 As David's life drew to its close he laid this charge on his son Solomon,

2 'I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong and show yourself a man.

3 Observe the injunctions of Yahweh your God, following his ways and keeping his laws, his commandments, his ordinances and his decrees, as stands written in the Law of Moses, so that you may be successful in everything you do and undertake,

4 and that Yahweh may fulfil the promise which he made me, "If your sons are careful how they behave, and walk loyally before me with all their heart and soul, you will never want for a man on the throne of Israel."

10 So David fell asleep with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David.

11 David was king of Israel for a period of forty years: he reigned at Hebron for seven years, and in Jerusalem for thirty-three.

12 Solomon then sat on the throne of David, and his sovereignty was securely established.

Responsorial Psalm, First Chronicles 29:10, 11, 11-12, 12

10 Hence, in the presence of the whole assembly David blessed Yahweh. David said: 'May you be blessed, Yahweh, God of Israel our ancestor, for ever and for ever!

11 Yours, Yahweh, is the greatness, the power, the splendour, length of days and glory, everything in heaven and on earth is yours. Yours is the sovereignty, Yahweh; you are exalted, supreme over all.

12 Wealth and riches come from you, you are ruler of all, in your hand lie strength and power, and you bestow greatness and might on whomsoever you please.

Gospel, Mark 6:7-13

7 Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs, giving them authority over unclean spirits.

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8 And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff -- no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses.

9 They were to wear sandals but, he added, 'Don't take a spare tunic.'

10 And he said to them, 'If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district.

11 And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust under your feet as evidence to them.'

12 So they set off to proclaim repentance;

13 and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.



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Questions for Reflection for February 5, 2026

1. In our first reading we are given the account of King David on his death bed. He is addressing his son, Solomon, concerning the way in which he should live his life in service to the Lord, as King. He also instructs Solomon about his sons, and how they should live.

What is clear is the connection between the faith one professes and the way that one lives their lives. David, as he faced death, had learned that lesson the hard way. He had done great things for the Lord, but, he had also sinned greatly. He knows the promise of the Lord to ensure that his dynasty will endure is dependent upon the fidelity of his successors.

We know, as Christians, that the Lord fulfilled His Covenant to David. Ultimately, by sending His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, whom the Gospel tells us, in his humanity, was of the lineage of David. St. Matthews Gospel account traces the genealogy of Jesus back to both Abraham and David. Thus, the covenants are fulfilled and perfected in Him.

There is a connection between the faith we profess and the way we live our lives as well. But, as Christians, we now have, through Jesus Christ, the Son of David and the Son of God, access to forgiveness and a continued access to grace through the Sacraments of His Church. The Sacrament of penance or confession is a tremendous gift. If you have not utilized it lately, make today the day.

Let us choose today to walk in the way of living faith - in our words and in our deeds.

2. Our Responsorial is taken from the 1 Book of Chronicles. Though it is not a Psalm of David, we are reciting David's words. David has just instructed his son Solomon on how to proceed to build the temple. He would not be allowed to build the temple himself.

This passage is taken from a prayer of praise he offers in the midst of an assembly of worship which he is presiding over. David's prayers are always filled with Praise and worship. That was, and still is, part of his enduring legacy in the loving plan of God for salvation.

Do we spend time daily praising and worshipping God?

3. In the portion of the Gospel of St. Mark which we hear proclaimed at Holy Mass today, Jesus summons the twelve whom he had chosen and sends them out two by two. He gives them His authority to combat and overcome evil, heal the sick and proclaim the Gospel. And, that mission continues today.



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Through the waters of Baptism, we were first forgiven of original sin and incorporated into His Mystical Body, the Church. We are all called to go forth, preach the Gospel and exercise His authority. Every single Baptized Christian is called to participate in the ongoing redemptive mission of the Lord.

We are living in a trying time for the Church in the known world of our day. It will become even more difficult in the days ahead. Remember these words from the Gospel of St John:

"And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19) Much like those early Christians, we face a similar hostility and opposition which grows more intense. This is precisely the kind of historic period which two thousand years of Christian history has shown us produces heroes and saints - and sometimes martyrs.

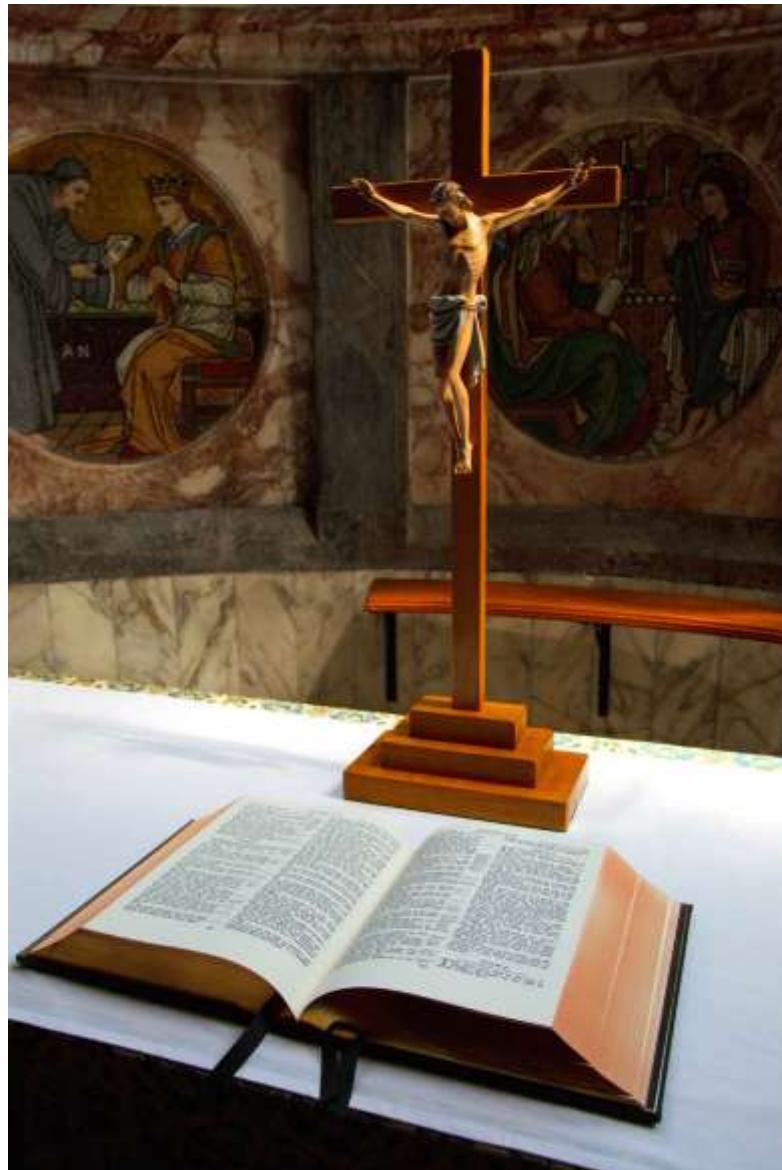
But we must say YES to the invitation of Jesus and follow His instructions. They come to us in His word, and through the teaching office of His Church.

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 6, 2026



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Daily Reading for Friday, February 6th, 2026

Reading 1, Sirach 47:2-11

2 As the fat is set apart from the communion sacrifice, so was David chosen out of the Israelites.

3 He played with lions as though with kids, and with bears as though with lambs.

4 While still a boy, did he not slay the giant and take away the people's shame, by hurling a stone from his sling and cutting short the boasting of Goliath?

5 For he called on the Lord Most High, who gave strength to his right arm to put a mighty warrior to death and assert the strength of his own people.

6 Hence they gave him credit for ten thousand, and praised him while they blessed the Lord, by offering him a crown of glory.

7 For he destroyed the enemies on every front, he annihilated his foes, the Philistines, and crushed their strength for ever.

8 In all his activities he gave thanks to the Holy One Most High in words of glory; he put all his heart into his songs out of love for his Creator.

9 He placed singers before the altar, melodiously to sing;

10 he gave the feasts their splendour, the festivals their solemn pomp, causing the Lord's holy name to be praised and the sanctuary to resound from dawn.

11 The Lord took away his sins, making his strength ever greater; he gave him a royal covenant, and a glorious throne in Israel.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 18:31, 47, 50, 51

31 For who is God but Yahweh, who is a rock but our God?

47 the God who gives me vengeance, and subjects whole peoples to me,

50 He saves his king time after time, displays his faithful love for his anointed, for David and his heirs for ever.

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Gospel, Mark 6:14-29

14 King Herod had heard about him, since by now his name was well known. Some were saying, 'John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.'

15 Others said, 'He is Elijah,' others again, 'He is a prophet, like the prophets we used to have.'

16 But when Herod heard this he said, 'It is John whose head I cut off; he has risen from the dead.'

17 Now it was this same Herod who had sent to have John arrested, and had had him chained up in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife whom he had married.

18 For John had told Herod, 'It is against the law for you to have your brother's wife.'

19 As for Herodias, she was furious with him and wanted to kill him, but she was not able to do so,

20 because Herod was in awe of John, knowing him to be a good and upright man, and gave him his protection. When he had heard him speak he was greatly perplexed, and yet he liked to listen to him.

21 An opportunity came on Herod's birthday when he gave a banquet for the nobles of his court, for his army officers and for the leading figures in Galilee.

22 When the daughter of this same Herodias came in and danced, she delighted Herod and his guests; so the king said to the girl, 'Ask me anything you like and I will give it you.'

23 And he swore her an oath, 'I will give you anything you ask, even half my kingdom.'

24 She went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask for?' She replied, 'The head of John the Baptist.'

25 The girl at once rushed back to the king and made her request, 'I want you to give me John the Baptist's head, immediately, on a dish.'

26 The king was deeply distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he was reluctant to break his word to her.

27 At once the king sent one of the bodyguard with orders to bring John's head.

28 The man went off and beheaded him in the prison; then he brought the head on a dish and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother.

29 When John's disciples heard about this, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

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Questions for Reflection for February 6, 2026

1. In our first reading, from the book of Sirach, the Hebrew sage extols David the Prophet, King, and Psalmist. He points to the courage of his youth when he stood up to Goliath and slew him with one stone from his slingshot.

He praises his courage in battle and points to the regard his people had for him, which led them to make him King. But, notice the other primary thrust in this passage, David was a man of prayer and worship. He also drew God's people to praise and worship.

Because of this continual offering of praise and worship, Sirach writes "The Lord took away his sins, making his strength ever greater; he gave him a royal covenant, and a glorious throne in Israel."

The sage writes (in another translation) "Like the choice fat of the sacred offerings, so was David in Israel". David offered himself to the Lord. When he sinned, he repented. He offered himself to the Lord as a sacrifice of praise. We are called to imitate him and do the same.

2. In our responsorial Psalm for today's Mass, David gives us an example of the kind of praise and worship for which he is now known by millions. He sings "For who is God but Yahweh, who is a rock but our God?" We are invited to make the praise and worship of the Lord a part of our daily lives.

The Apostle Paul writes to the Thessalonians "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thess. 5: 16,17)

Can we live this way? The answer is YES.

3. In the Gospel for today's Mass we hear of the evil King named Herod, who, having heard of the miracles and the message of Jesus, feared he was John the Baptizer "raised up". His life of sin so corrupted him, that he turned further and further away from God. Taking the life of the forerunner, John the Baptizer, because of a drunken promise he made to a dancing girl.

John was the last prophet of the Old Testament who became the first prophet of the New Testament. And, he became the first Martyr of the New Testament.

John is a man to be imitated in both life and death. We learn from him to live our lives as joyful penitents; ever aware of our utter dependency on God's grace. John still points to Jesus, in his birth, his life and ministry and his martyr's death.



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By standing apart, boldly calling out evil doers without regard to their prestige or rank, by challenging his own co-religionists, John made himself terribly unpopular. At the end, he publicly and relentlessly criticized the personal behavior of the most powerful politician in Judea, Herod. As a result, he was arrested and executed.

He was faithful to the mission he had received to the point of giving his life. We are called to do the same. The word "martyr" is from a Greek word which means witness. Most of us will not be called to shed our blood for the faith, though Christians in many parts of the world are doing that.

But we are all called to be heroic witness to Jesus Christ.



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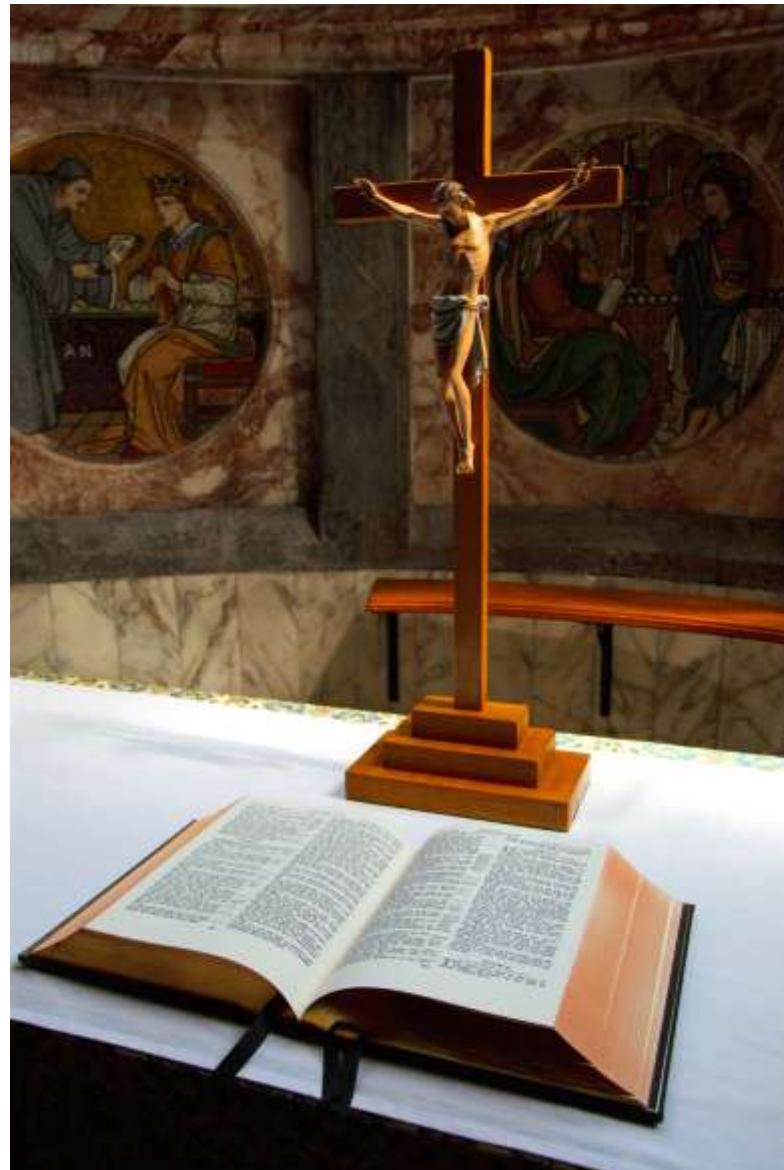
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 7, 2026



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Daily Reading for Saturday, February 7th, 2026

Reading 1, First Kings 3:4-13

4 The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, since that was the principal high place -- Solomon presented a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

5 At Gibeon Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream during the night. God said, 'Ask what you would like me to give you.'

6 Solomon replied, 'You showed most faithful love to your servant David, my father, when he lived his life before you in faithfulness and uprightness and integrity of heart; you have continued this most faithful love to him by allowing a son of his to sit on his throne today.'

7 Now, Yahweh my God, you have made your servant king in succession to David my father. But I am a very young man, unskilled in leadership.

8 And here is your servant, surrounded with your people whom you have chosen, a people so numerous that its number cannot be counted or reckoned.

9 So give your servant a heart to understand how to govern your people, how to discern between good and evil, for how could one otherwise govern such a great people as yours?'

10 It pleased Yahweh that Solomon should have asked for this.

11 'Since you have asked for this,' God said, 'and not asked for long life for yourself or riches or the lives of your enemies but have asked for a discerning judgement for yourself,

12 here and now I do what you ask. I give you a heart wise and shrewd as no one has had before and no one will have after you.

13 What you have not asked I shall give you too: such riches and glory as no other king can match.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 119:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

9 How can a young man keep his way spotless? By keeping your words.

10 With all my heart I seek you, do not let me stray from your commandments.



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11 In my heart I treasure your promises, to avoid sinning against you.

12 Blessed are you, Yahweh, teach me your will!

13 With my lips I have repeated all the judgements you have given.

14 In the way of your instructions lies my joy, a joy beyond all wealth.

Gospel, Mark 6:30-34

30 The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught.

31 And he said to them, 'Come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that there was no time for them even to eat.

32 So they went off in the boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves.

33 But people saw them going, and many recognised them; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them.

34 So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.



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Questions for Reflection for February 7, 2026

1. In our first reading, taken from the first book of Kings, we are given an insight into why Solomon, the son of David, became so wise. Even now, we speak of "the wisdom of Solomon".

In the previous chapter, David had died, and the scripture tells us "Solomon sat upon the throne of David his Father, and his kingdom was firmly established" (1 Kings 2:12). Of course, Solomon knows the family history and the travail his own father had endured.

He is a man of prayer, like his Father. And this reading reveals his heart. In the verse right before this we read "Solomon loved the Lord; walking in the statutes of David his father". So, he offers sacrifice and prays in earnest and the Lord visits him in a dream. This encounter would shape his relationship going forward, with the Lord, and with the people of God, Israel.

When the Lord invites him to ask for anything, he asks for wisdom, for an understanding heart, or mind so he might discern between good and evil in order to govern the people with wisdom. The Lord answers that prayer and is pleased with what it reveals.

Question, if the Lord invited you to ask for anything, what would you ask for?

2. In our Psalm excerpt from Psalm 119 we see the character of David, the father of Solomon. He asks, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" And, he answers his own question, "By keeping your words". Each of us is called to keep our way pure. To turn away from sin and grow in holiness.

David shows us the path. By turning always to the Lord and doing His Word.

3. In the Gospel appointed for today's Holy Mass, the Evangelist Mark presents us with the disciples, having just returned from their first missionary journey. They were eager to tell the Lord "all that they had done and taught".

But Jesus had another plan. Through the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, He wanted to teach them about what I like to call the "economy of heavenly scale". He invited them to come away to a lonely place and rest a while. Usually such rest is accompanied by deep prayer.

He had something of great importance to teach them. The kind of lesson which would change their entire perspective and set them on a mission that would turn the world upside down.

Jesus wants to do the same with each one of us. Like the disciples, we need to listen to Him, in prayer, and allow Him to change our minds, our hearts, and our lives. Are we willing to do that?



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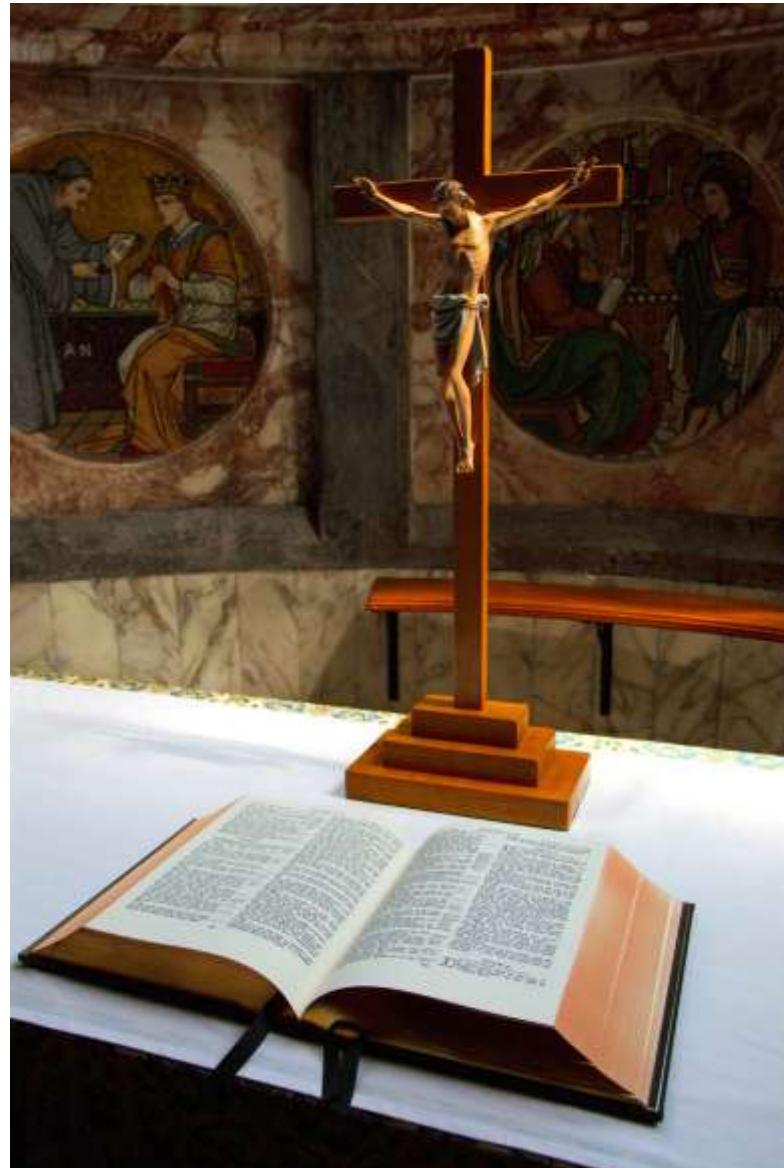
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 8, 2026



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Daily Reading for Sunday, February 8th, 2026

Reading 1, Isaiah 58:7-10

7 Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, and sheltering the homeless poor; if you see someone lacking clothes, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own kin?

8 Then your light will blaze out like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over. Saving justice will go ahead of you and Yahweh's glory come behind you.

9 Then you will cry for help and Yahweh will answer; you will call and he will say, 'I am here.' If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist and malicious words,

10 if you deprive yourself for the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, your light will rise in the darkness, and your darkest hour will be like noon.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

4 For the honest he shines as a lamp in the dark, generous, tender-hearted, and upright.

5 All goes well for one who lends generously, who is honest in all his dealing;

6 for all time to come he will not stumble, for all time to come the upright will be remembered.

7 Bad news holds no fears for him, firm is his heart, trusting in Yahweh.

8 His heart held steady, he has no fears, till he can gloat over his enemies.

9 To the needy he gives without stint, his uprightness stands firm for ever; his reputation is founded on strength.

Reading 2, First Corinthians 2:1-5

1 Now when I came to you, brothers, I did not come with any brilliance of oratory or wise argument to announce to you the mystery of God.

2 I was resolved that the only knowledge I would have while I was with you was knowledge of Jesus, and of him as the crucified Christ.

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3 I came among you in weakness, in fear and great trembling

4 and what I spoke and proclaimed was not meant to convince by philosophical argument, but to demonstrate the convincing power of the Spirit,

5 so that your faith should depend not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Gospel, Matthew 5:13-16

13 'You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under people's feet.

14 'You are light for the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden.

15 No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house.

16 In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.



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Questions for Reflection for February 8, 2026

1. This is the fifth Sunday in Ordinary time and our first reading is an excerpt from the Messianic Hebrew Prophet Isaiah. The Lord is speaking through him to instruct the people of Israel on true and false fasting and worship. In the verse just before this passage the Lord asks

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?"

The message is clear and is consistent throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, what Christians call the Old Testament" and the New Testament, prayer and fasting must be more than words, it must be action.

Prayer and fasting are to lead us into a life of communion. It is our fuel, the wind in our sails. We who have been baptized into Jesus Christ are now called and enabled to live our lives in Him, by living them in His Body, the Church, of which we are members. (1 Cor. 12:27)

This call to live in Him engages our freedom and invites our continual response to His grace. It is the fuel of our action; or it should be. Our Psalm response tells us the fruit which results from a life lived this way. "All goes well for one who lends generously, who is honest in all his dealing; for all time to come he will not stumble, for all time to come the upright will be remembered."

Are we walking the talk?

2. Our Second Reading, from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthian Christians reminds us of something which we must never forget. We are weak, and yes, we are foolish. But, its not about us. The power of the message we are called to proclaim is found in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

In the first chapter of that same letter he tells them - and reminds us - "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world, to shame the strong".

I find great solace and strength in that. I'm weak and foolish, so I qualify for duty in the Army of the Lord. Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified commands that Army and His Strength conquers death itself.

3. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) We are bearers of the light of Christ who have been sent into a world which is walking in the twilight.

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The Father wants to bring the entire human race back into a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who live in Jesus Christ, by living in the Church, which is His Body, are sent on mission into the world in order to bring all men and women into the new world of the Church.

The power to effect redemptive change in the world comes from the life of God within us. It is amazing how little leaven it takes to raise a loaf of bread. That is because within those little particles of yeast is found the power to ferment, to change the lump of wet dough into a loaf of aromatic, tasty, nourishing bread. However, the power contained within that yeast is not activated unless it is mixed and kneaded into the dough.

Once you work the leaven in, it is still hidden to the eye but how it transforms that loaf! So it is with Christians within human culture! The power within us is the very same power that raised Jesus from the dead (See Romans 8:11)! All we are asked to do is to mix it up. We have to get in the loaf. We must be in the world - where Jesus is - in order to be used to accomplish His ongoing work of redemption.



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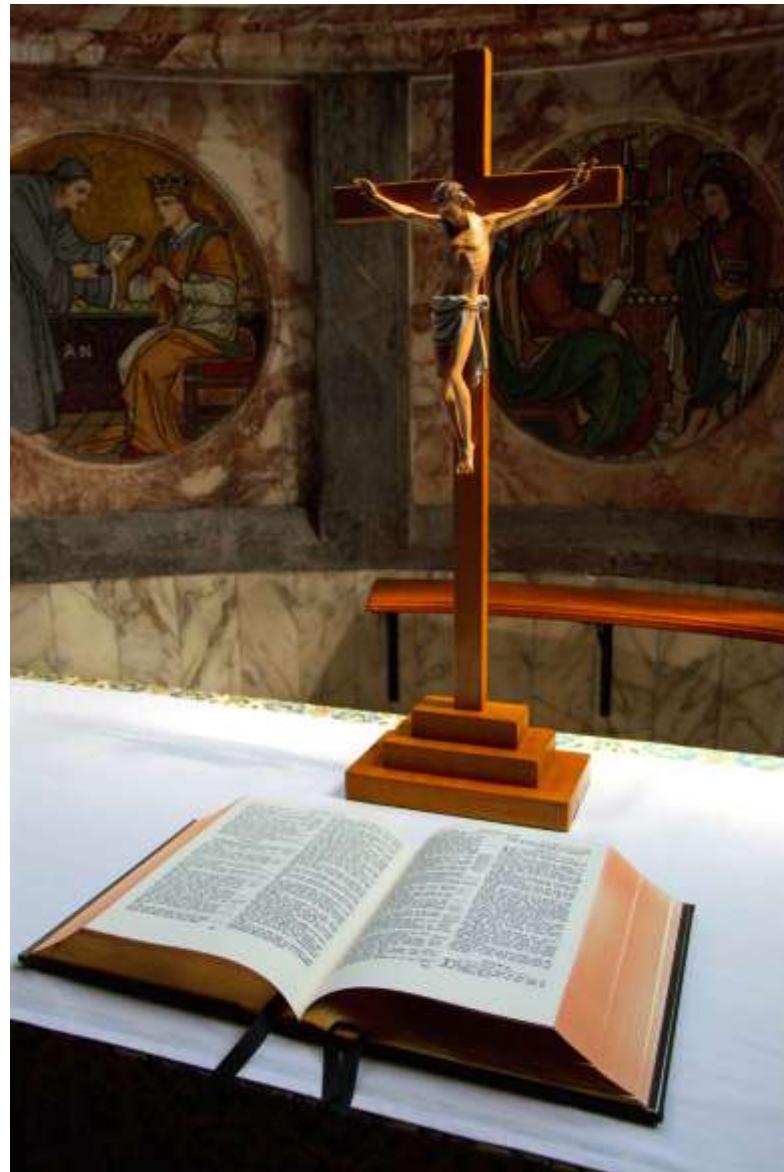
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 9, 2026



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Daily Reading for Monday, February 9th, 2026

Reading 1, First Kings 8:1-7, 9-13

1 Solomon then summoned the elders of Israel to Jerusalem to bring the ark of the covenant of Yahweh up from the City of David, that is, Zion.

2 All the men of Israel assembled round King Solomon in the month of Ethanim, at the time of the feast (that is, the seventh month).

3 When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the priests took up the ark

4 and the Tent of Meeting and all the sacred utensils which were in the Tent.

5 King Solomon and all Israel, present with him before the ark, sacrificed countless, innumerable sheep and oxen.

6 The priests brought the ark of the covenant of Yahweh to its place, in the Debir of the Temple, that is, in the Holy of Holies, under the wings of the winged creatures

7 for the winged creatures spread their wings over the place where the ark stood, forming a canopy over the ark and its shafts.

9 There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets which Moses had placed in it at Horeb, the tablets of the covenant which Yahweh made with the Israelites when they came out of Egypt.

10 Now when the priests came out of the Holy Place, the cloud filled the Temple of Yahweh,

11 and because of the cloud the priests could not stay and perform their duties. For the glory of Yahweh filled the Temple of Yahweh.

12 Then Solomon said: Yahweh has chosen to dwell in thick cloud.

13 I have built you a princely dwelling, a residence for you for ever.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 132:6-7, 8-10

6 Listen, we heard of it in Ephrathah, we found it at Forest-Fields.

7 Let us go into his dwelling-place, and worship at his footstool.

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8 Go up, Yahweh, to your resting-place, you and the ark of your strength.

9 Your priests are robed in saving justice, your faithful are shouting for joy.

10 For the sake of your servant David, do not reject your anointed.

Gospel, Mark 6:53-56

53 Having made the crossing, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored there.

54 When they disembarked people at once recognised him,

55 and started hurrying all through the countryside and brought the sick on stretchers to wherever they heard he was.

56 And wherever he went, to village or town or farm, they laid down the sick in the open spaces, begging him to let them touch even the fringe of his cloak. And all those who touched him were saved.



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Questions for Reflection for February 9, 2026

1. In our first reading we are taken to extraordinary event in the history of God's People Israel, then under the leadership of King Solomon, the dedication of the temple and the installment of the Ark of the Covenant.

Solomon, the son of David, will finally fulfill what his father had never been able to accomplish. There was nothing in the Ark, our scripture tells us, but the two stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments. A powerful image of God's presence with His chosen people and their mission to lead the whole world back to Him, through the teaching of His Law.

Our first reading today is taken from the Old Testament Book of Kings. We hear of the Ark of the Lord's Covenant being brought from the City of David at the request of King Solomon. This Ark was venerated by the People of Israel because in it was deposited the ten words, the tablets, the Ten Commandments, through which God made a covenant with Israel. To be in its presence was to experience heaven touching earth.

Now, as Christians, consider this beautiful scene as it is fulfilled and perfected in the coming of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Incarnate Word made flesh in the womb of a Holy Virgin. This is why the early Christians spoke of Mary, our Lady, as a new Ark of the Covenant. In her womb was Jesus Christ.

Consider as well, the glory of every Holy Mass, at which the sacrifice of Calvary is truly made present and heaven is brought to earth and earth is brought to heaven. The glory revealed at every consecration fulfills and perfects the glory revealed in this temple dedication.

How do we approach Holy Mass? How often do we attend?

2. Psalm 132, from which our responsorial Psalm is taken, addresses the eternal dwelling of God in Zion. God wants to dwell with His people. He reveals and gives Himself to His people.

Now, since Jesus has come, the former glory kneels before the glory revealed in Him. It was but a foretaste. In every tabernacle in every church, Jesus is truly present. Do we believe this? If so, why do we not visit Him more often?

3. In our Gospel text from the Gospel of Mark, we read of another encounter with heaven touching earth. The Living Word, sent from heaven, the Word made flesh, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, walked on the round of Gennesaret and people instinctively knew that heaven was touching earth. They brought the sick before the Lord, knowing that even touching the tassel on his cloak would bring healing and deliverance.

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At every Holy Mass we encounter the same Lord, the same Living Word, the same Incarnate One who has been raised from the dead. Healing still flows from Him, through His Holy Word and in His Holy Body and Blood which we receive from the Altar at every Mass. When we receive Him with living faith, we are changed, made new and capacitated to live our lives differently now, in Him.

This miraculous encounter, heaven touching earth, is available to each of us today. All that is asked of us is our assent, and our cooperation with grace. We can learn how to pray in such a way that we bring down that cloud of Glory.

We not only touch the hem or tassel of His Cloak when we approach the Altar, we receive Him, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, into our very selves. Now, we are invited to become what we receive.



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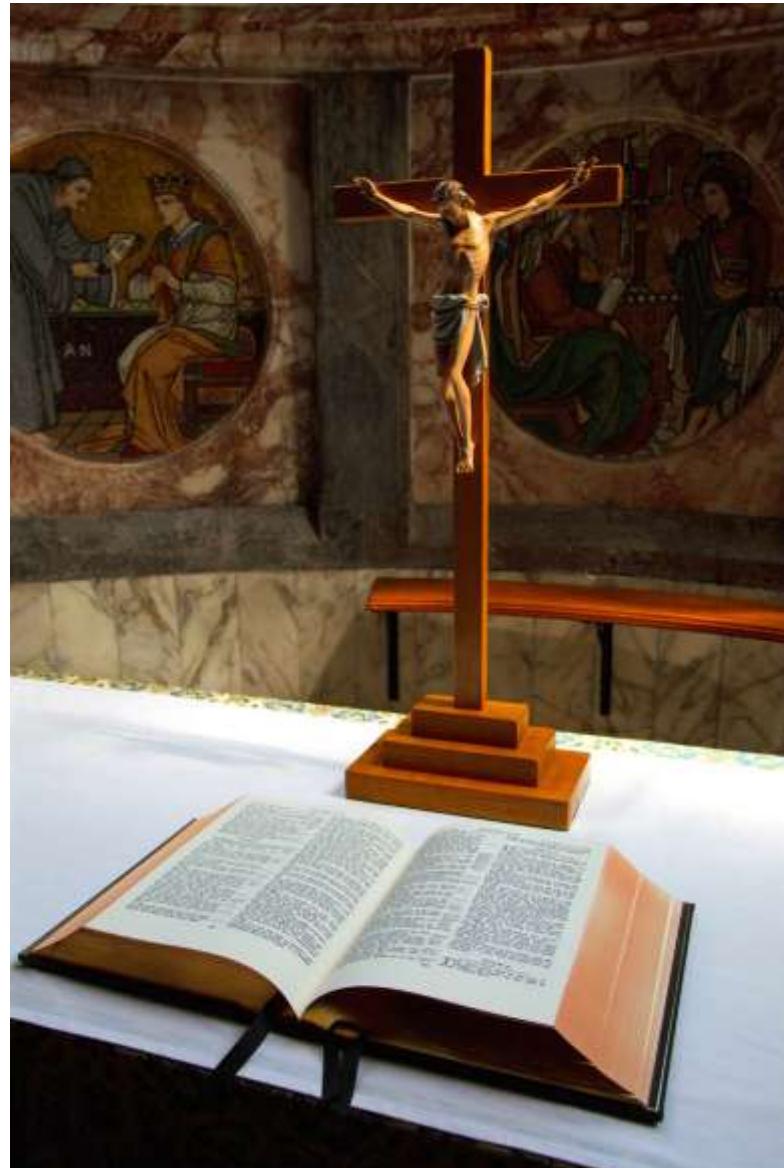
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 10, 2026



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Daily Reading for Tuesday, February 10th, 2026

Reading 1, First Kings 8:22-23, 27-30

22 Then, in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, Solomon stood facing the altar of Yahweh and, stretching out his hands towards heaven,

23 said, 'Yahweh, God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, as loyal to the covenant and faithful in love to your servants as long as they walk wholeheartedly in your way.

27 Yet will God really live with human beings on earth? Why, the heavens, the highest of the heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple built by me!

28 Even so, listen favourably to the prayer and entreaty of your servant, Yahweh my God; listen to the cry and to the prayer which your servant makes to you today:

29 day and night may your eyes watch over this temple, over this place of which you have said, "My name will be there." Listen to the prayer which your servant offers in this place.

30 'Listen to the entreaty of your servant and of your people Israel; whenever they pray in this place, listen from the place where you reside in heaven; and when you hear, forgive.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 84:3, 4, 5, 10, 11

3 Even the sparrow has found a home, the swallow a nest to place its young: your altars, Yahweh Sabaoth, my King and my God.

4 How blessed are those who live in your house; they shall praise you continually.

5 Blessed those who find their strength in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

10 Better one day in your courts than a thousand at my own devices, to stand on the threshold of God's house than to live in the tents of the wicked.

11 For Yahweh God is a rampart and shield, he gives grace and glory; Yahweh refuses nothing good to those whose life is blameless.



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Gospel, Mark 7:1-13

1 The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round him,

2 and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them.

3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, keep the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow;

4 and on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them to keep, concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes.

5 So the Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?'

6 He answered, 'How rightly Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites in the passage of scripture: This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me.'

7 Their reverence of me is worthless; the lessons they teach are nothing but human commandments.

8 You put aside the commandment of God to observe human traditions.'

9 And he said to them, 'How ingeniously you get round the commandment of God in order to preserve your own tradition!

10 For Moses said: Honour your father and your mother, and, Anyone who curses father or mother must be put to death.

11 But you say, "If a man says to his father or mother: Anything I have that I might have used to help you is Korban (that is, dedicated to God),"

12 then he is forbidden from that moment to do anything for his father or mother.

13 In this way you make God's word ineffective for the sake of your tradition which you have handed down. And you do many other things like this.'



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Questions for Reflection for February 10, 2026

1. Our first reading from the Book of Kings continues the account of the dedication of the Temple with Solomon's powerful prayer. The King of Israel, standing before the people and the Ark of the Covenant, and praying:

'Yahweh, God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, as loyal to the covenant and faithful in love to your servants as long as they walk wholeheartedly in your way. Yet will God really live with human beings on earth? Why, the heavens, the highest of the heavens, cannot contain you."

yet, today, in the Liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church, we commemorate the appearance, in 1858, of the Mother of the Lord, Jesus Christ, to Bernadette Soubirous, a fourteen-year-old French girl. This is an optional memorial and may or may not be mentioned at every Mass.

But, as I heard King Solomon's prayer and pondered the glory of God as it fell upon that temple, I was reminded of one of the most popular icons of Our Lady, and one of the most ancient. She has her arms outstretched and the sky behind her. In Her Womb is Jesus with his arms outstretched in a teaching position.

The Icon is called, in Greek, the Platytera, which means, loosely translated, she who is more spacious than the sky. Think about this, the same God who Solomon rightly affirmed the heavens could not contain, sent His Son, the Incarnate Word, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, to dwell in the womb of a Holy Virgin and be birthed.

The grotto at Lourdes receives 6 million visitors a year and has been the site of extraordinary physical miracles. God did come to live with human beings on earth, in and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

2. And with the Psalmist today we cry out "Better one day in your courts than a thousand at my own devices, to stand on the threshold of God's house than to live in the tents of the wicked."

We can and do live in the house of the Lord when we decide to respond to the grace of our Baptism and begin to understand that we are now members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. The Church is not some - thing, but Someone, into whom we have been incorporated. Jesus lives in us and we live in Him.

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3. In the Gospel passage from St. Mark, appointed for today's Holy Mass, we once again see how hardness of heart, even in religious believers, can eventually lead to spiritual blindness. The Pharisees, who have fallen into the grip of observing the externals while growing cold in their hearts, should be a warning to all of us.

The Pharisees were a genuine religious reform movement which sought to bring faithful Jews back to living the fullness of the Law of Moses in order to witness to the truth.

However, the ones who the evangelists who penned the four Gospels used to communicate a danger which can afflict all of us, those ones were certainly blinded by their own self-righteousness. They succumbed to the sin of spiritual pride.

That is why they are given to us as tutors. But by the grace of God, we can fall into the same trap. It happens before we know what has occurred.

As one who serves in ordained ministry and preaches and teaches, I truly need the reminder. Today's words in the Gospel seemed particularly harsh. Jesus called these religious folks "Blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!" (Matt. 23: 23-26)

The Pharisees did not realize what had happened to them. They prided themselves on their strict adherence to the Law - and believed they were being devout. Yet, they had been blinded and become incapable of seeing the Source and Fulfillment of the Law as He stood in their midst.

I suggest that we can easily become those kind of men and women, if we fail to stay in a fresh and ongoing intimate communion with the Lord. Yesterday's prayer will not keep that communion alive. Yesterday's acts of love will not keep the power of the Holy Spirit flowing today.

Sliding into Pharisee-ism seems to be a particularly dangerous temptation for those who consider themselves to be devout. It is an easy trap to fall into. A trap we need to be on the lookout for in our own lives.

And, fall is the operative word. We fall into the path and get swept along. Before we know it, we become those blind guides and whitewashed sepulchers, straining out the gnat while swallowing the camel. Readily correcting others while we fall into trap of the roots of every sin, pride.

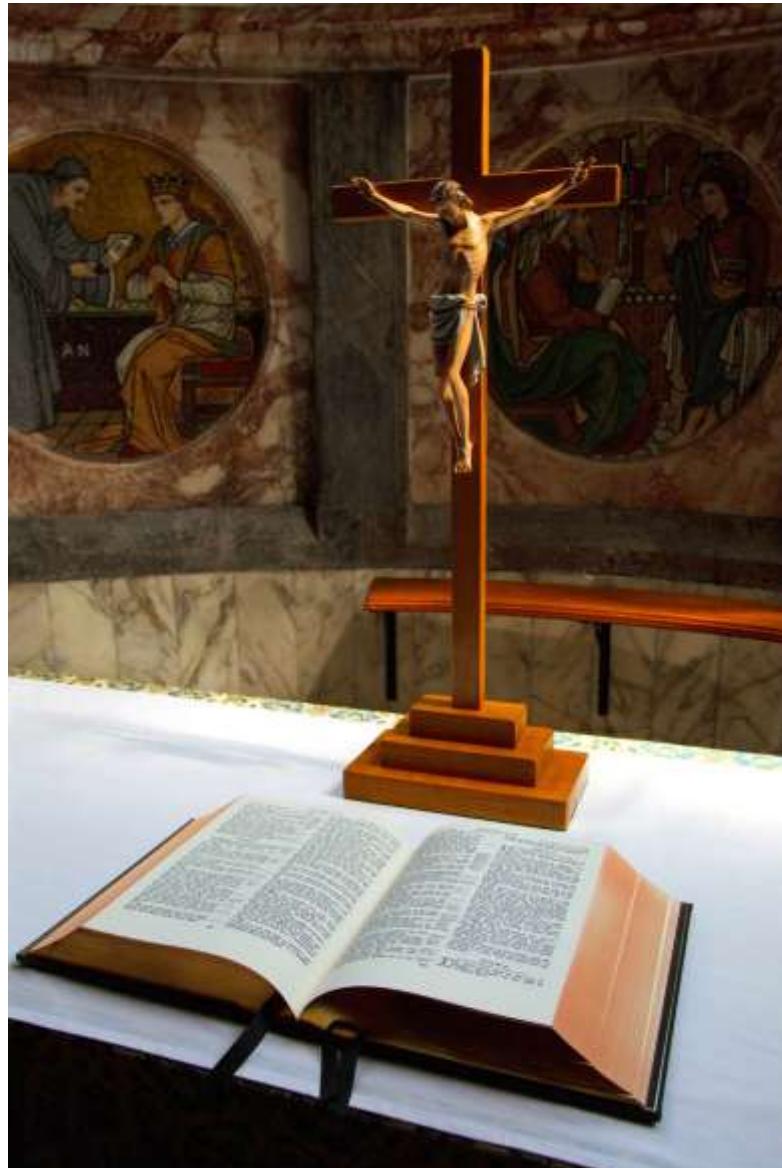
The really horrible truth about this malady is we may not know it is even happening. Then, we find ourselves awakened to its corrosive effects through the bad fruit within us - and around us.

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 11, 2026



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Daily Reading for Wednesday, February 11th, 2026

Reading 1, First Kings 10:1-10

- 1 The queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's fame and came to test him with difficult questions.
- 2 She arrived in Jerusalem with a very large retinue, with camels laden with spices and an immense quantity of gold and precious stones. Having reached Solomon, she discussed with him everything that she had in mind,
- 3 and Solomon had an answer for all her questions; not one of them was too obscure for the king to answer for her.
- 4 When the queen of Sheba saw how very wise Solomon was, the palace which he had built,
- 5 the food at his table, the accommodation for his officials, the organisation of his staff and the way they were dressed, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings which he presented in the Temple of Yahweh, it left her breathless,
- 6 and she said to the king, 'The report I heard in my own country about your wisdom in handling your affairs was true then!
- 7 Until I came and saw for myself, I did not believe the reports, but clearly I was told less than half: for wisdom and prosperity, you surpass what was reported to me.
- 8 How fortunate your wives are! How fortunate these courtiers of yours, continually in attendance on you and listening to your wisdom!
- 9 Blessed be Yahweh your God who has shown you his favour by setting you on the throne of Israel! Because of Yahweh's everlasting love for Israel, he has made you king to administer law and justice.'
- 10 And she presented the king with a hundred and twenty talents of gold and great quantities of spices and precious stones; no such wealth of spices ever came again as those which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 37:5-6, 30-31, 39-40

- 5 Commit your destiny to Yahweh, be confident in him, and he will act,
- 6 making your uprightness clear as daylight, and the justice of your cause as the noon.

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30 Wisdom comes from the lips of the upright, and his tongue speaks what is right;

31 the law of his God is in his heart, his foot will never slip.

39 The upright have Yahweh for their Saviour, their refuge in times of trouble;

40 Yahweh helps them and rescues them, he will rescue them from the wicked, and save them because they take refuge in him.

Gospel, Mark 7:14-23

14 He called the people to him again and said, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand.

15 Nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that person unclean; it is the things that come out of someone that make that person unclean.

16 Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!'

17 When he had gone into the house, away from the crowd, his disciples questioned him about the parable.

18 He said to them, 'Even you -- don't you understand? Can't you see that nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that person unclean,

19 because it goes not into the heart but into the stomach and passes into the sewer?

20 And he went on, 'It is what comes out of someone that makes that person unclean.

21 For it is from within, from the heart, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder,

22 adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly.

23 All these evil things come from within and make a person unclean.'



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Questions for Reflection for February 11, 2026

1. As we continue in our first readings at Holy Mass to follow the reign of King Solomon, his fame has spread beyond Israel. In fact, leaders of surrounding Nations, such as the Queen of Sheba, have heard of his wisdom.

Sheba was a kingdom in Southwestern Arabia. She wants to see for herself. And, she does. Notice her reaction! She affirms that the God of Israel is the true God. Here are her words addressed to King Solomon:

"Blessed be Yahweh your God who has shown you his favor by setting you on the throne of Israel! Because of Yahweh's everlasting love for Israel, he has made you king to administer law and justice.'

"And she presented the king with a hundred and twenty talents of gold and great quantities of spices and precious stones; no such wealth of spices ever came again as those which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon."

As Christian believers we need to understand that the witness of our Way of Life may be the most important witness we give. Before they were called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26) the early followers of Jesus Christ were often referred to as "the Way".

The Apostle Paul, in recounting his own conversion, speaks of having persecuted "this Way" (Acts 22: 3-16) prior to his encounter with the Risen Lord on the Road to Damascus.

This expression "the Way" reveals a profoundly important aspect of the understanding of the early Christians. They believed and proclaimed that the Christian faith was to be expressed in a new way of living.

It still is.

2. Our Responsorial Psalm today also calls for action. David sings "Commit your destiny to Yahweh, be confident in him, and he will act, making your uprightness clear as daylight, and the justice of your cause as the noon."

Have we committed "our destiny to the Lord?" If not, today is the day to do so.

3. Our Gospel text from St. Mark reveals the very core of Christian Moral Teaching. It speaks of our choices coming from the heart. The heart in the biblical sense is the place from which we make our choices. The "seat of our moral personality" says the Catholic Catechism.

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In its explanation of the morality of human acts, The Catechism offers a sobering insight concerning a wrong exercise of freedom:

"Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself." It properly insists that authentic Human Freedom cannot be realized in decisions made against God and against what is good because it is "patterned on God's freedom."

"Patterned on God's freedom, man's freedom is not negated by his obedience to the divine law; indeed, only through this obedience does it abide in the truth and conform to human dignity. This is clearly stated by the Council:

"Human dignity requires man to act through conscious and free choice, as motivated and prompted personally from within, and not through blind internal impulse or merely external pressure. Man achieves such dignity when he frees himself from all subservience to his feelings, and in a free choice of the good, pursues his own end by effectively and assiduously marshaling the appropriate means. (VS #42)

The New Testament is filled with examples of the connection between what we choose and who we become. We become adulterers when we look at a woman with lust (Mt. 5:28); what comes out of our heart (The heart is the biblical center where freedom is exercised, human choices are made and character is formed through choice) is what makes us unclean (Mk 7:14-23).

Freedom has consequences. The capacity to make choices is constitutive of our being human persons and reflects an aspect of the *Imago Dei*, the Image of God, present within us. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote in their document on the Mission of the Church: Authentic freedom is an outstanding manifestation of the divine image within man. (GS #17)

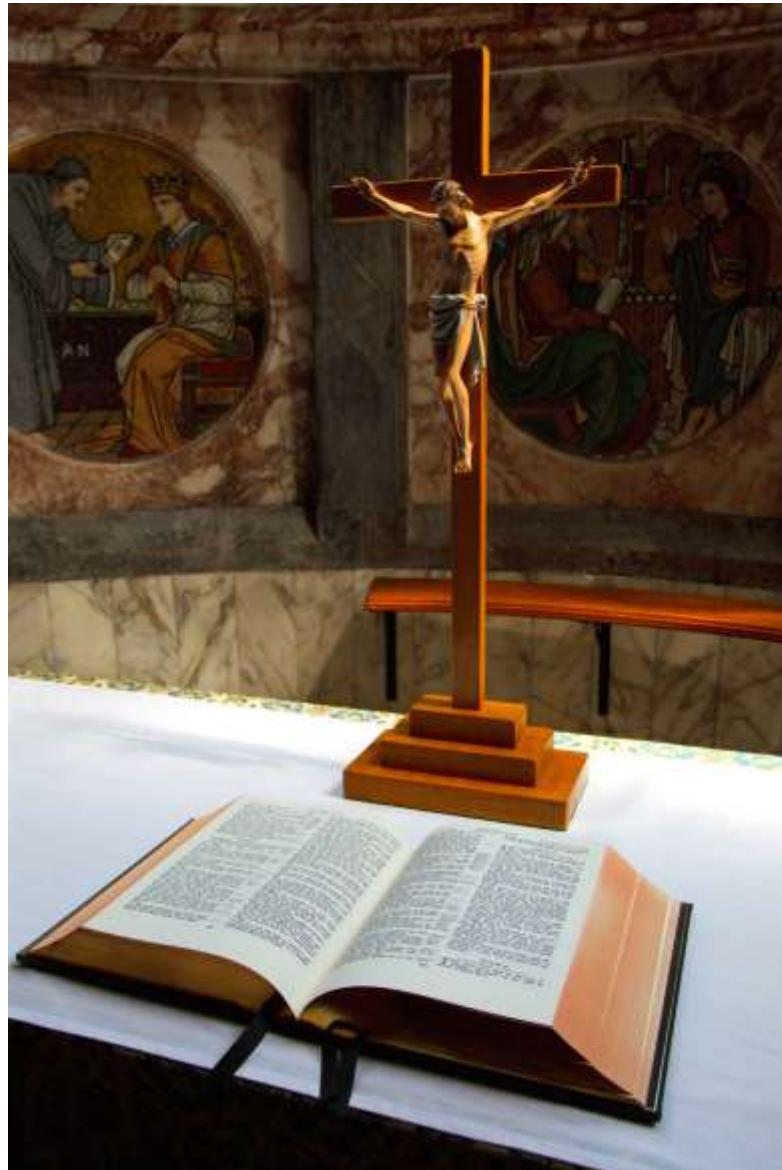
What are we choosing? What have we set our hearts upon? Who are we becoming?

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 12, 2026



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Daily Reading for Thursday, February 12th, 2026

Reading 1, First Kings 11:4-13

4 When Solomon grew old his wives swayed his heart to other gods; and his heart was not wholly with Yahweh his God as his father David's had been.

5 Solomon became a follower of Astarte, the goddess of the Sidonians, and of Milcom, the Ammonite abomination.

6 He did what was displeasing to Yahweh, and was not a wholehearted follower of Yahweh, as his father David had been.

7 Then it was that Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, on the mountain to the east of Jerusalem, and to Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites.

8 He did the same for all his foreign wives, who offered incense and sacrifice to their gods.

9 Yahweh was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from Yahweh, God of Israel, who had twice appeared to him

10 and had forbidden him to follow other gods; but he did not carry out Yahweh's order.

11 Yahweh therefore said to Solomon, 'Since you have behaved like this and have not kept my covenant or the laws which I laid down for you, I shall tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants.

12 For your father David's sake, however, I shall not do this during your lifetime, but shall tear it out of your son's hands.

13 Even so, I shall not tear the whole kingdom from him. For the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen, I shall leave your son one tribe.'

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 106:3-4, 35-36, 37, 40

3 How blessed are those who keep to what is just, whose conduct is always upright!

4 Remember me, Yahweh, in your love for your people. Come near to me with your saving power,

35 but intermarried with them, and adopted their ways.



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36 They worshipped those nations' false gods, till they found themselves entrapped,

37 and sacrificed their own sons and their daughters to demons.

40 Yahweh's anger blazed out at his people, his own heritage filled him with disgust.

Gospel, Mark 7:24-30

24 He left that place and set out for the territory of Tyre. There he went into a house and did not want anyone to know he was there; but he could not pass unrecognised.

25 At once a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him and came and fell at his feet.

26 Now this woman was a gentile, by birth a Syro-Phoenician, and she begged him to drive the devil out of her daughter.

27 And he said to her, 'The children should be fed first, because it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to little dogs.'

28 But she spoke up, 'Ah yes, sir,' she replied, 'but little dogs under the table eat the scraps from the children.'

29 And he said to her, 'For saying this you may go home happy; the devil has gone out of your daughter.'

30 So she went off home and found the child lying on the bed and the devil gone.



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Questions for Reflection for February 12, 2026

1. As we continue, through the first readings at Holy Mass, to follow the life of King Solomon, we heard of his horrible errors, his fall from grace, his sins of idolatry. This same King, the Son of David, who completed the temple and was considered, even by the Queen of Sheba, became an idolater, in his old age, worshipping false gods and incurring the wrath and judgement of God.

This reading is not only a glimpse into salvation history, it is a warning to each one of us. Recall what happened to Cain, after the Lord found the sacrifice of Abel more pleasing, he succumbed to the horrid sin of fratricide, killing his brother. The Lord had warned him, in Genesis 4:7 "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

How do we "master sin", by staying in what the Church calls a "state of grace" free of mortal sin which separates us from God. We do that by regularly praying, reading the scripture, attending Holy Mass, frequenting the sacrament of penance, and the Holy Eucharist...Yesterdays relationship with the Lord is not enough for today.

Sin is still "crouching at the door". But the Father sent His Son, Jesus, as our Savior, to free us from its consequences and enable us to live in a state of grace. Jesus continues to mediate His grace his divine life, through His mystical Body, the Church, of which we are members. But we need to continually stay in a relationship with Him.

2. In our responsorial Psalm, David, the Father of Solomon, sings "How blessed are those who keep to what is just, whose conduct is always upright!" He then opines about what occurs to those who worship false gods.

Little did he know, back when he wrote these words, that his own son, would succumb to such idolatry. Again, another warning to us to stay faithful.

3. In our Gospel passage for today's Holy Mass, we follow the account of the ongoing public ministry of Jesus as recounted by St. Mark. Mark was writing his Gospel account predominantly to Gentile believers. Here, in this passage Jesus moves through a pagan or gentile area. Although Jesus came first to the House of Israel, and preached first to the Jewish people, his message of salvation was for all men and women.

The miraculous deliverance from a demon which Jesus grants to the daughter of this woman, is a direct response to her persevering prayer. We are all called to this kind of persevering prayer, no matter what our state in life or vocation.

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Preparing ourselves for such prayer means learning to silence the clamor of the age, stop the ever-accelerating pace of the futile quests that so often occupy our hearts, and live in the eternal now by surrendering ourselves - and even our best aspirations- to the One who created us -and now re-creates us- in His Son Jesus Christ.

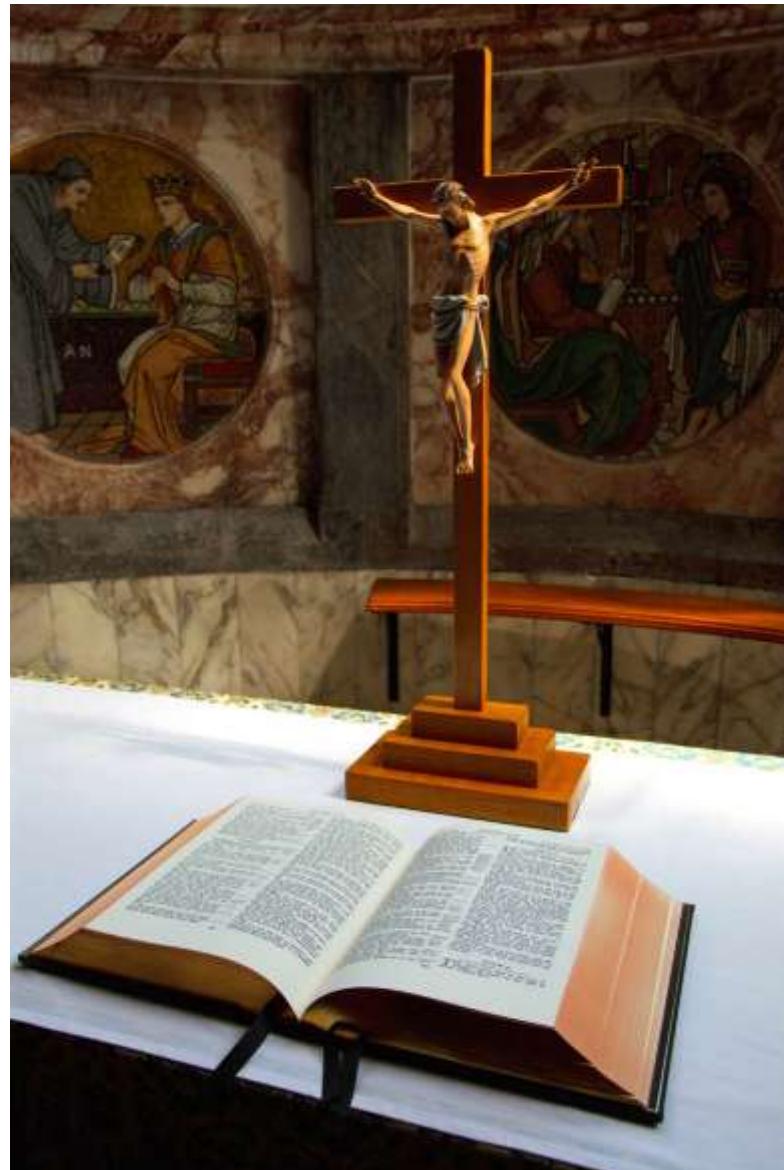
It is there, in the emptied place, in the stillness of the eternal now, where we prepare a room for the King of all hearts. And, in that encounter, we will find the longing of our heart fulfilled. We, like this woman, will see the miracles of Jesus Christ in our own lives.

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 13, 2026



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Daily Reading for Friday, February 13th, 2026

Reading 1, First Kings 11:29-32; 12:19

29 One day when Jeroboam had gone out of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh accosted him on the road. Ahijah was wearing a new cloak; the two of them were in the open country by themselves.

30 Ahijah took the new cloak which he was wearing and tore it into twelve strips,

31 saying to Jeroboam: 'Take ten strips for yourself, for Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "I am going to tear the kingdom from Solomon's hand and give ten tribes to you.

32 He will keep one tribe for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel;

19 And Israel has remained in rebellion against the House of David from that day to this.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 81:10-11, 12-13, 14-15

10 I, Yahweh, am your God, who brought you here from Egypt, you have only to open your mouth for me to fill it.

11 'My people would not listen to me, Israel would have none of me.

12 So I left them to their stubborn selves, to follow their own devices.

13 'If only my people would listen to me, if only Israel would walk in my ways,

14 at one stroke I would subdue their enemies, turn my hand against their opponents.

15 'Those who hate Yahweh would woo his favour, though their doom was sealed for ever,

Gospel, Mark 7:31-37

31 Returning from the territory of Tyre, he went by way of Sidon towards the Lake of Galilee, right through the Decapolis territory.

32 And they brought him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they asked him to lay his hand on him.



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33 He took him aside to be by themselves, away from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle.

34 Then looking up to heaven he sighed; and he said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.'

35 And his ears were opened, and at once the impediment of his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly.

36 And Jesus ordered them to tell no one about it, but the more he insisted, the more widely they proclaimed it.

37 Their admiration was unbounded, and they said, 'Everything he does is good, he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.'



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Questions for Reflection for February 13, 2026

1. In our first reading, from chapter 11 of the first book of Kings, we heard that one of King Solomon's administrators, Jeroboam, encountered a prophet named Ahijah on the road to Jerusalem. The Prophet tells him that the Lord will make him king over 10 tribes of Israel, excluding Judah and Benjamin. Why? The Lord is taking only 10 of the twelve tribes away from Solomons son (and David's grandson) named Rehoboam because Solomon had become an idolator. He worshipped false gods and was not following the Law as his father David had done. The prophet also tells Jeroboam that - if he stays faithful- the Lord will bless him with a dynasty.

When Solomon hears of this, he tries to kill Jeroboam, but the Lord protects him. The 11th chapter ends with the death of Solomon. Just as one holy leader, like Abraham or Moses, can bring Gods favor on a Nation, a sinful leader, an idolator, can give rise to spiritual cancer among an entire people. Our choices not only change us, but they also change the world around us. Is there an area of your life you could listen to God and His invitation or commandment more closely?

2. In our canticle, taken from Psalm 81, we hear the words of David and are invited to cry out with him the command of the Lord.

"I am the Lord your God: Hear my voice, there shall be no strange god among you." This Psalm invites us to examine ourselves. Is there an area of our life which is out of order? Has anything in our life become more important than our relationship with the Lord?

3. In the Gospel appointed for today, we heard of Jesus healing a deaf man. This powerful physical healing, this miracle, also points us toward considering a spiritual parallel.

Are we listening to the Lord as He speaks to us? Jesus is with us. He speaks to our spiritual deafness those very words "Be Opened".

He speaks to us through His Written Word, the Sacred Scripture, the Bible. He speaks to us through the teaching of the Church. He speaks to us in prayer. But sometimes our spiritual ears are closed.

We need to ask the Lord to open our spiritual ears. He will do so. Notice the response of the deaf man after his healing, he praises God. What can you thank God and praise Him for today?



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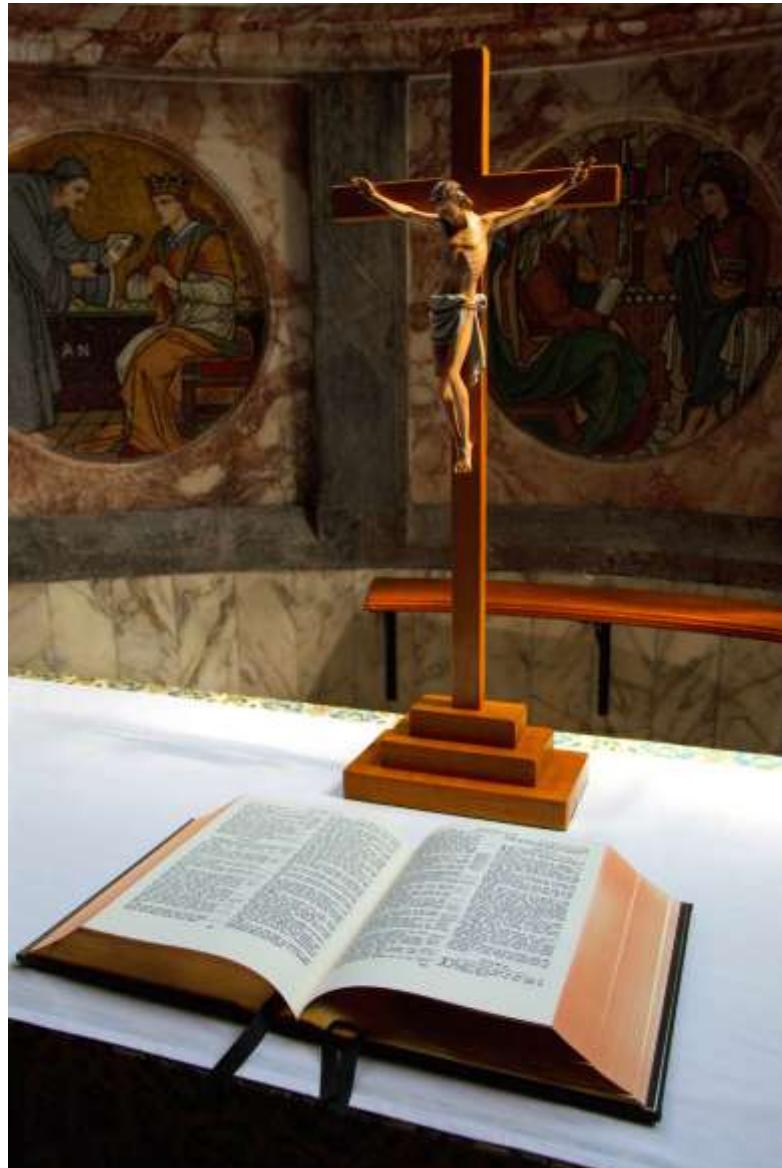
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 14, 2026



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Daily Reading for Saturday, February 14th, 2026

Reading 1, First Kings 12:26-32; 13:33-34

26 Jeroboam thought to himself, 'As things are, the kingdom will revert to the House of David.

27 If this people continues to go up to the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, the people's heart will turn back again to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will put me to death.'

28 So the king thought this over and then made two golden calves; he said to the people, 'You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough. Here is your God, Israel, who brought you out of Egypt!'

29 He set one up at Bethel,

30 and the people went in procession in front of the other one all the way to Dan. In Israel this gave rise to sin, for the people went to Bethel to worship the one, and all the way to Dan to worship the other.

31 He set up shrines on the high places and appointed priests from ordinary families, who were not of levitical descent.

32 Jeroboam also instituted a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth of the month, like the feast kept in Judah, when he offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did at Bethel, offering sacrifices to the calves which he had made and, at Bethel, installing the priests of the high places which he had set up.

33 Jeroboam did not give up his wicked ways after this incident, but went on appointing priests for the high places from the common people. He consecrated as priests of the high places any who wished to be.

34 Such conduct made the House of Jeroboam a sinful House, and caused its ruin and extinction from the face of the earth.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 106:6-7, 19-20, 21-22

6 Like our ancestors, we have sinned, we have acted wickedly, guiltily;

7 our ancestors in Egypt never grasped the meaning of your wonders. They did not bear in mind your countless acts of love, at the Sea of Reeds they defied the Most High;

19 At Horeb they made a calf, bowed low before cast metal;



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20 they exchanged their glory for the image of a grass-eating bull.

21 They forgot the God who was saving them, who had done great deeds in Egypt,

22 such wonders in the land of Ham, such awesome deeds at the Sea of Reeds.

Gospel, Mark 8:1-10

1 And now once again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat. So he called his disciples to him and said to them,

2 'I feel sorry for all these people; they have been with me for three days now and have nothing to eat.

3 If I send them off home hungry they will collapse on the way; some have come a great distance.'

4 His disciples replied, 'Where could anyone get these people enough bread to eat in a deserted place?'

5 He asked them, 'How many loaves have you?' And they said to him, 'Seven.'

6 Then he instructed the crowd to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and began handing them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them among the crowd.

7 They had a few small fishes as well, and over these he said a blessing and ordered them to be distributed too.

8 They ate as much as they wanted, and they collected seven basketfuls of the scraps left over.

9 Now there had been about four thousand people. He sent them away

10 and at once, getting into the boat with his disciples, went to the region of Dalmanutha.



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Questions for Reflection for February 14, 2026

1. The very evil which led to Solomon losing the kingdom, Jeroboam now also commits. He sets up golden calves and establishes idol worship. He feared that the hearts of the people would return to their master.

Thinking, with a darkened mind, that he would be able to keep his portion of the kingdom this way, he institutes idolatry. Notice the progression. His efforts to cling to power, lead to idolatry. And, his sin, then ensnares the whole people and brings down the wrath of God.

We can hear these stories and think we are immune. After all, we don't build statues out of gold and worship them, right? **WRONG**.

Here these words from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

"Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God."

"Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc. Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon."

"Many martyrs died for not adoring "the Beast" refusing even to simulate such worship. Idolatry rejects the unique Lordship of God; it is therefore incompatible with communion with God.

"Human life finds its unity in the adoration of the one God. The commandment to worship the Lord alone integrates man and saves him from an endless disintegration. Idolatry is a perversion of man's innate religious sense. An idolater is someone who "transfers his indestructible notion of God to anything other than God."

Where are the idols in our own lives?

2. In our responsorial Psalm, David helps us to understand this even more. Recounting the idolatry of the people of Israel at Horeb, he doesn't simply point out their sin, but repents himself in these words: "Like our ancestors, we have sinned, we have acted wickedly, guiltily; our ancestors in Egypt never grasped the meaning of your wonders."

Have we grasped the wonders of God? Is he the center of our lives?



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3. Our Gospel passage presents the second miracle of the multiplication of loaves and fish. This time it's 4000 people. But, once again, not only is it a physical miracle, which it is, but it is intended to teach the disciples, and that includes us, about how we are to live our lives as contemporary followers of Jesus

First, we are to respond to the need of people with compassion, as Jesus did. Not, with the mentality of scarcity, but understanding what I like to call the economy of heavenly scale. The heart of Jesus is the model for how we are called to inform our own "heart", our own decisions and actions, with living faith.

Next, we are to realize that if we simply place what we have in the hands of the Master, He multiplies it and then gives it back to us to meet that need. He is still alive, walking with us. And, He invites us to be a part of His ongoing ministry.

Do we really believe this? Do we live as though we believe this?



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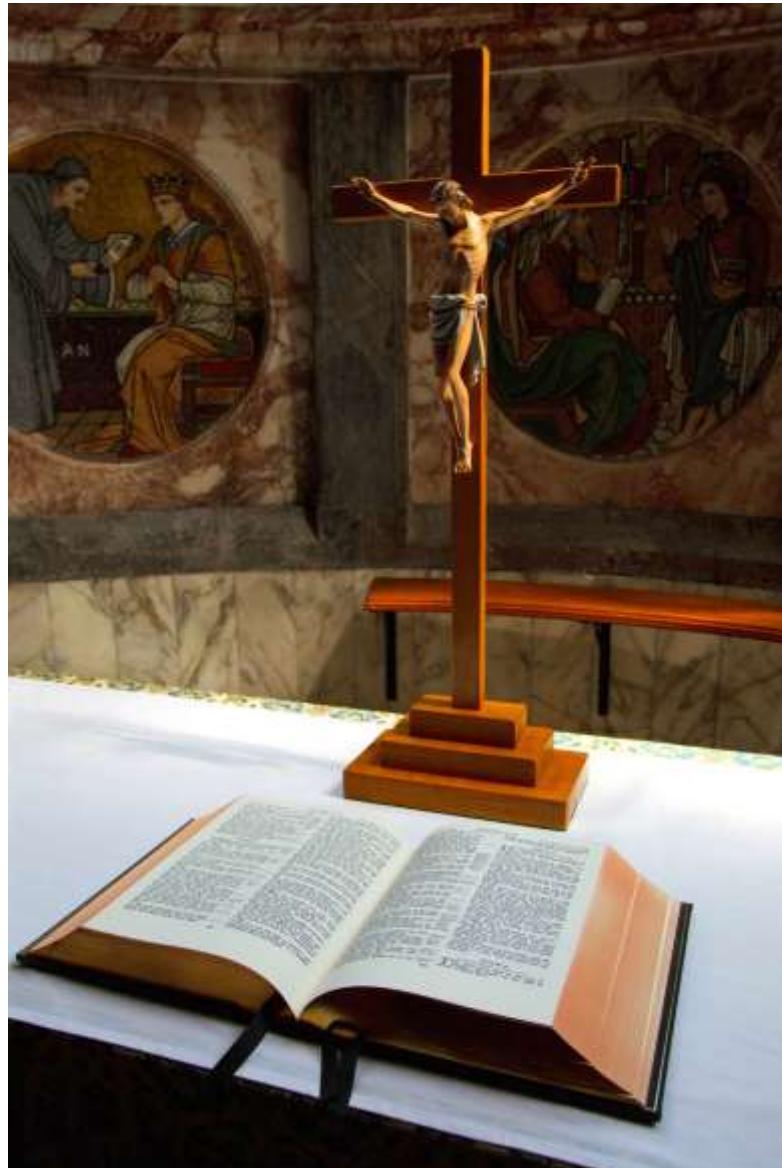
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 15, 2026



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Daily Reading for Sunday, February 15th, 2026

Reading 1, Sirach 15:15-20

- 15 If you choose, you will keep the commandments and so be faithful to his will.
- 16 He has set fire and water before you; put out your hand to whichever you prefer.
- 17 A human being has life and death before him; whichever he prefers will be given him.
- 18 For vast is the wisdom of the Lord; he is almighty and all-seeing.
- 19 His eyes are on those who fear him, he notes every human action.
- 20 He never commanded anyone to be godless, he has given no one permission to sin.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

- 1 How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Law of Yahweh!
- 2 Blessed are those who observe his instructions, who seek him with all their hearts,
- 4 You lay down your precepts to be carefully kept.
- 5 May my ways be steady in doing your will.
- 17 Be generous to your servant and I shall live, and shall keep your words.
- 18 Open my eyes and I shall fix my gaze on the wonders of your Law.
- 33 Teach me, Yahweh, the way of your will, and I will observe it.
- 34 Give me understanding and I will observe your Law, and keep it wholeheartedly.

Reading 2, First Corinthians 2:6-10

- 6 But still, to those who have reached maturity, we do talk of a wisdom, not, it is true, a philosophy of this age or of the rulers of this age, who will not last long now.

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7 It is of the mysterious wisdom of God that we talk, the wisdom that was hidden, which God predestined to be for our glory before the ages began.

8 None of the rulers of the age recognised it; for if they had recognised it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

9 but it is as scripture says: What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, what the mind of man cannot visualise; all that God has prepared for those who love him;

10 to us, though, God has given revelation through the Spirit, for the Spirit explores the depths of everything, even the depths of God.

Gospel, Matthew 5:17-37

17 'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them.

18 In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved.

19 Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven.

20 'For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven.

21 'You have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You shall not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court.

22 But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court; anyone who calls a brother "Fool" will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and anyone who calls him "Traitor" will answer for it in hell fire.

23 So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,

24 leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering.



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25 Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison.

26 In truth I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny.

27 'You have heard how it was said, You shall not commit adultery.

28 But I say this to you, if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

29 If your right eye should be your downfall, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body thrown into hell.

30 And if your right hand should be your downfall, cut it off and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of yourself than to have your whole body go to hell.

31 'It has also been said, Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a writ of dismissal.

32 But I say this to you, everyone who divorces his wife, except for the case of an illicit marriage, makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

33 'Again, you have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord.

34 But I say this to you, do not swear at all, either by heaven, since that is God's throne;

35 or by earth, since that is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, since that is the city of the great King.

36 Do not swear by your own head either, since you cannot turn a single hair white or black.

37 All you need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the Evil One.



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Questions for Reflection for February 15, 2026

1. Our first reading from the Book of Sirach underscores the importance of our choices. They not only change the world around us, they change us. Yet, our capacity to always choose in accordance with God's loving plan. .

In this first reading and in the responsorial Psalm for today's Mass, we are invited to consider our choices in life. Our freedom has been fractured by sin. We do not always choose the path to our true liberation because of the effects of what St. Paul called the "law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

We experience the plight summarized succinctly by the Apostle in his letter to the Romans, "What I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate." (Romans 7:15)

The Catechism, summarizing the teaching of Scripture and Holy Tradition, explains what I call the "fracture of our freedom" with these words,

"Freedom and sin. Man's freedom is limited and fallible. In fact, man failed. He freely sinned. By refusing God's plan of love, he deceived himself and became a slave to sin. This first alienation engendered a multitude of others. From its outset, human history attests the wretchedness and oppression born of the human heart in consequence of the abuse of freedom. (CCC # 1739)"

One aspect of sin is that it is always an abuse of our use of human freedom. It is a wrong choice. However, in the words of the Apostle Paul, it was "for freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1).

We need an education in how to exercise our freedom properly if our capacity to exercise it properly is to be strengthened. We also need treatment for the fracture to our freedom which was occasioned by the original sin of our first parents - as well as the further weakening caused by the cumulative effect of our own errant exercises of this power of choice.

That treatment is the splint of the Cross of Christ. It alone can heal the fracture which sin has brought to our freedom.

2. In our second reading, from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, we hear of a "hidden wisdom" which has now been revealed in Jesus Christ, a plan, "hidden for the ages". This wisdom is revealed to those who turn wholly to the Lord and are converted. Those who as the Lord, who is the source of all true wisdom, to reveal it to them.

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It is the Holy Spirit which can reveal God's wisdom, His Loving plan, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, to us. But, we must ask for it, seek it, study it, pursue it and, as it is revealed, allow our minds to be renewed and our lifestyle to be changed, by it and through it.

3. In the Gospel Lesson for today's Mass, we see this wisdom revealed in this powerful teaching given by Jesus. External compliance with the Law is not what God wants. In Jesus Christ, the Law has been perfected, completed, and He now calls His followers, you and me, to a higher law, to live His life.

Jesus does not abolish the precepts of the Old Law, the Law of Moses, He perfects them, and, by His Cross and Resurrection, empowers us to live an entirely new way of life in Him. Not by our own efforts but by cooperating with His grace and allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us from the inside out.

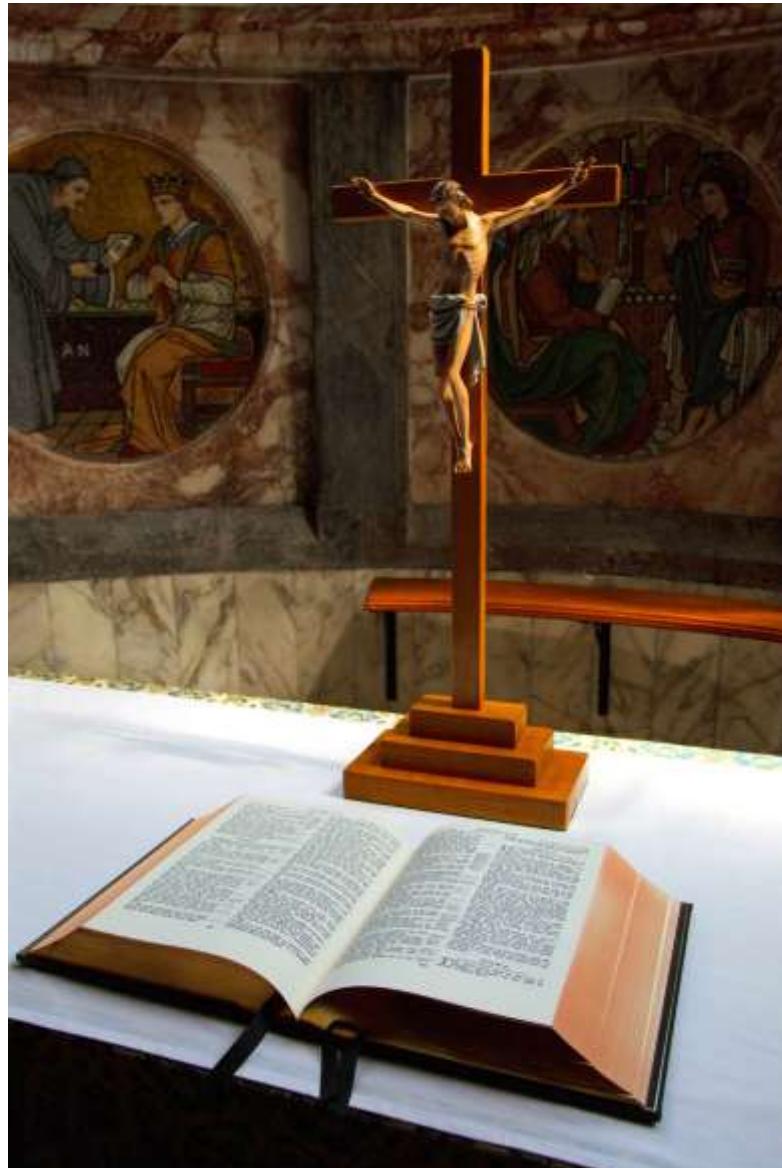
This is what it means to be a Christian. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "If anyone is in Christ, He is a New Creation". (2 Cor. 5:17) The Christian life and vocation is a call to continuing conversion.

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 16, 2026



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Daily Reading for Monday, February 16th, 2026

Reading 1, James 1:1-11

1 From James, servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Greetings to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion.

2 My brothers, consider it a great joy when trials of many kinds come upon you,

3 for you well know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance, and

4 perseverance must complete its work so that you will become fully developed, complete, not deficient in any way.

5 Any of you who lacks wisdom must ask God, who gives to all generously and without scolding; it will be given.

6 But the prayer must be made with faith, and no trace of doubt, because a person who has doubts is like the waves thrown up in the sea by the buffeting of the wind.

7 That sort of person, in two minds,

8 inconsistent in every activity, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

9 It is right that the brother in humble circumstances should glory in being lifted up,

10 and the rich in being brought low. For the rich will last no longer than the wild flower;

11 the scorching sun comes up, and the grass withers, its flower falls, its beauty is lost. It is the same with the rich: in the middle of a busy life, the rich will wither.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 119:67, 68, 71, 72, 75, 76

67 Before I was punished I used to go astray, but now I keep to your promise.

68 You are generous and act generously, teach me your will.

71 It was good for me that I had to suffer, the better to learn your judgements.

72 The Law you have uttered is more precious to me than all the wealth in the world.

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75 I know, Yahweh, that your judgements are upright, and in punishing me you show your constancy.

76 Your faithful love must be my consolation, as you have promised your servant.

Gospel, Mark 8:11-13

11 The Pharisees came up and started a discussion with him; they demanded of him a sign from heaven, to put him to the test.

12 And with a profound sigh he said, 'Why does this generation demand a sign? In truth I tell you, no sign shall be given to this generation.'

13 And, leaving them again, he re-embarked and went away to the other side.



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Questions for Reflection for February 16, 2026

1. The letter of St. James is the first of what are called the "Catholic" or universal letters. Named - not after the community to which the letter is addressed, but after the author. It contains instructions to the early Christians on how to integrate their faith with their daily life. In other words, to walk the talk. To live the Christian Way.

Christian Tradition identifies James as the author as the Bishop of Jerusalem. This excerpt is taken from the very beginning. And its message is timely for anyone today who seeks to live a morally coherent Christian life. We were promised by the Lord that struggle, trouble, trials and, yes, persecution and trials would come.

James is telling the early believers, and each one of us, testing that the "of your faith produces perseverance, and perseverance must complete its work so that you will become fully developed, complete, not deficient in any way." In short, what often changes in times of trouble and suffering is not that it goes away, but we can be changed in and through it, if we join it to the sufferings of the Lord and ask for heavenly wisdom.

How do we approach struggles and difficulties? Do they make us bitter or better?

2. The Psalmist David continues the theme affirming that even the punishment which often accompanies our sins against the Lord and His Ways, can be remedial, actually "good for us". Later, in the New Testament, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us of this truth with this reminder: "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives."
3. In the Gospel appointed for today, Jesus, even after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes, the Pharisees demanded a "sign" in order to place their faith in Jesus Christ.

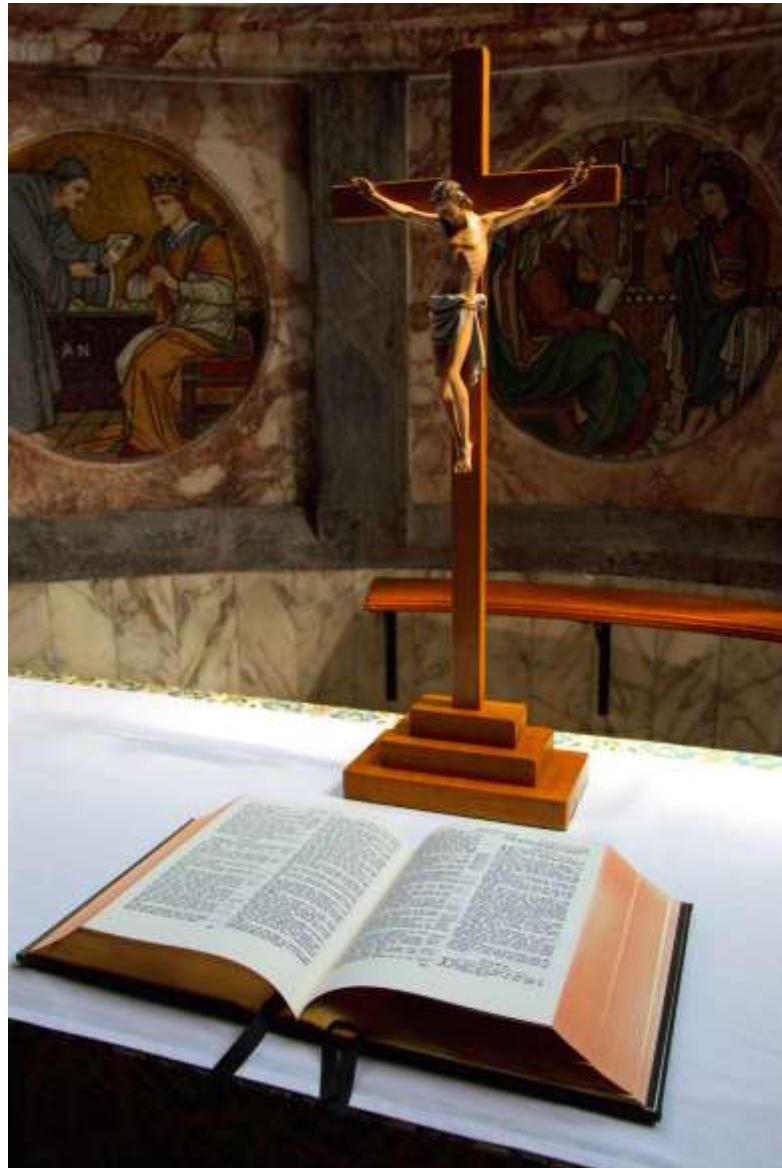
This frustrates and even irritates the Lord. How about us. In our Christian life, do we seek a sign to go deeper? Or do we seek the Son? Do we heed the very words of Jesus "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33)

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 17, 2026



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Daily Reading for Tuesday, February 17th, 2026

Reading 1, James 1:12-18

12 Blessed is anyone who perseveres when trials come. Such a person is of proven worth and will win the prize of life, the crown that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

13 Never, when you are being put to the test, say, 'God is tempting me'; God cannot be tempted by evil, and he does not put anybody to the test.

14 Everyone is put to the test by being attracted and seduced by that person's own wrong desire.

15 Then the desire conceives and gives birth to sin, and when sin reaches full growth, it gives birth to death.

16 Make no mistake about this, my dear brothers:

17 all that is good, all that is perfect, is given us from above; it comes down from the Father of all light; with him there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow caused by change.

18 By his own choice he gave birth to us by the message of the truth so that we should be a sort of first-fruits of all his creation.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 94:12-13, 14-15, 18-19

12 How blessed are those you instruct, Yahweh, whom you teach by means of your law,

13 to give them respite in evil times, till a pit is dug for the wicked.

14 Yahweh will not abandon his people, he will not desert his heritage;

15 for judgement will again become saving justice, and in its wake all upright hearts will follow.

18 I need only say, 'I am slipping,' for your faithful love, Yahweh, to support me;

19 however great the anxiety of my heart, your consolations soothe me.



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Gospel, Mark 8:14-21

14 The disciples had forgotten to take any bread and they had only one loaf with them in the boat.

15 Then he gave them this warning, 'Keep your eyes open; look out for the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.'

16 And they said to one another, 'It is because we have no bread.'

17 And Jesus knew it, and he said to them, 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not understand, still not realise? Are your minds closed?

18 Have you eyes and do not see, ears and do not hear? Or do you not remember?

19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of scraps did you collect?' They answered, 'Twelve.'

20 'And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets full of scraps did you collect?' And they answered, 'Seven.'

21 Then he said to them, 'Do you still not realise?'



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Questions for Reflection for February 17, 2026

1. In our first reading, we continue to hear the instruction which St. James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, wrote to all of the early churches. Once again, remember this is called a "catholic" (meaning universal) epistle (the word means letter) because it was written to all the Christian communities. So, it is named after the author.

The framework for this letter is the Apostles desire to help all Christians understand that to follow the Lord, to really walk in His Way, will entail struggle, difficulty, suffering, and yes, even the trying of their faith and temptation. And, also remember, we are the contemporary disciples of Jesus Christ. So, the wisdom in this letter is for our lives, today.

In this excerpt St. James tells the early Christians - and each one of us - that persevering, when we are tempted, will gain us the "crown of life". And, further, that it will make us ""BLESSED" - and the Greek can be translated "HAPPY". He warns against blaming God for such temptations and reminds us that such temptations to our disordered desires and succumbing to sin. We are responsible for our own sin. When we do sin, if we do not repent, turn away from sin and turn back to the Lord, sin will lead to death - the ultimate separation from God.

There is a way to overcome sin and be set free, by the grace, the free gift of the Lord's Divine Life. That Divine Life comes to us through the Sacraments which are His continued ministry among us through His Mystical Body, the Church. And, through our taking the call to holiness and conversion seriously. How are we doing?

2. The Psalmist David continues to tell us of the path to happiness, telling us to listen to and follow the instruction, the Word of the Lord. That instruction comes to us through His Word, and the teaching of His Church. Are we reading the Bible? Are we studying the teaching of the Church?
3. In the Gospel appointed for today's Mass, Jesus warns the disciples of the leaven or yeast of the Pharisees. Unlike the leaven of yeast of His Word, and the Kingdom of God, this leaven and yeast do not cause us to rise, rather to descend back into sin, and can lead us to eternal separation from God. That is what is called Hell.

The late Pope Saint John XXIII wrote, "Every believer, in this, our world, must be a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying ferment in the dough: He will be so to the degree that, in his innermost being, he lives in communion with God. In fact, there can be no peace among men if there is no peace in each one of them."

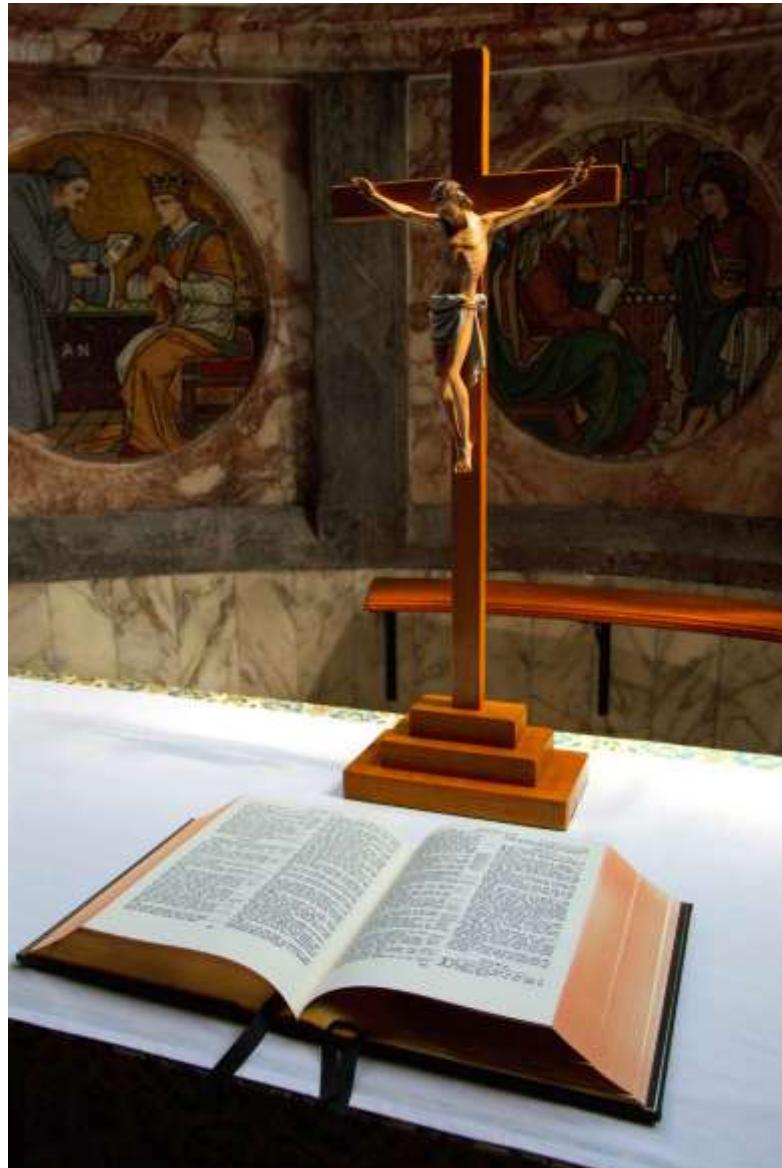
The Gospel asks each one of us to live a New Way of Life. We can become light and leaven, salt and seed for a world in need of God's grace. We are to be a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying ferment in the dough. We are mustard seeds in a world waiting to be reborn - in and through Jesus Christ.

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 18, 2026



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Daily Reading for Wednesday, February 18th, 2026

Reading 1, Joel 2:12-18

12 'But now -- declares Yahweh- come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.'

13 Tear your hearts and not your clothes, and come back to Yahweh your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and he relents about inflicting disaster.

14 Who knows if he will not come back, relent and leave a blessing behind him, a cereal offering and a libation to be presented to Yahweh your God?

15 Blow the ram's-horn in Zion! Order a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,

16 call the people together, summon the community, assemble the elders, gather the children, even infants at the breast! Call the bridegroom from his bedroom and the bride from her bower!

17 Let the priests, the ministers of Yahweh, stand weeping between portico and altar, saying, 'Spare your people, Yahweh! Do not expose your heritage to the contempt, to the sarcasm of the nations! Why give the peoples cause to say, "Where is their God?" '

18 Then, becoming jealous over his country, Yahweh took pity on his people.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

3 For I am well aware of my offences, my sin is constantly in mind.

4 Against you, you alone, I have sinned, I have done what you see to be wrong, that you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence, and your victory may appear when you give judgement,

5 remember, I was born guilty, a sinner from the moment of conception.

6 But you delight in sincerity of heart, and in secret you teach me wisdom.

12 Give me back the joy of your salvation, sustain in me a generous spirit.

13 I shall teach the wicked your paths, and sinners will return to you.

14 Deliver me from bloodshed, God, God of my salvation, and my tongue will acclaim your saving justice.

17 Sacrifice to God is a broken spirit, a broken, contrite heart you never scorn.



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Reading 2, Second Corinthians 5:20--6:2

20 So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were urging you through us, and in the name of Christ we appeal to you to be reconciled to God.

21 For our sake he made the sinless one a victim for sin, so that in him we might become the uprightness of God.

1 As his fellow-workers, we urge you not to let your acceptance of his grace come to nothing.

2 As he said, 'At the time of my favour I have answered you; on the day of salvation I have helped you'; well, now is the real time of favour, now the day of salvation is here.

Gospel, Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

1 'Be careful not to parade your uprightness in public to attract attention; otherwise you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven.

2 So when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win human admiration. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward.

3 But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing;

4 your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

5 'And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward.

6 But when you pray, go to your private room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

16 'When you are fasting, do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they go about looking unsightly to let people know they are fasting. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward.

17 But when you fast, put scent on your head and wash your face,

18 so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.



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Questions for Reflection for February 18, 2026

1. On this Ash Wednesday, I will again stand alongside of the Priest, to administer the ashes to the faithful who come forward. Together we begin the 40-day journey of repentance and conversion known as Lent. We are joined to millions in every Nation on the earth.

The Ordo offers two exhortations to be said by the Priest or the Deacon as the Ashes, the burnt Palms from the prior year's Passion/Palm Sunday, are rubbed into the penitent's forehead. "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel" or "Remember you are dust and to dust you will return".

They serve as a sign of our commitment to repentance and conversion. Being marked with those ashes begins our Lenten observance and disciplines. They continue for forty days until the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday.

During these forty days the Lord Jesus Christ invites us to walk with Him on the Way of the Cross. This simple but solemn Ash Wednesday service is an invitation every year to those who have eyes to comprehend its opportunity. It is up to us to accept it and open its potential through our response, our free choice, to participate in its potential.

In our first reading from the Prophet Joel, the Lord invites His people, "...come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.' Tear your hearts and not your clothes, and come back to Yahweh your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love."

Lent is an invitation to every one of us, to turn away from sin and turn toward the Lord.

Let us choose to say Yes.

2. The Psalm appointed for this Ash Wednesday Mass reminds us that sin is personal. So, too, repentance must be personal. Notice the words used by David:

For I am well aware of my offences, my sin is constantly in mind. Against you, you alone, I have sinned, I have done what you see to be wrong, that you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence, and your victory may appear when you give judgement, remember, I was born guilty, a sinner from the moment of conception.

But you delight in sincerity of heart, and in secret you teach me wisdom.

The Apostle Paul in his Second Letter to the Corinthians writes to tell them, as well as tell us, that we are Ambassadors for Christ.

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We represent the Lord Jesus Christ in the world. Every one of us who have been baptized. Not just the ordained or the "professionals"

Through each of us, the Lord sends forth His invitation to all men and women to be reconciled to Him by repenting of their sin, turning to Jesus Christ and become New Creations in Him.

What a call this is! How are we doing?

3. In the Gospel of the day, taken from St. Matthew, Jesus instructs his disciples on how to fast and live as a penitent. It is not a matter of outward show, but genuine inward change.

The goal of all of our Lenten practices is our genuine conversion.

Throughout Lent, the Church, as Mother and Teacher, invites us to empty ourselves through various forms of fasting, abstinence and almsgiving and be filled with God's Divine life and Love.

We are enlisted into spiritual warfare (See, 2 Cor. 10:4, Eph 6:14-16), to do battle with the "world", the "flesh" and the Devil, who is opposed to our experience of the fullness of our salvation.

During the forty days of Lent, we are invited to say "yes" to every invitation of grace offered to us and thus advance in our continuing conversion.

We walk the way of Jesus Christ who is the "leader and perfecter" of our faith.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith."

Who needs Lent? We do. It is an invitation and not an imposition. It is a gift and not a burden. That is, it can be if we enter into it with our entire person.

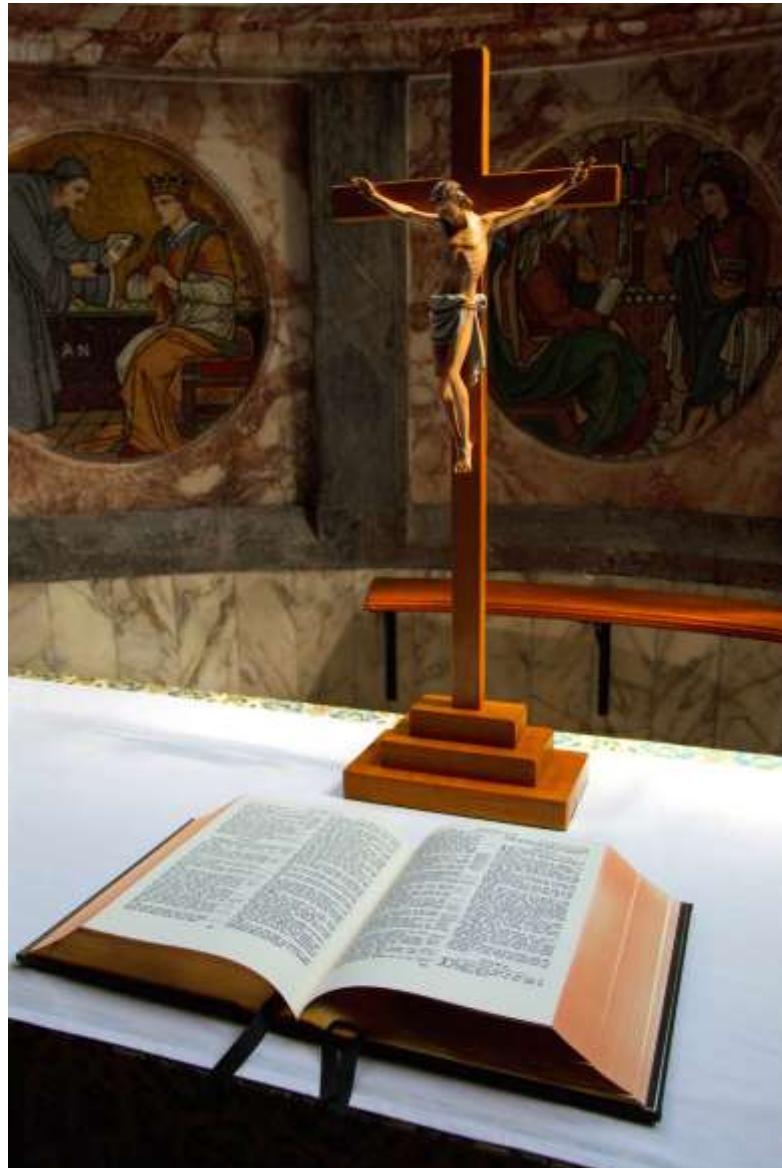
Will we do so?

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 19, 2026



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Daily Reading for Thursday, February 19th, 2026

Reading 1, Deuteronomy 30:15-20

15 'Look, today I am offering you life and prosperity, death and disaster.

16 If you obey the commandments of Yahweh your God, which I am laying down for you today, if you love Yahweh your God and follow his ways, if you keep his commandments, his laws and his customs, you will live and grow numerous, and Yahweh your God will bless you in the country which you are about to enter and make your own.

17 But if your heart turns away, if you refuse to listen, if you let yourself be drawn into worshipping other gods and serving them,

18 I tell you today, you will most certainly perish; you will not live for long in the country which you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

19 Today, I call heaven and earth to witness against you: I am offering you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live,

20 in the love of Yahweh your God, obeying his voice, holding fast to him; for in this your life consists, and on this depends the length of time that you stay in the country which Yahweh swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that he would give them.'

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6

1 How blessed is anyone who rejects the advice of the wicked and does not take a stand in the path that sinners tread, nor a seat in company with cynics,

2 but who delights in the law of Yahweh and murmurs his law day and night.

3 Such a one is like a tree planted near streams; it bears fruit in season and its leaves never wither, and every project succeeds.

4 How different the wicked, how different! Just like chaff blown around by the wind

6 For Yahweh watches over the path of the upright, but the path of the wicked is doomed.



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Gospel, Luke 9:22-25

22 He said, 'The Son of man is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be put to death, and to be raised up on the third day.'

23 Then, speaking to all, he said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me.'

24 Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, will save it.

25 What benefit is it to anyone to win the whole world and forfeit or lose his very self



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Questions for Reflection for February 19, 2026

1. "Today I am offering you life or death, blessing or curse" the Lord says to Israel. And, the offer has stood through the ages.

The real question is what have we chosen? Following the Lord and His ways is a continual invitation. Our "YES" from yesterday is insufficient for today.

This is Thursday after Ash Wednesday. Yesterday we were marked with ashes and chose to set aside the next forty days to repent, turn away from sin, fast, pray and choose to empty ourselves in order to turn toward the Lord and be filled with grace, which is His Divine Life.

With that grace, we are empowered to continue to say "Yes" and choose the Way that leads to life. Listen to these words spoken to Israel:

"Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live, in the love of Yahweh your God, obeying his voice, holding fast to him; for in this your life consists..."

They are spoken to you and to me. Will we choose the Way that leads to life and blessing this Lent?

2. The Psalm of David which we reelect upon today, and which becomes our response, also addresses the choice facing us during these forty Days called Lent. To choose the Way of Life, the Way of the Lord, is to turn away from the Way of death.

It calls for a radical reorientation of our life. It means changing relationships as well. As David sings "How blessed is anyone who rejects the advice of the wicked and does not take a stand in the path that sinners tread, nor a seat in company with cynics, but who delights in the law of Yahweh and murmurs his law day and night.

Such a one is like a tree planted near streams; it bears fruit in season and its leaves never wither, and every project succeeds.

The Greek word for conversion, used in the New Testament, is "metanoia" meaning "change of mind" or "heart. Yet the full meaning is somewhat more. In the New Testament, the word metanoia is often translated as "repentance". But this kind of repentance is not only about regret or guilt or shame; it means making a decision to turn around, to face a new direction.

Are we ready to turn around this Lent? To turn away from sin and turn toward the Lord. To turn away from the way that leads to death and turn toward the Lord of Life?

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3. There is no such thing as Christianity without the Cross. The words of Jesus in the Gospel of St Luke, which we just heard proclaimed are strong and demand a strong response.

"If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, will save it. What benefit is it to anyone to win the whole world and forfeit or lose his very self?"

Jesus bore His Cross and, in some way, invites us into His very act of sacrificial love by inviting us to pick up our own "cross" and follow Him.

He was Divine and, because of that, He alone could do for us what we could not do for ourselves, restoring, through His passion and death, the broken relationship between God and the people whom He fashioned for love and communion.

With His outstretched arms, He bridged the gap between heaven and earth. In His triumph over death he defeated the last enemy and began the new creation.

However, in His Sacred humanity, this man Jesus shows each of us how to live differently.

Sometimes, we are invited to embrace even that which we do not want as the means of our transformation. We have been given the grace to accept difficulties, struggles, and even, at times, undeserved suffering.

When it is embraced in love and for love, it can actually become the path to a deepening experience of the fruits of redemption.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin." (Hebrews 14:15)

The Christian tradition instructs us that even undeserved and unmerited suffering, when joined in love to the sufferings of Jesus Christ, can produce extraordinary fruit within us - and then through us, as we change. This is a part of the teaching on the mystery of suffering in the Christian life.

Saint Jose Maria Escriva once wrote the great Christian revolution has been to convert pain into fruitful suffering and to turn a bad thing into something good. We have deprived the devil of this weapon; and with it we can conquer eternity.



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How do we treat those circumstances that cause us to struggle? How do we deal with what we find unpleasant?

Do we practice an adult form of avoidance and run, acting as if it will all just go away like when children cover their eyes? Or do we believe that even unpleasant things and "difficult" people can actually be gifts from the hands of a loving God who invites us to walk in the way of His Son?

How do we deal with unresolved conflicts or troubling relationships? Do we work toward resolution, making "love our aim" (1 Cor. 14:7), or do we avoid them, thinking they will just go away if we "pretend" they don't exist?

The Choice is ours. God gives us the grace to make the choice for Life.



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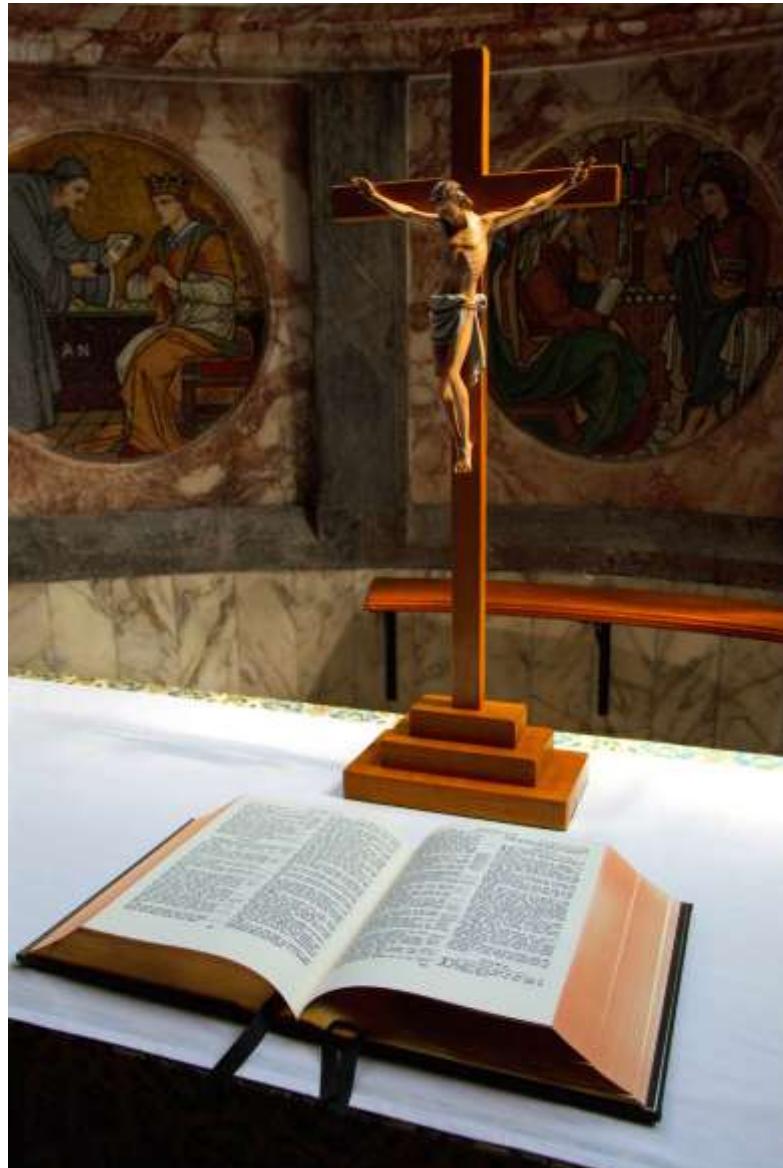
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 20, 2026



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Daily Reading for Friday, February 20th, 2026

Reading 1, Isaiah 58:1-9

1 Shout for all you are worth, do not hold back, raise your voice like a trumpet. To my people proclaim their rebellious acts, to the House of Jacob, their sins.

2 They seek for me day after day, they long to know my ways, like a nation that has acted uprightly and not forsaken the law of its God. They ask me for laws that are upright, they long to be near God:

3 'Why have we fasted, if you do not see, why mortify ourselves if you never notice?' Look, you seek your own pleasure on your fastdays and you exploit all your workmen;

4 look, the only purpose of your fasting is to quarrel and squabble and strike viciously with your fist. Fasting like yours today will never make your voice heard on high.

5 Is that the sort of fast that pleases me, a day when a person inflicts pain on himself? Hanging your head like a reed, spreading out sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call fasting, a day acceptable to Yahweh?

6 Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me: to break unjust fetters, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break all yokes?

7 Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, and sheltering the homeless poor; if you see someone lacking clothes, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own kin?

8 Then your light will blaze out like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over. Saving justice will go ahead of you and Yahweh's glory come behind you.

9 Then you will cry for help and Yahweh will answer; you will call and he will say, 'I am here.' If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist and malicious words,

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6, 18-19

3 For I am well aware of my offences, my sin is constantly in mind.

4 Against you, you alone, I have sinned, I have done what you see to be wrong, that you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence, and your victory may appear when you give judgement,



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5 remember, I was born guilty, a sinner from the moment of conception.

6 But you delight in sincerity of heart, and in secret you teach me wisdom.

18 In your graciousness do good to Zion, rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

19 Then you will delight in upright sacrifices,-burnt offerings and whole oblations -- and young bulls will be offered on your altar.

Gospel, Matthew 9:14-15

14 Then John's disciples came to him and said, 'Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?'

15 Jesus replied, 'Surely the bridegroom's attendants cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is still with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.



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Questions for Reflection for February 20, 2026

1. On this Friday after Ash Wednesday, the readings appointed for Holy Mass direct us toward manifestations, actions of repentance. How we demonstrate that we are truly responding to the Lord's invitation to conversion of life.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, and I quote:

"The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others.

"Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: effort at reconciliation with one's neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one's neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity "which covers a multitude of sins." (CCC #1434)

The Lord speaks, in our first reading, through the great Hebrew Prophet Isaiah, of true and false fasting. He warns of outward observances which do NOT turn us away from sin and toward Him.

"Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me: to break unjust fetters, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break all yokes?

Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, and sheltering the homeless poor; if you see someone lacking clothes, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own kin?

Then your light will blaze out like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over."

As we undertake acts of penance, fasting and abstinence during this Lent, will they bear the true fruits of repentance?

2. And, once again, one of the most powerful penitential Psalms of David, Psalm 51, is given as our Response. David does NOT blame anyone else, or even circumstances, for his sin. He owns up to it.

The Catholic Catechism, in a section entitled "The Proliferation of sin" instructs us in these sobering words:

Sin creates a proclivity to sin; it engenders vice by repetition of the same acts. This results in perverse inclinations which cloud conscience and corrupt the concrete judgment of good and evil. Thus, sin tends to reproduce itself and reinforce itself, but it cannot destroy the moral sense at its root.



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Vices can be classified according to the virtues they oppose, or also be linked to the capital sins which Christian experience has distinguished, following St. John Cassian and St. Gregory the Great. They are called "capital" because they engender other sins, other vices.¹³⁸ They are pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth or acedia.

The catechetical tradition also recalls that there are "sins that cry to heaven": the blood of Abel, the sin of the Sodomites, the cry of the people oppressed in Egypt, the cry of the foreigner, the widow, and the orphan, injustice to the wage earner.

Sin is a personal act. Moreover, we have a responsibility for the sins committed by others when we cooperate in them:

- by participating directly and voluntarily in them;
- by ordering, advising, praising, or approving them;
- by not disclosing or not hindering them when we have an obligation to do so;
- by protecting evil-doers. (CCC 1865-1868)

In our own repentance, are we taking personal responsibility for our sinful thoughts and actions?

3. When asked why His disciples did not fast, Jesus explains that while the Bridegroom is with them, his best men, or attendants, should not fast. But he explains the bridegroom will be taken away and then the attendants will fast.

He is the Bridegroom in this teaching. The Church is the Bride. The disciples are his attendants.

And, the Bridegroom will soon voluntarily offer Himself on the Cross on Calvary. He will offer His Life as an atonement for all the sins of the world. And, from His wounded side, the Church will be birthed. Yes, He will be raised and ascend. And He will return.

But, the Church will, and does Fast, to hasten His return, and to call down the power of the Kingdom of God.

The Christian tradition on fasting is rich and well developed. Its primary purpose is the conversion of heart and life of the penitent. Let's reflect on some of the instruction given in the Catechism of the catholic Church:

"Jesus' call to conversion and penance, like that of the prophets before him, does not aim first at outward works, "sackcloth and ashes," fasting and mortification, but at the conversion of the heart, interior conversion.



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"Without this, such penances remain sterile and false; however, interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures and works of penance.

"Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. At the same time, it entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace.

"This conversion of heart is accompanied by a salutary pain and sadness which the Fathers called *animi cruciatus* (affliction of spirit) and *compunctio cordis* (repentance of heart).

"The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give man a new heart. Conversion is first of all a work of the grace of God who makes our hearts return to him: "Restore us to thyself, O LORD, that we may be restored!"

God gives us the strength to begin anew. It is in discovering the greatness of God's love that our heart is shaken by the horror and weight of sin and begins to fear offending God by sin and being separated from him. The human heart is converted by looking upon him whom our sins have pierced (CCC #1430-1432)

Lord, as we fast during this Lent, please give us the grace of conversion of heart.



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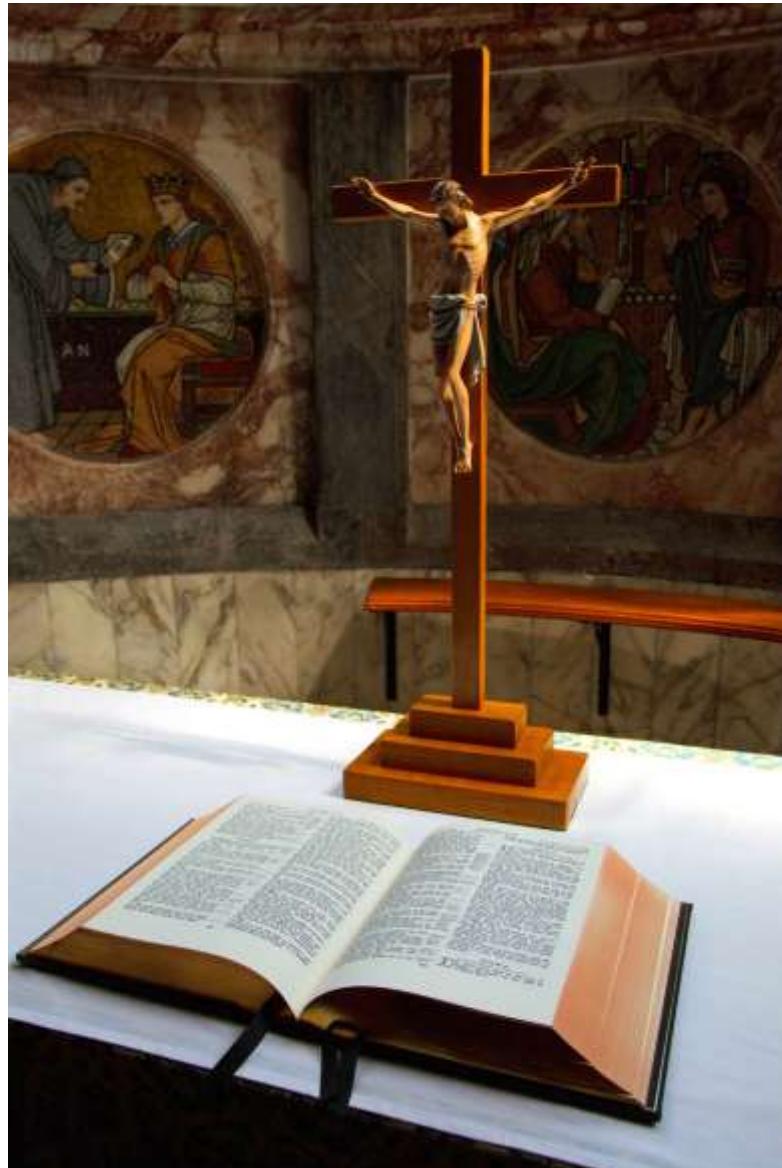
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 21, 2026



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Daily Reading for Saturday, February 21st, 2026

Reading 1, Isaiah 58:9-14

9 Then you will cry for help and Yahweh will answer; you will call and he will say, 'I am here.' If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist and malicious words,

10 if you deprive yourself for the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, your light will rise in the darkness, and your darkest hour will be like noon.

11 Yahweh will always guide you, will satisfy your needs in the scorched land; he will give strength to your bones and you will be like a watered garden, like a flowing spring whose waters never run dry.

12 Your ancient ruins will be rebuilt; you will build on age -- old foundations. You will be called 'Breach-mender', 'Restorer of streets to be lived in'.

13 If you refrain from breaking the Sabbath, from taking your own pleasure on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath 'Delightful', and the day sacred to Yahweh 'Honourable', if you honour it by abstaining from travel, from seeking your own pleasure and from too much talk,

14 then you will find true happiness in Yahweh, and I shall lead you in triumph over the heights of the land. I shall feed you on the heritage of your father Jacob, for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 86:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

1 [Prayer Of David] Listen to me, Yahweh, answer me, for I am poor and needy.

2 Guard me, for I am faithful, save your servant who relies on you. You are my God,

3 take pity on me, Lord, for to you I cry all the day.

4 Fill your servant's heart with joy, Lord, for to you I raise up my heart.

5 Lord, you are kind and forgiving, rich in faithful love for all who call upon you.

6 Yahweh, hear my prayer, listen to the sound of my pleading.



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Gospel, Luke 5:27-32

27 When he went out after this, he noticed a tax collector, Levi by name, sitting at the tax office, and said to him, 'Follow me.'

28 And leaving everything Levi got up and followed him.

29 In his honour Levi held a great reception in his house, and with them at table was a large gathering of tax collectors and others.

30 The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples and said, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?'

31 Jesus said to them in reply, 'It is not those that are well who need the doctor, but the sick.'

32 I have come to call not the upright but sinners to repentance.'



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Questions for Reflection for February 21, 2026

1. The Holy Spirit speaks powerfully through the great Hebrew Prophet Isaiah in our first reading. The people of God, and that includes the Church, are told that when we cry for help, the Lord hears always us.

Prayer works!

We are told that when we live lives which manifest God's Image and His love, by reaching out to the poor and liberating those held in captivity, ...when we reach out to the poor.... He will work through us.

And, in addition, when we keep Holy His Day, and follow His Way of Life... all of these things which demonstrate that our faith is not only words, but a true way of life, we will be HAPPY.

That's right, the Lord wants us Happy, an all too often forgotten yet fundamental truth of the Jewish and Christian teaching on morality.

For the Christian, who has inherited the promises made to Israel by virtue of being grafted into the Vine of Abraham through belonging to Jesus Christ, this promise of happiness applies to us - to you and me!

As we choose the Lord, as we grow in the life of the Holy Spirit, we begin to experience real happiness. The kind that does not disappear in struggle or become extinguished by difficulty. His Image is restored in us and we begin to grow into His Likeness.

How do we view holiness?

Do we understand it as a call to true happiness?

It is.

2. The Psalmist shows us the kind of humility which we are all called to exhibit when we approach the Lord. In His prayer and supplication, He first acknowledges his own poverty and humility. He affirms that he is the Servant - and God alone is the Master. He takes the position of being free of any pride or arrogance.

That is the starting point for the kind of prayer that pleases the Lord and opens the heavens.

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From that vantage point, he approaches the Lord and makes known his need. He also praises the Lord and thanks Him for His goodness. And notice, it is the praise which fuels his joy. He asks the Lord to give him joy of heart.

Repentance, doing penance, engaging in fasting and abstinence is meant to free us and make us more open to the blessings of the Lord. Make us more pliable, able to be used as His instrument of mercy and peace to others.

David is a great teacher of prayer. A model for us as we walk through the journey of Lent.

Are we listening?

3. Our Gospel for today's Holy Mass is taken from St. Luke. It is Luke's account of the call of Levi, or Matthew. Matthew was a tax collector. A profession derided by many Jews in the days of Jesus' earthly ministry because the tax collected was paid to Rome, the occupier of their promised land.

Jesus is no respecter of persons. he calls all men and women, and awaits our response/ "Come, follow me" he said to Levi, and the scripture recounts "And leaving everything Levi got up and followed him."

Levi's response is held before us as our model. No matter who we are, where we've been, or what we are doing, Jesus is calling us. And, when we hear His Voice, the only proper response is to leave everything and follow Him.

The root of the word vocation is voice. Jesus calls each one of us.

Do we hear His voice?

Are we responding?

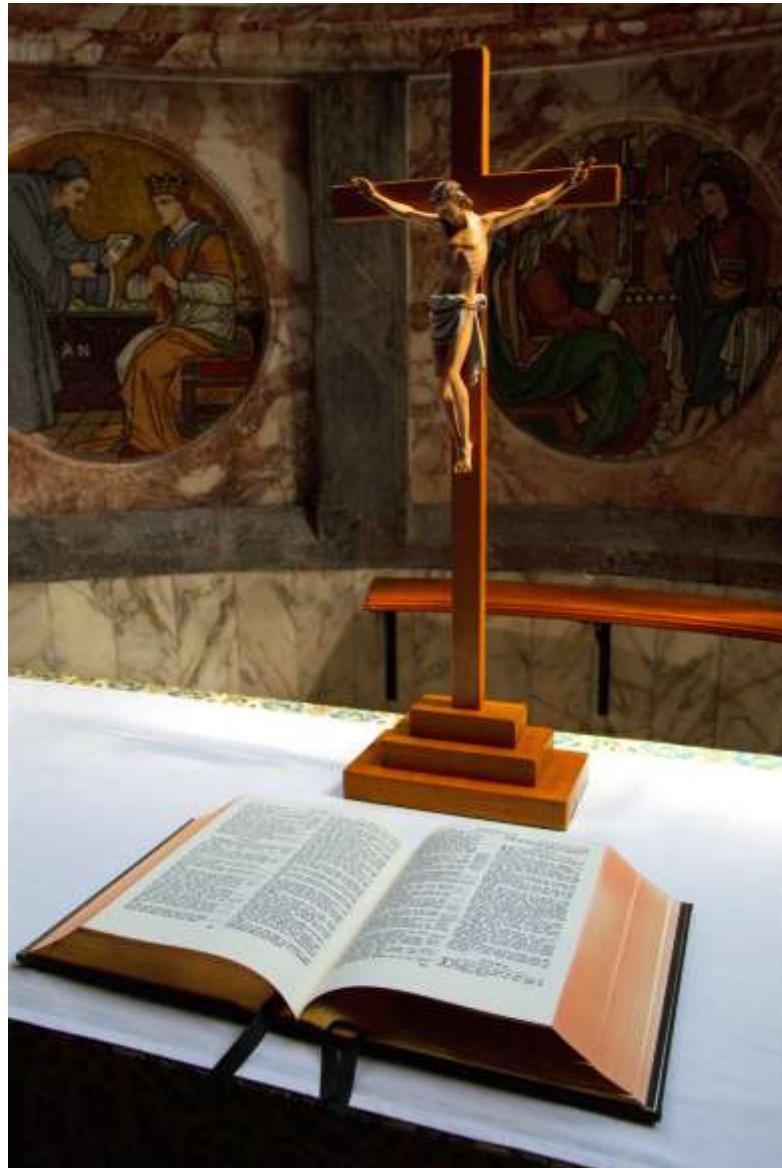
He still calls "not the upright, but sinners to repentance."

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 22, 2026



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Daily Reading for Sunday, February 22nd, 2026

Reading 1, Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7

7 Yahweh God shaped man from the soil of the ground and blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living being.

8 Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned.

9 From the soil, Yahweh God caused to grow every kind of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

1 Now, the snake was the most subtle of all the wild animals that Yahweh God had made. It asked the woman, 'Did God really say you were not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?'

2 The woman answered the snake, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden.

3 But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, "You must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death."

4 Then the snake said to the woman, 'No! You will not die!

5 God knows in fact that the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good from evil.'

6 The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was enticing for the wisdom that it could give. So she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked. So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

3 For I am well aware of my offences, my sin is constantly in mind.

4 Against you, you alone, I have sinned, I have done what you see to be wrong, that you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence, and your victory may appear when you give judgement,

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5 remember, I was born guilty, a sinner from the moment of conception.

6 But you delight in sincerity of heart, and in secret you teach me wisdom.

12 Give me back the joy of your salvation, sustain in me a generous spirit.

13 I shall teach the wicked your paths, and sinners will return to you.

14 Deliver me from bloodshed, God, God of my salvation, and my tongue will acclaim your saving justice.

17 Sacrifice to God is a broken spirit, a broken, contrite heart you never scorn.

Reading 2, Romans 5:12-19

12 Well then; it was through one man that sin came into the world, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned.

13 Sin already existed in the world before there was any law, even though sin is not reckoned when there is no law.

14 Nonetheless death reigned over all from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sin was not the breaking of a commandment, as Adam's was. He prefigured the One who was to come . . .

15 There is no comparison between the free gift and the offence. If death came to many through the offence of one man, how much greater an effect the grace of God has had, coming to so many and so plentifully as a free gift through the one man Jesus Christ!

16 Again, there is no comparison between the gift and the offence of one man. One single offence brought condemnation, but now, after many offences, have come the free gift and so acquittal!

17 It was by one man's offence that death came to reign over all, but how much greater the reign in life of those who receive the fullness of grace and the gift of saving justice, through the one man, Jesus Christ.

18 One man's offence brought condemnation on all humanity; and one man's good act has brought justification and life to all humanity.

19 Just as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience are many to be made upright.



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Gospel, Matthew 4:1-11

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the desert to be put to the test by the devil.

2 He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was hungry,

3 and the tester came and said to him, 'If you are Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.'

4 But he replied, 'Scripture says: Human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

5 The devil then took him to the holy city and set him on the parapet of the Temple.

6 'If you are Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down; for scripture says: He has given his angels orders about you, and they will carry you in their arms in case you trip over a stone.'

7 Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'

8 Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour.

9 And he said to him, 'I will give you all these, if you fall at my feet and do me homage.'

10 Then Jesus replied, 'Away with you, Satan! For scripture says: The Lord your God is the one to whom you must do homage, him alone you must serve.'

11 Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels appeared and looked after him.



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Questions for Reflection for February 22, 2026

1. Our first reading, on this First Sunday of Lent, is taken from the first Book of the Bible, the Book of Genesis. It is an account of the Fall of our first parents, the commission of the Original sin. Listen to the clear explanation of the Fall in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and I quote: "God created man in his image and established him in his friendship. A spiritual creature, man can live this friendship only in free submission to God. The prohibition against eating "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" spells this out: "for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die."(Gen 2:17)

The "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" symbolically evokes the insurmountable limits that man, being a creature, must freely recognize and respect with trust. Man is dependent on his Creator, and subject to the laws of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom." (Par 396)

The Catholic Catechism continues, explaining how this first or original sin occurred: "Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of.278 All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.

"In that sin man preferred himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good. Constituted in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully "divinized" by God in glory. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to "be like God", but "without God, before God, and not in accordance with God".

"Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately lose the grace of original holiness. They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image - that of a God jealous of his prerogatives." (CCC # 396-399)

2. In the Responsorial Psalm, David laments "I was born guilty, a sinner from the moment of conception." This points to what the Church explains concerning Original sin and how it is passed on. Again, the Catholic Catechism explains:

"How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam "as one body of one man".293 By this "unity of the human race" all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state.



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It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed" - a state and not an act." (CCC #404)

And the Apostle Paul tells us in our second reading, his letter to the Romans, that only Jesus Christ, the Savior, the One he also calls New Adam", can free us from this offense, and He does, through Baptism.

3. This brings us to this profound Gospel, the temptation of Jesus Christ in the desert. The first temptation Jesus faced was to His identity. After all, he IS the Son of God! We, through our Baptism, have also now become Sons (and daughters) of the Father in Him. The next temptation was to idolatry. We regularly commit the horrid sin of idolatry, succumbing to its lies almost on a daily basis.

Like the Christians in ancient Rome, we live in an age which has "exchanged the truth of God for a lie, worshipping created things rather than the Creator. (Rom. 1:25) Finally, there was the subtle but deadly temptation to violate integrity, to use the gifts and power of God improperly and put the Lord to the test. How clearly this poisonous serpent lurks in our daily life!

In each of these encounters with the Tempter, Jesus shows us the method by confronting the lies of the truth of God's Word. He is the Living Word, and we, through our Baptism, now live our lives in Him. That is why I say we enter the desert IN Him. We do this by living within the communion of the Church which is His Risen Body on earth.

The Church is not some-thing but Some - One. There, in the Lord, we find the resources we need to grow in holiness and struggle against the lingering effects of sin. There we embark on the journey of holiness, becoming what the Scriptures call "perfected" or completed in Jesus Christ. His Divine Life (Grace) is mediated to us through the Sacraments, in the Living word and the communion of love in which we now live.

We are invited during these 40 days to take every gift, every grace, offered to us. We are invited to learn to wield the weapons of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. By these practices we grow in freedom by putting away the "old man/woman" and putting on the "new man/woman", created anew in Jesus. It is Jesus in his Sacred Humanity who fully reveals that new man. He is the model, showing us the method. However, in His Divinity He is Himself the Means. In Him we are redeemed.

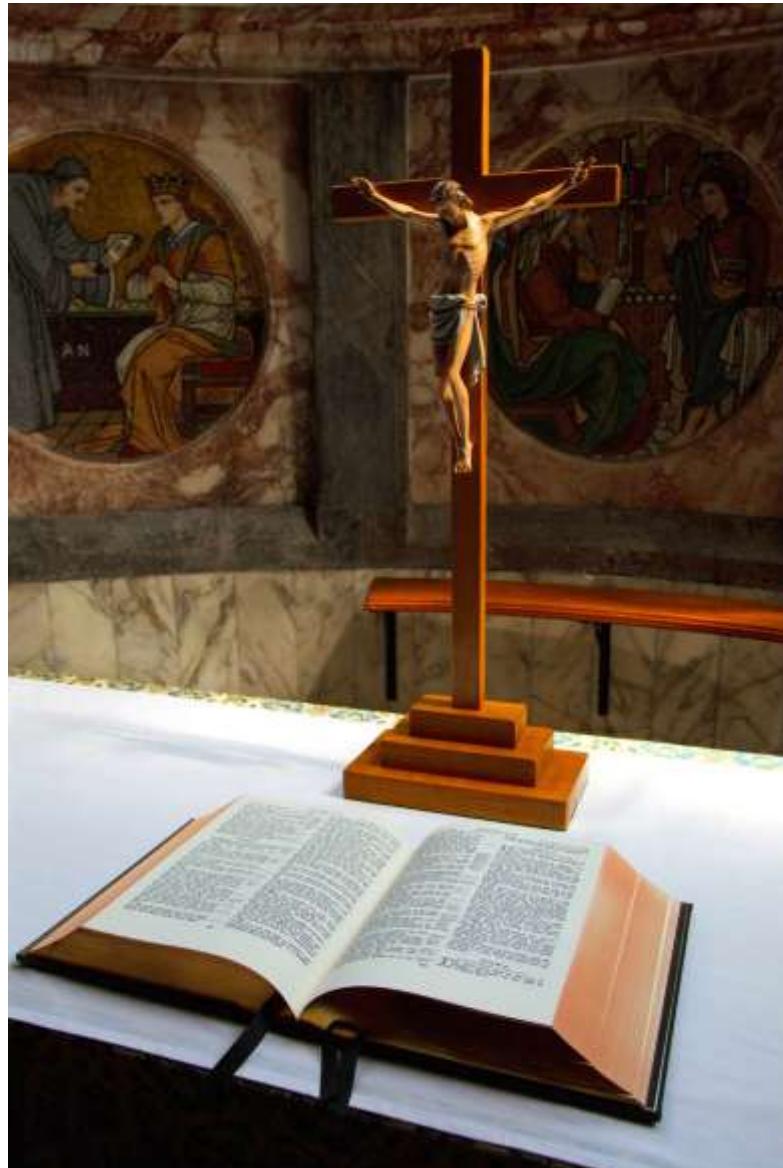
We are also capacitated to grow in holiness and virtue by overcoming temptation. Through His Saving Life, Death and Resurrection, he makes it possible for us to live new lives, in Him - beginning now and leading into eternity.

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 23, 2026



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Daily Reading for Monday, February 23rd, 2026

Reading 1, Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18

1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said:

2 'Speak to the whole community of Israelites and say: "Be holy, for I, Yahweh your God, am holy.

11 "You will not steal, nor deal deceitfully or fraudulently with your fellow-citizen.

12 You will not swear by my name with intent to deceive and thus profane the name of your God. I am Yahweh.

13 You will not exploit or rob your fellow. You will not keep back the labourer's wage until next morning.

14 You will not curse the dumb or put an obstacle in the way of the blind, but will fear your God. I am Yahweh.

15 "You will not be unjust in administering justice. You will neither be partial to the poor nor overawed by the great, but will administer justice to your fellow-citizen justly.

16 You will not go about slandering your own family, nor will you put your neighbour's life in jeopardy. I am Yahweh.

17 You will not harbour hatred for your brother. You will reprove your fellow-countryman firmly and thus avoid burdening yourself with a sin.

18 You will not exact vengeance on, or bear any sort of grudge against, the members of your race, but will love your neighbour as yourself. I am Yahweh.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 19:8, 9, 10, 15

8 The precepts of Yahweh are honest, joy for the heart; the commandment of Yahweh is pure, light for the eyes.

9 The fear of Yahweh is pure, lasting for ever; the judgements of Yahweh are true, upright, every one,

10 more desirable than gold, even than the finest gold; his words are sweeter than honey, that drips from the comb.



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Gospel, Matthew 25:31-46

31 'When the Son of man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory.

32 All nations will be assembled before him and he will separate people one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats.

33 He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left.

34 Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.

35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome,

36 lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me."

37 Then the upright will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

38 When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome, lacking clothes and clothe you?

39 When did we find you sick or in prison and go to see you?"

40 And the King will answer, "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."

41 Then he will say to those on his left hand, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

42 For I was hungry and you never gave me food, I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink,

43 I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, lacking clothes and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me."

44 Then it will be their turn to ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or lacking clothes, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?"

45 Then he will answer, "In truth I tell you, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me."

46 And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the upright to eternal life.'

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Questions for Reflection for February 23, 2026

1. The Lord spoke through his servant Moses to His people Israel "Be Holy, as I am Holy", then gave His people a way of life to live which would reveal the Holiness of God to all the Nations.

We were created in the Image of God. And, at the core of the truth which that phrase reveals is our capacity for freedom. The real question is how are we using our freedom. The real problem is sin. It has fractured our freedom and, we too often do not choose to live the Way of the Lord.

In his encyclical letter on Faith and Reason, *Fides et ratio*, St. John Paul II wrote:

"It is not just that freedom is part of the act of faith: it is absolutely required. Indeed, it is faith that allows individuals to give consummate expression to their own freedom. Put differently, freedom is not realized in decisions made against God.

"For how could it be an exercise of true freedom to refuse to be open to the very reality which enables our self-realization? Men and women can accomplish no more important act in their lives than the act of faith; it is here that freedom reaches the certainty of truth and chooses to live in that truth." (#13, *Faith and Reason*)

All of this invites us to pause and reflect upon our own lives, and our own choices. This 40-Day season of repentance and conversion called Lent presents us with an opportunity to turn away from sin and toward the Lord.

Have we offered the Lord our freedom?

2. The Psalmist David regularly sang Psalms of praise to the Lord, thanking Him for His Law, the precepts which lead us to holiness and happiness.

So, in our Response to today's Readings we are invited to sing along with him:

"The precepts of Yahweh are honest, joy for the heart;
the commandment of Yahweh is pure, light for the eyes."

How do we view the Lord's precepts, His commandments? Do we see them as an imposition or - an invitation?



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3. The Gospel of the day is sobering and challenging. Jesus speaks to us of the final judgement and, how our own lives will be evaluated. His identification with "the poor" in all of their manifestations, is obvious.

Jesus comes to us in the poor and the needy in our daily lives. How we treat them reveals the depth and sincerity of our love for God.

This is a longstanding teaching of the Church, precisely because it is a clear teaching of Jesus Himself. It cannot - and must not- be minimized or marginalized by trying to enclose it in any political box, no matter what the label.

If you desire to read more about this tenet of Catholic Social Doctrine and Biblical teaching, you can find helpful treatment throughout the sections on Social Concerns in the Catholic Catechism and the immense sources cited within the paragraphs and the footnotes within that section.

2444 - "The Church's love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to "be able to give to those in need." (Ephesians 4:28). It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty.

This morning, on this Monday of the First Full week of Lent (Matt. 25: 31-46): we hear this passage from the Gospel of St. Matthew at Holy Mass. Hear these STUNNING words of Jesus:

"I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you gave me clothing; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison, and you visited me."

How well I understand the question posed by his stunned disciples, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs."

It was an extraordinary statement! However, as I have aged, I have come to see the many faces of poverty and I am learning to recognize the face of Jesus as He is revealed in them all.

Have you ever considered the significance of the fact that the same Jesus who promised to be with us always also told us that the poor would be with us always? That is because they are connected. Indeed, in a sense, they are one and the same - in a way that is revealed with the eyes of living faith. "The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me" (Jesus, Matthew 26:11) "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

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The face of Jesus is found in the face of the poor, for those with eyes to see. The word of Jesus is spoken through the poor, for those who cultivate the ears to hear Him. The cry of Jesus is heard in the cry of the poor, at least for those who stop to listen. That is the deeper meaning behind this sobering scene recounting the last judgment recorded by the Evangelist Matthew in the 25th Chapter of his Gospel.

How do we treat the poor?



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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 24, 2026



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Daily Reading for Tuesday, February 24th, 2026

Reading 1, Isaiah 55:10-11

10 For, as the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before having watered the earth, fertilising it and making it germinate to provide seed for the sower and food to eat,

11 so it is with the word that goes from my mouth: it will not return to me unfulfilled or before having carried out my good pleasure and having achieved what it was sent to do.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 34:4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19

4 I seek Yahweh and he answers me, frees me from all my fears.

5 Fix your gaze on Yahweh and your face will grow bright, you will never hang your head in shame.

6 A pauper calls out and Yahweh hears, saves him from all his troubles.

7 The angel of Yahweh encamps around those who fear him, and rescues them.

16 But Yahweh's face is set against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

17 They cry in anguish and Yahweh hears, and rescues them from all their troubles.

18 Yahweh is near to the broken-hearted, he helps those whose spirit is crushed.

19 Though hardships without number beset the upright, Yahweh brings rescue from them all.

Gospel, Matthew 6:7-15

7 'In your prayers do not babble as the gentiles do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard.

8 Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 So you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy,

10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.



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11 Give us today our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.

13 And do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One.

14 'Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours;

15 but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.



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Questions for Reflection for February 24, 2026

1. In our first reading appointed for Holy Mass during this Lenten weekday, we are reminded of the power of God's word. The Lord speaks through the great Hebrew prophet Isaiah:

"For, as the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before having watered the earth, fertilizing it and making it germinate to provide seed for the sower and food to eat, so it is with the word that goes from my mouth: it will not return to me unfulfilled or before having carried out my good pleasure and having achieved what it was sent to do."

In the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum (The Word of God), issued by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, we find these beautiful words:

"(I)n the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life." (Paragraph 21)

How do we hear the Word of the Lord when it is proclaimed at Mass or, when we read it in our own time of prayer and devotion? Do we receive it for what it truly is, the Word of God? Do we ask the Holy Spirit to plant it deeply within our hearts and water it does it bears fruit in our lives?

Do we seek to commit it to memory, reflect upon it?

2. "Fix your gaze upon Yahweh" sings the Psalmist in this beautiful excerpt from Psalm 34

The meaning and purpose of life itself is to commune with God. As we grow in faith through our participation in the life of grace, lived out in the Church, our capacity to respond to His loving invitation grows, through prayer.

Prayer is the pathway to that peace the Lord promised, which the world cannot give - and the world cannot take away. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)

Prayer is about falling in love with the living God. Do we have a fixed time of prayer and reflection appointed for each day? If not, why not?



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3. From this Gospel text from St. Matthew and its parallel in Luke, we have been given the beautiful form prayer we were taught as children. It is the prayer we pray at every Holy Mass, the Our Father.

However, Jesus is teaching us all much more than one form of prayer, he is revealing to his friends and followers the relationship which is itself the very heart of prayer.

Jesus sets forth the relational framework within which life itself can become an ongoing dialogue of prayer. The Our Father reveals the path for every one of us to living in a continual communion with God.

What Jesus is teaching us in this Gospel is a Way of Life. We can have the same relationship Jesus has with the Father, the intimate communion the disciples witnessed when they came upon Him prayer. The same relationship they witness as they walked with Him daily. We also walk with Him daily.

Lord, teach us to Pray.



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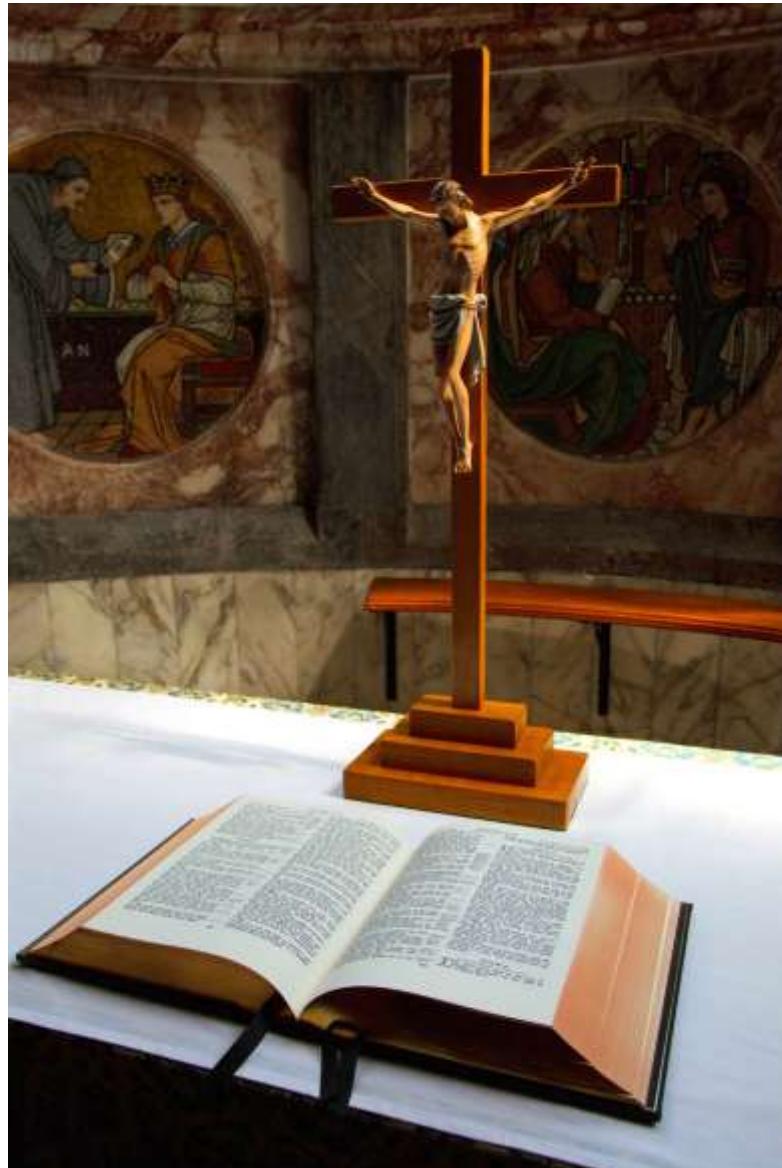
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 25, 2026



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Daily Reading for Wednesday, February 25th, 2026

Reading 1, Jonah 3:1-10

1 The word of Yahweh was addressed to Jonah a second time.

2 'Up!' he said, 'Go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach to it as I shall tell you.'

3 Jonah set out and went to Nineveh in obedience to the word of Yahweh. Now Nineveh was a city great beyond compare; to cross it took three days.

4 Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city and then proclaimed, 'Only forty days more and Nineveh will be overthrown.'

5 And the people of Nineveh believed in God; they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least.

6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his robe, put on sackcloth and sat down in ashes.

7 He then had it proclaimed throughout Nineveh, by decree of the king and his nobles, as follows: 'No person or animal, herd or flock, may eat anything; they may not graze, they may not drink any water.

8 All must put on sackcloth and call on God with all their might; and let everyone renounce his evil ways and violent behaviour.

9 Who knows? Perhaps God will change his mind and relent and renounce his burning wrath, so that we shall not perish.'

10 God saw their efforts to renounce their evil ways. And God relented about the disaster which he had threatened to bring on them, and did not bring it.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19

3 For I am well aware of my offences, my sin is constantly in mind.

4 Against you, you alone, I have sinned, I have done what you see to be wrong, that you may show your saving justice when you pass sentence, and your victory may appear when you give judgement,

12 Give me back the joy of your salvation, sustain in me a generous spirit.

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13 I shall teach the wicked your paths, and sinners will return to you.

18 In your graciousness do good to Zion, rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

19 Then you will delight in upright sacrifices,-burnt offerings and whole oblations -- and young bulls will be offered on your altar.

Gospel, Luke 11:29-32

29 The crowds got even bigger and he addressed them, 'This is an evil generation; it is asking for a sign. The only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah.

30 For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be a sign to this generation.

31 On Judgement Day the Queen of the South will stand up against the people of this generation and be their condemnation, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, look, there is something greater than Solomon here.

32 On Judgement Day the men of Nineveh will appear against this generation and be its condemnation, because when Jonah preached they repented; and, look, there is something greater than Jonah here.



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Questions for Reflection for February 25, 2026

1. Not only is the account of Jonah an event, it speaks to us of the way in which the Mercy of God is revealed. God always responds to sincere repentance. And, warnings of His pending judgement are conditional. God is not "mean", He is Just and Merciful.

So, let's consider one of the myriad of ways we can learn from this story of Jonah as Christians.

The Catholic Catechism gives us some helpful teaching on the "senses of scripture in these words:

"According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two senses of Scripture: the literal and the spiritual, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral and anagogical senses. The profound concordance of the four senses guarantees all its richness to the living reading of Scripture in the Church.

"The literal sense is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: "All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal."

"The spiritual sense. Thanks to the unity of God's plan, not only the text of Scripture but also the realities and events about which it speaks can be signs."

And, under that understanding of the "spiritual sense" the Catechism explains:

"The allegorical sense. We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ; thus, the crossing of the Red Sea is a sign or type of Christ's victory and also of Christian Baptism.

"The moral sense. The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written "for our instruction".⁸⁵

"The anagogical sense (Greek: anagoge, "leading"). We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland: thus, the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem. (CCC #115-117)

St Cyril of Jerusalem writes, "As Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."



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So, for Christians, we see in this account, that Jonah was also a "figure" a type" of Christ.

The Forty Days of Lent are a continual call of the Holy Spirit to each one of us, individually, and to the whole Church, to repent, to turn away from Sin. When we do, we receive not the judgment and consequence which our sins deserve, but the Mercy of the Lord.

Are we responding to this continual call to repent?

2. The Psalmist David understood what the call to repentance really entails. It requires taking personal responsibility for our own sin.

We cannot keep blaming others, or our circumstances. We made the wrong choice to turn away from God, His Law and His loving plan for our life. Now, we must admit it and repent, seeking forgiveness.

He shows us the path to repentance.

The Catholic Catechism doesn't make light of sin, and neither should we. It teaches, and I quote:

"Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as "an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law."

Then, it cites the very Psalm appointed for our response today:

"Sin is an offense against God: "Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in your sight." Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it. Like the first sin, it is disobedience, a revolt against God through the will to become "like gods," knowing and determining good and evil. Sin is thus "love of oneself even to contempt of God."

Finally, it explains, "In this proud self- exaltation, sin is diametrically opposed to the obedience of Jesus, which achieves our salvation." (CCC #1849, 1850)

Have we acknowledged our responsibility for our own sin and repented?

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3. In the Gospel appointed for today's Mass, Jesus scolds His listeners as an "evil generation...asking for a sign". Words which could apply to our own time as well, as men and women have turned away from God - and built many new idols, including disordered self-love, which they now worship.

Jesus addresses their lack of repentance by referring to the "Sign of Jonah". In this instance, He is not only referring to Himself as having been prefigured by the type we spoke of in our reflection on the First reading. That, as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days, so He will be in the belly of the earth for three days.

In Luke's account he is referring to the preaching of Jonah as the Sign they have already received - the strong call to repentance which turned the people of Nineveh away from sin and to their knees - Jesus is preaching to them. That is the sign which He had already given to them - and they had not listened. They were not repenting. They were not believing or heeding His message.

Jesus is preaching that Call to Repentance to our own generation as well. The message of the Gospel calls every generation to repentance. To, as we heard on Ash Wednesday, "Turn Away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel"

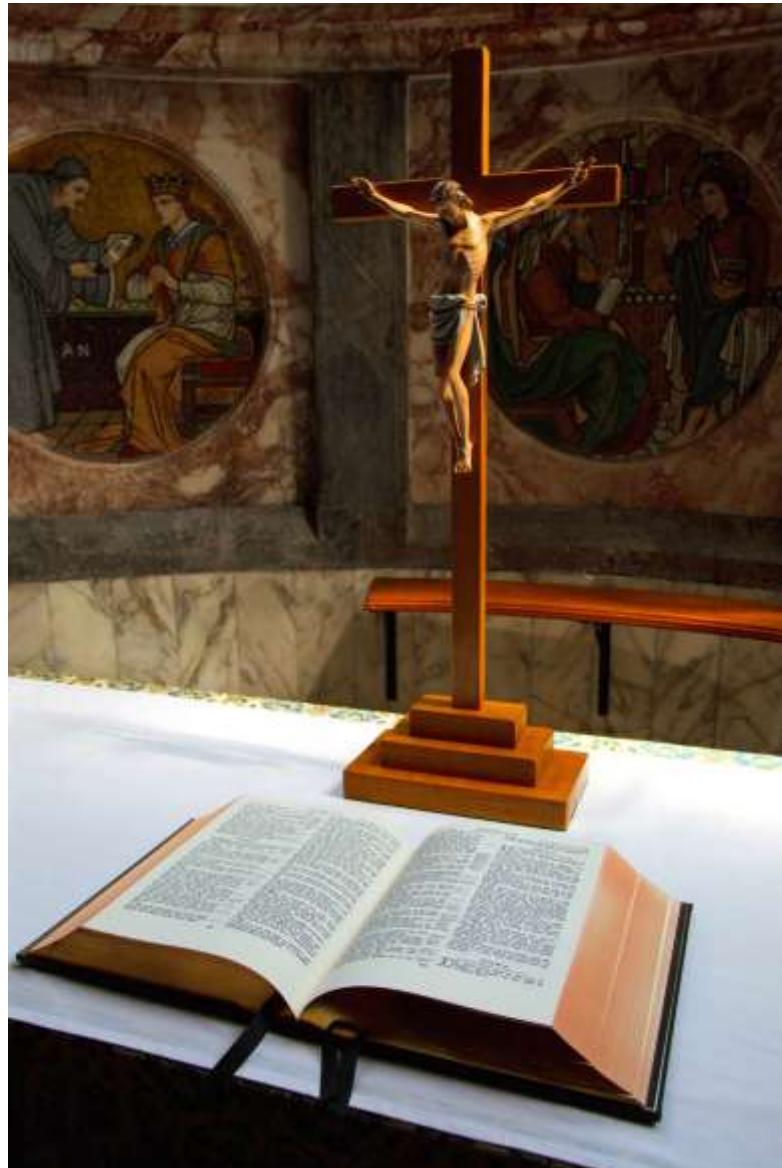
Have we responded, today?

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 26, 2026



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Daily Reading for Thursday, February 26th, 2026

Reading 1, Esther C: 12, 14-16, 23-25

12 The king said to Queen Esther, 'In the citadel of Susa the Jews have killed five hundred men and also the ten sons of Haman. What must they have done in the other provinces of the realm? Tell me your request; I grant it to you. Tell me what else you would like; it is yours for the asking.'

14 Whereupon, the king having given the order, the edict was promulgated in Susa and the ten sons of Haman were hanged.

15 Thus the Jews of Susa reassembled on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men in the city. But they took no plunder.

16 The other Jews who lived in the king's provinces also assembled to defend their lives and rid themselves of their enemies. They slaughtered seventy-five thousand of their opponents. But they took no plunder.

23 Once having begun, the Jews continued observing these practices, Mordecai having written them an account

24 of how Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the persecutor of all the Jews, had plotted their destruction and had cast the pur, that is, the lot, for their overthrow and ruin;

25 but how, when he went back to the king to ask him to order the hanging of Mordecai, the wicked scheme which he had devised against the Jews recoiled on his own head, and both he and his sons were hanged on the gallows;

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 138:1-2, 2-3, 7-8

1 [Of David] I thank you, Yahweh, with all my heart, for you have listened to the cry I uttered. In the presence of angels I sing to you,

2 I bow down before your holy Temple. I praise your name for your faithful love and your constancy; your promises surpass even your fame.

3 You heard me on the day when I called, and you gave new strength to my heart.

7 Though I live surrounded by trouble you give me life -- to my enemies' fury! You stretch out your right hand and save me,



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8 Yahweh will do all things for me. Yahweh, your faithful love endures for ever, do not abandon what you have made.

Gospel, Matthew 7:7-12

7 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

8 Everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened.

9 Is there anyone among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread?

10 Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish?

11 If you, then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

12 'So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and the Prophets.



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Questions for Reflection for February 26, 2026

1. The Book of Esther, a portion of which is offered as the first reading for today's Holy Mass, tells of how the Lord saved His people, Israel, from the hands of an enemy and protected them because they hoped in Him, even in a time of captivity in what was the Persian empire.

The Lord acts through a holy man named Mordecai and a holy woman named Esther. And, this deliverance at the hands of God gives rise to a special Jewish Feast, Purim, in the observance of faithful Jews. On this joyful celebration, the Jewish people commemorate the salvation and deliverance of the Jewish people from an evil ruler named Haman who sought to kill them all.

This deeply held belief that God is always protecting and delivering His people, carries on today in the lived faith of both Jews and Christians. The God whom we proclaim and serve is not some distant deity who got things started and then stood back. No, he is a very personal Father and Deliverer who intervenes in human history.

This is still true. Today. For you and me. And, as Christians, we confess that we are heirs of the promises made to Abraham, grafted onto the vine, who is Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Paul explains in his New Testament Letter to the Galatians:

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." (Gal. 3:29)

Do we understand what it means to be children of Abraham and heirs according to a promise?

If not, study the Scriptures, pray through them, and find out.

2. The gratitude in the heart of the Psalmist David is contagious. As we chant, pray, and sing his hymns to God - which are what the Psalms are - we can be caught up into it.

In fact, we should be. The Lord listens to our cries, when we turn to Him. When we are weak, He is strong. He always hears us, but He waits to hear from us. That is what prayer is all about.

And, just like the Lord did for David, he delivers us from our trouble, if we turn to Him and ask. EVERY DAY.

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Have we begun this day with Praise and Thanksgiving to God? Have we turned to Him and opened up our hearts, asking for His Help? If not yet, now is the time. Praise the Lord, right Now. Fill this day with continuing prayer and watch how your life changes.

3. In this beautiful passage from the Gospel of St. Matthew, appointed for our reflection on this Lenten weekday, Jesus is teaching His disciples about the prayer of petition. Remember, we are His disciples. He is teaching YOU and ME!

St. Luke's account of this same teaching follows after the disciples find Jesus in prayerful communion with His Father. He demonstrates the very kind of prayer which is needed. In His Sacred humanity, Jesus also shows them the way of life into which they will be initiated. Through His gift of the salvation won for us on Golgotha's Hill and His defeat of death demonstrated in the empty tomb, Jesus makes a path to freedom possible. He also shows us it will not be easy and requires persistence.

Luke adds an additional parable to communicate to us that prayer often involves persistence.

"And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ?Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'?" I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs."

"And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks, receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:5-13)

Prayer leads us into a life of real communion with the living God. It is our fuel, the wind in our sails. We who are baptized into Jesus Christ are to live our lives in Him, by living them in His Body, the Church, of which we are members. (1 Cor. 12:27) This call to live in Him engages our freedom and invites our continual response to His grace. Without prayer, it simply is not possible to make progress on the way.

The intimate communion the disciples witnessed when they came upon Jesus in prayer can become our experience.

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We are adopted sons and daughters of "His Father and Our Father". (John 20:17). The ongoing instruction which they received as they walked with Him daily can become ours when we walk with Him daily.

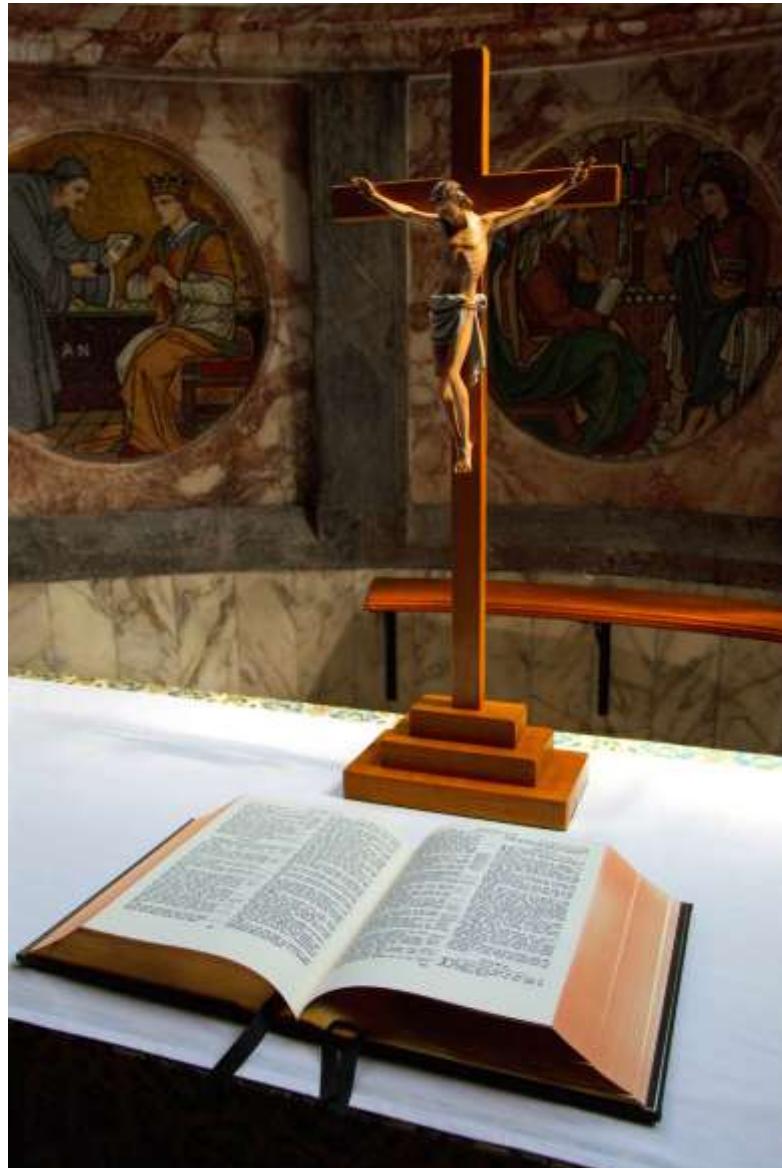
But, remember, we must ask. We must seek. We must knock. And, not just once, but persistently! Do we pray with persistence? If not, why not?

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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 27, 2026



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Daily Reading for Friday, February 27th, 2026

Reading 1, Ezekiel 18:21-28

21 'If the wicked, however, renounces all the sins he has committed, respects my laws and is law-abiding and upright, he will most certainly live; he will not die.

22 None of the crimes he committed will be remembered against him from then on; he will most certainly live because of his upright actions.

23 Would I take pleasure in the death of the wicked -- declares the Lord Yahweh -- and not prefer to see him renounce his wickedness and live?

24 'But if the upright abandons uprightness and does wrong by copying all the loathsome practices of the wicked, is he to live? All his upright actions will be forgotten from then on; for the infidelity of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, he will most certainly die.

25 'Now, you say, "What the Lord does is unjust." Now listen, House of Israel: is what I do unjust? Is it not what you do that is unjust?

26 When the upright abandons uprightness and does wrong and dies, he dies because of the wrong which he himself has done.

27 Similarly, when the wicked abandons wickedness to become law-abiding and upright, he saves his own life.

28 Having chosen to renounce all his previous crimes, he will most certainly live: he will not die.

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

1 [Song of Ascents] From the depths I call to you, Yahweh:

2 Lord, hear my cry. Listen attentively to the sound of my pleading!

3 If you kept a record of our sins, Lord, who could stand their ground?

4 But with you is forgiveness, that you may be revered.

5 I rely, my whole being relies, Yahweh, on your promise.

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6 My whole being hopes in the Lord, more than watchmen for daybreak; more than watchmen for daybreak

7 let Israel hope in Yahweh. For with Yahweh is faithful love, with him generous ransom;

8 and he will ransom Israel from all its sins.

Gospel, Matthew 5:20-26

20 'For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven.

21 'You have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You shall not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court.

22 But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court; anyone who calls a brother "Fool" will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and anyone who calls him "Traitor" will answer for it in hell fire.

23 So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,

24 leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering.

25 Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison.

26 In truth I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny.



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Questions for Reflection for February 27, 2026

1. In our first reading, the Lord is speaking to His people, Israel, through the Hebrew Prophet Ezekiel, during the Babylonian captivity. The message was clear then, and its relevance for us is equally clear.

Our choices matter. Our conduct matters. In fact, we will be judged according to our conduct. We are personally accountable, and our good deeds of the past will not eradicate the wrong choices, the sin, if today.

What a sobering and important message for us to ponder as we continue through this Liturgical season of Lent, the Forty Days during which the Church, as Mother and Teacher, invites us to walk with Jesus into the desert and deal with the world, the flesh and the devil.

This season invites us to examine our own lives, and our own choices. What are we choosing and who are we becoming? How do we exercise our human freedom?

Basil the Great was a monk, theologian, Bishop of the fourth century, and a friend of Gregory of Nyssa. He wrote a detailed Rule for Monks which contains helpful insights into what we choose and who we become. He also gives us this definition of sin:

"This is the definition of sin: the misuse of powers given us by God for doing good; a use contrary to God's commands. On the other hand, the virtue that God asks of us is the use of the same powers based on a good conscience in accordance with God's command."

What are we choosing?

2. We all know that David made some seriously wrong choices. He committed serious sin. The accounts in the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures attest to that fact.

For one of his egregious sins, God sent Nathan the Prophet to rebuke him and call him to repentance. The story can be found in the Second Book of Samuel, Chapter 12. Read it. Watch David's reaction when his sin is exposed. he acknowledges it and repents. he does not make light of it. He does not deny it. He makes the right choice.

Indeed, there are consequences to sin. But God desires us to repent and turn away from sin and turn toward Him again.

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David's Psalms reflect that kind of ongoing relationship of repentance and conversion.

What about you - and me? Remember David's words from this Responsorial Psalm of today's Mass:

"If you kept a record of our sins, Lord, who could stand their ground? But with you is forgiveness, that you may be revered. I reply, my whole being relies, Yahweh, on your promise."

Are we regularly repenting of our sin and turning back toward God? Do we frequent the great Sacrament of New Beginnings, Confession, also called the Sacrament of penance and Reconciliation?

Now is the time!

3. The Gospel passage appointed for today's Holy Mass during this Lenten Season presents us with Jesus raising the water level, so to speak, for those who follow Him. That means you and me.

Our "uprightness" must exceed that of the scribes and pharisees. WOW! That is a tall order.

This is not only an ideal; it is meant to become real in the life of every Christian - no matter what our state in life or specific vocational calling within the one call of discipleship. We are to cooperate with the grace of God and yield more and more to the Holy Spirit, in order to be made new.

The Holy Spirit brings about a transforming work within each of us, making us more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ - if we cooperate with grace.

That entails developing a new way of life which is rooted in prayer and communion with God, fed through immersion in His Word and participation in the sacred mysteries, the sacraments, and expressed in love.

Such a robust moral vision calls us to growth in virtue.

The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity are infused in us through Baptism.

The hinge or cardinal virtues are, in a proper sense, acquired through a lifestyle of living faith and participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

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This vision of a dynamic Christian life also involves the development of what were called "habitus" in Latin, from which we derive the word habit. Let's call them habits of holiness. They are powers to act with excellence which are formed within the Christian believer through our cooperation with grace.

That is the key word. We cannot do any of this on our own.

We cannot do any of this on our own, with our own human effort. We need God's grace, His Divine Life.

The Father has given this grace to us freely in His Son, Jesus Christ. We are now invited to grow in our relationship with Him by living our lives in the heart of the Church, which is his Body, of which we became members through Baptism. We are invited to grow in this reality and make it our own by embracing the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

By reading, praying and living His Word, receiving the grace which is mediated through the Sacraments, learning the New Way of Life revealed to us in the Bible, and continuing to seek more and more of the Holy Spirit through communion with God in prayer, we are able to be continually converted and made new. (2 Cor 5:17)

By grace, we are empowered to replace those old habits of vice with habits of holiness.

We are to live in the Holy Spirit, allowing the Holy Spirit to work within us, making us new and enabling us to grow in virtue and to begin to manifest the fruits, the character of Christ being formed in us. (Gal. 5:22)

Consider this poignant insight from the Catechism:

"The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin.(CCC 1733)"

By grace we can choose to grow in the likeness of the One who carried His Cross to free us from the power of sin and the final enemy of death. However, even God will not violate our human freedom. He strengthens it and enables us to respond to His continual invitations.

Coming to understand the relationship between our freedom and the grace of God more fully is a key to our progress in holiness and our response to the invitation of conversion. We are invited to be educated in freedom.

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The Catechism points us on the way: "Freedom and grace. The grace of Christ is not in the slightest way a rival of our freedom when this freedom accords with the sense of the true and the good that God has put in the human heart."

"On the contrary, as Christian experience attests especially in prayer, the more docile we are to the promptings of grace, the more we grow in inner freedom and confidence during trials, such as those we face in the pressures and constraints of the outer world. "

"By the working of grace the Holy Spirit educates us in spiritual freedom in order to make us free collaborators in his work in the Church and in the world: 'Almighty and merciful God, in your goodness take away from us all that is harmful, so that, made ready both in mind and body, we may freely accomplish your will.(Prayer of the Roman Missal) (CCC # 1742)"

Are we docile to the promptings of grace?



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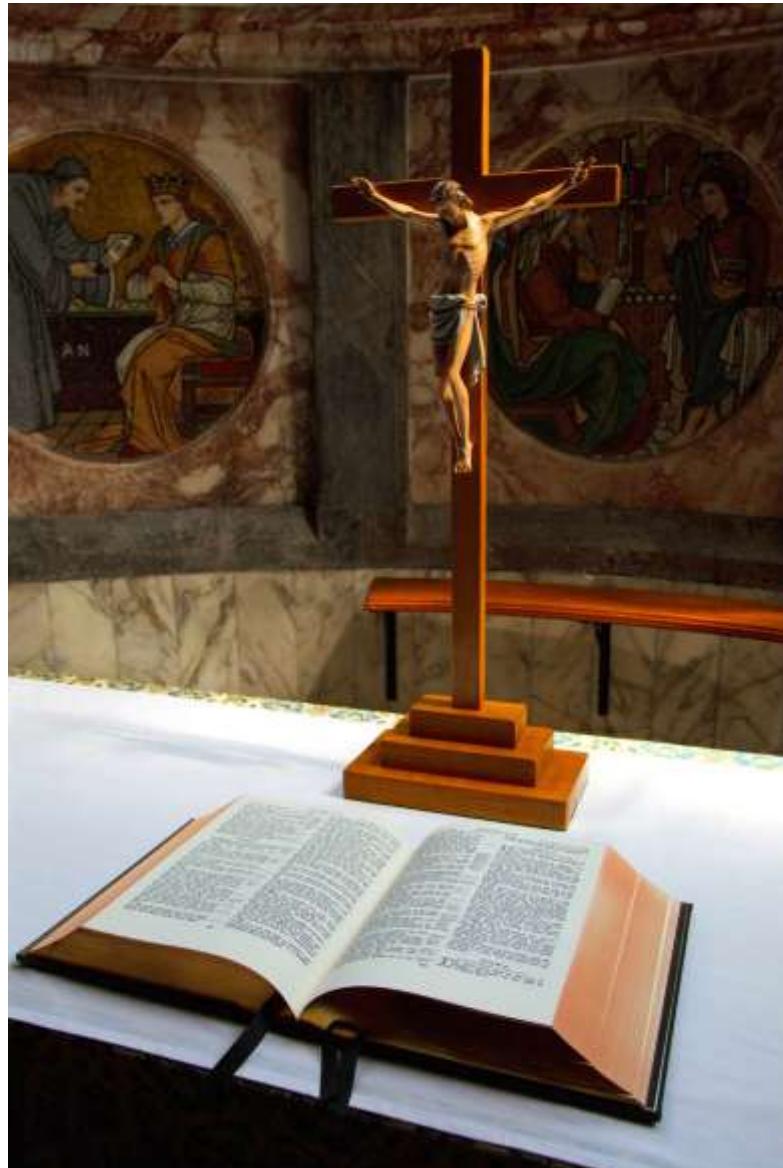
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Daily Reading and Questions for Reflection

February 28, 2026



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Daily Reading for Saturday, February 28th, 2026

Reading 1, Deuteronomy 26:16-19

16 'Yahweh your God commands you today to observe these laws and customs; you must keep and observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.

17 'Today you have obtained this declaration from Yahweh: that he will be your God, but only if you follow his ways, keep his statutes, his commandments, his customs, and listen to his voice.

18 And today Yahweh has obtained this declaration from you: that you will be his own people -- as he has said -- but only if you keep all his commandments;

19 then for praise and renown and honour, he will raise you higher than every other nation he has made, and you will be a people consecrated to Yahweh, as he has promised.'

Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8

1 How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Law of Yahweh!

2 Blessed are those who observe his instructions, who seek him with all their hearts,

4 You lay down your precepts to be carefully kept.

5 May my ways be steady in doing your will.

7 I thank you with a sincere heart for teaching me your upright judgements.

8 I shall do your will; do not ever abandon me wholly.

Gospel, Matthew 5:43-48

43 'You have heard how it was said, You will love your neighbour and hate your enemy.

44 But I say this to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you;

45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on the bad as well as the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike.



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46 For if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even the tax collectors do as much?

47 And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional?

48 Do not even the gentiles do as much? You must therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.'



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Questions for Reflection for February 28, 2026

1. The "fifth Book of Moses Commonly Called Deuteronomy" as my favorite translation of the Bible the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition, calls the Book from which our first reading is taken, presents us with the Law which was given through Moses. It was given for the people of Israel to live when they took possession of the Land the Lord promised them in His Covenant with them.

This Law was to give rise to a Way of Life which would show all of the other Nations that the God of Israel is to be the God of every Nation.

Fidelity to that Way of Life would ensure the ongoing protection and provision of the Lord.

In other words, the relationship with the Lord and Israel was a two-way street.

As Heirs of the Covenant, through our having been grafted onto the Vine of Jesus Christ, we Christians are invited into a relationship with the Lord. We are called to keep the New Law of Love given to us in and through Jesus Christ.

Lent is a time to examine our own response to that invitation. To see whether our conduct lines up with our promises.

How are we doing?

2. David the Psalmist sings in our Responsorial Psalm of today's Liturgy, "How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Law of Yahweh!"

Before they were called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26) the early followers of Jesus Christ were often referred to as 'the Way'.

The Apostle Paul, in recounting his own conversion, speaks of having persecuted 'this Way' (Acts 22: 3-16) prior to his encounter with the Risen Lord on the Road to Damascus.

This expression 'the Way' reveals a profoundly important aspect of the understanding of the early Christians. They believed and proclaimed that the Christian faith was to be expressed in a new way of living.

It still is. Does our life reflect this New Way of Living?



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3. Jesus said it, clearly, and the Gospel appointed for today's Mass gives it to us: "You must therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

It is a call to complete transformation, beginning right now - and right where we are. It is a call to become saints in the stuff of the real world. It is right there where our transformation takes place. It becomes the very real material which is used to recreate us more fully into the Image revealed perfectly in the Sacred Humanity of Jesus.

In its dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the Second Vatican Council in the Catholic Church affirmed the teaching of Jesus Christ, the clear teaching and witness of the early Church and the consistent teaching of Church Councils throughout the ages - holiness of life is not an option, for any member of the Church.

We are all called to Christian perfection, "all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect" (*Lumen Gentium*, Light to the Nations, 11).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity. All are called to holiness: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (CCC #2013) Christians are saved from sin, death and separation from God, through Jesus Christ.

In Greek, the word often translated perfect is *téleios*. It refers to something being completed, brought to its full purpose, potential and intended end and vocation.

For example, in the world of objects, a hammer is *téleios* or perfect when it is hammering a nail. In the world of subjects, things are *téleios* or perfect when they are fulfilling their nature. In our Western minds, we can limit this word "perfect" and thereby fail to grasp its promise and potential. We think of it mathematically rather than relationally. We fail to understand it is a work in process.

Notice that the concept of being "perfected" is also applied to Jesus by the author of the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews in chapter 5 verses 8-9: "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him."

Jesus was made perfect through what He suffered. Yet, Jesus was without sin. How then was He perfected? He came into the world to redeem, to transform us by a life, and a death, and a Resurrection of perfect love.

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He fulfilled His purpose when He presided over the new creation from the Altar of that Cross and robbed death of its victory by bursting forth from a tomb which could not contain Love.

We live in Him now - as we live our lives in the heart of the Church for the sake of the world. The Church is not so much a Some-Thing as a Some-One. We are being made perfect, holy, as we cooperate with His continual invitations to conversion by living our lives in the Communion of His Body on earth. We are being capacitated to love as He loved.

By doing so we prove ourselves to be Sons and daughters of His Father, who by the power of the Holy Spirit, has become Our Father. When we follow Jesus, a dynamic process happens within us, an ever-deepening conversion and transformation, a process which is called perfection.

Are we cooperating with the grace given to us to become holy, to become "perfect"?



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