

Lenten Reflections

March 3, 2020



St Francis Receiving the Stigmata – El Greco – Public Domain

<https://art.thewalters.org/detail/6457/saint-francis-receiving-the-stigmata-2/>

Are you crazy? What were you thinking? Whatever possessed you to do such a foolhardy thing? Didn't you realize how dangerous that was? My horrified father fired one question after another at me in quick succession as I sheepishly looked down at the soggy, mud-covered mess that extended from my brand-new shoes to my eight-year-old knees.

It was a bright Saturday afternoon in mid-March, one of the first nice days following what had been a brutally cold winter that had kept rambunctious kids like my friends and me cooped up for weeks in our tiny apartments. The spring thaw had begun, and we were finally free to pursue one of our favorite pastimes, climbing the huge billboard which loomed high above the trees in one of the few empty lots left in the Bronx in the early 1950s.

As we exuberantly climbed up the towering structure, our ringleader Jimmy looked down and exclaimed, "Let's jump! The mud is so soft. We won't get hurt." Our buddy Vinny chimed in, "Yeah! It will be fun!"

My better instincts kicked in, and I resisted offering the obvious justification for my reluctance, "It's too dangerous. We could get killed!" Jimmy challenged me, "I dare you!" Vinny taunted me, "I double-dare you!" Hubris won. I recklessly accepted the dare. I jumped!

I recalled this incident as I reflected on today's Gospel and remembered the priest introducing the Lord's Prayer at every Mass with the words, "... **we dare to say**, 'Our Father...'" This is the prayer that our loving, merciful Jesus taught us to pray. Why does the priest dare us to say it? Are we courting danger when we say it? I wonder... Think twice before you risk telling God you're ready for His will to be done in your life. Do you really want Him to forgive you the way you forgive others? Are you willing to accept the consequences if He takes you at your word? If so, go ahead and pray the Lord's Prayer and mean it.

I dare you!

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Tuesday of the First Week of Lent

Lectionary: 225

Reading 1 [IS 55:10-11](#)

Thus says the LORD:
Just as from the heavens
the rain and snow come down
And do not return there
till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
Giving seed to the one who sows
and bread to the one who eats,
So shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;
It shall not return to me void,
but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it.

Responsorial Psalm [34:4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19](#)

R. (18b) From all their distress God rescues the just.

Glorify the LORD with me,
let us together extol his name.
I sought the LORD, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.

R. From all their distress God rescues the just.

Look to him that you may be radiant with joy,
and your faces may not blush with shame.
When the poor one called out, the LORD heard,
and from all his distress he saved him.

R. From all their distress God rescues the just.

The LORD has eyes for the just,
and ears for their cry.
The LORD confronts the evildoers,
to destroy remembrance of them from the earth.

R. From all their distress God rescues the just.

When the just cry out, the LORD hears them,
and from all their distress he rescues them.
The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.

R. From all their distress God rescues the just.

Verse Before The Gospel [MT 4:4B](#)

One does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

Gospel [MT 6:7-15](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“In praying, do not babble like the pagans,
who think that they will be heard because of their many words.
Do not be like them.
Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

“This is how you are to pray:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

“If you forgive men their transgressions,
your heavenly Father will forgive you.
But if you do not forgive men,
neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.”