

The positive power of penance

Children of all ages know that if we make a mess, we must clean it up and try not to do it again. Penance is a lot like that – it helps us clean up our sin and avoid repeats. Help children appreciate penance.

Self-denial. Suggest small sacrifices that are age appropriate - skipping a favorite TV show, foregoing an hour of video games, or passing on dessert. Then suggest that the discomfort can be offered to God as an apology for past wrongs.

Acts of kindness. Our sin affects others,

so helping others also helps us make up for our sins.

Assisting a neighbor, volunteering at church, or showing kindness to a friend, can be offered to God as penance.

"Do I have to?" When you ask your child to do something he doesn't have to do and may not enjoy, remind him that it can be offered as penance. Visiting elderly relatives, playing patiently with younger siblings, doing homework without reminders are sacrifices that can be offered as penance.

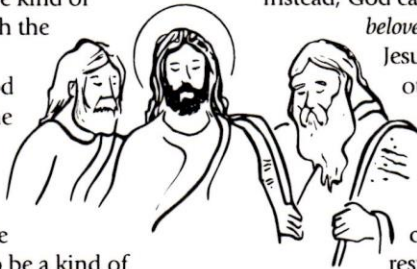


Scripture LESSON

Mark 9:2-10, Transformation, not restoration

Ancient Jews imagined that the Messiah would free Israel to be the kind of people it already was with the religion and structure it already had. After all, God had set Moses aside as the lawgiver and liberator, and Elijah was the first great prophet to foretell the coming of Christ. The Messiah was predicted to be a kind of repairman to restore it all.

So, when Jesus was transfigured with Moses and Elijah, the apostles figured God was revealing Him as the expected Messiah. Peter thought he was complimenting Jesus by offering to build tents for each of them, putting Jesus on



the same level as Moses and Elijah. Instead, God called Jesus, "my beloved Son," exalting Jesus above every other human hero.

What can a parent do? Jesus' apostles thought He had come simply to restore Israel, but

Jesus came to transform us and give us new life. The Transfiguration was to prepare Jesus' followers for a surprising truth: He would accomplish this victory by dying on the Cross and rising from the dead, thus conquering death itself.

Feasts & Celebrations

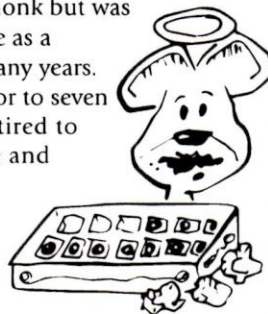
February 2 – The Presentation of the Lord. In accordance with the Law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple forty days after His birth, and Simeon praised God for revealing the long-awaited Savior.

February 2 – St. Catherine of Ricci (1590). Against her father's wishes, St. Catherine gave up her wealthy life and joined the Dominicans when she was twelve. She received visions of the Lord's Passion, which she experienced every Friday.

February 14 – Ash Wednesday. The

first day of Lent. Ashes of old palms are placed on the forehead, as a sign of penance. It's also a day of abstinence from meat and fasting – one regular meal and two small meals that together don't equal a full meal.

February 21 – St. Peter Damian (1072). St. Peter Damian became a disciplined monk but was called to serve as a bishop for many years. He was advisor to seven popes. He retired to monastic life and died in the care of his brother monks.



Parent TALK

I had stopped praying. My father had a heart attack last summer and I was helping Mom care for him while working and caring for my own family. Then my father-in-law was diagnosed with lung cancer and needed care. Finally, Ken lost his job for the second time in three years and we had used up our savings the first time. Obviously God wasn't listening.

A few nights later I overheard our ten-year old saying her prayers asking God for help. She ended with, "Thanks for listening. Amen." Then she went to sleep. Standing outside her room, I realized Kara didn't tell God what to do. She asked for help, trusted that it would come, and left it to God.

I prayed for the first time in weeks and ended with, "Thanks for listening. Amen." I realized God is always listening. I was the one who had stopped talking.

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