

Sunday, Jan 03, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Bless this new year of grace

Some things are worth taking the time to do. After enduring the manifold burdens of this past year, few of us will need persuading that the annual Epiphany Blessing of the Home is a ritual worth investing in. Gather your housemates if living with others. Download a home blessing ritual or create one yourself, using symbols especially meaningful to your participants. Which household items became especially significant during the pandemic and call for a special blessing? A cloth mask, a bar of soap, and Netflix may be featured as items of peculiar yet holy purpose in this year's rites everywhere.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12 (20). *"Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come."*

Monday, Jan 04, 2021

MEMORIAL OF SAINT ELIZABETH ANN SETON, RELIGIOUS

Preserve the legacy

Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first U.S.-born saint, started the country's first Catholic girls' school in Maryland, where she also founded the first American women's religious community, the Sisters of Charity. All those "firsts" multiplied into an incredible legacy of parochial education and religious life benefiting women that ripples to today. At Seton's beatification, Pope John XXIII said, "she sowed a seed in America which by Divine Grace grew into a tree." Perhaps you yourself are a beneficiary of her legacy. In the words of Pope Paul VI at her canonization, "Rejoice for your glorious daughter. Be proud of her. And know how to preserve her fruitful heritage."

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 3:22—4:6; Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25 (212). *"He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom."*

Tuesday, Jan 05, 2021

MEMORIAL OF JOHN NEUMANN, BISHOP

Parishes for the people

What would U.S. parishes look like without John Neumann, the first naturalized U.S. citizen and bishop who was canonized? As a seminarian in his native Bohemia, John cherished Saint Paul's missionary epistles from the Bible and longed to serve the United States as a missionary. His wish was granted. After John's 1835 ordination he began to set up parishes and a network of parochial schools in New York. He served Germans and Native Americans and also learned Gaelic and Italian to better serve parishioners in Baltimore and Philadelphia. He introduced the Forty Hours devotion and set up parish missions for Lent. Ask John to pray for your parish today.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 4:7-10; Mark 6:34-44 (213). *"They were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things."*

Wednesday, Jan 06, 2021

MEMORIAL OF ANDRÉ BESSETTE, RELIGIOUS

Open the door to new life

So many have said that 2020 was a year of unprecedented challenges, marked by a pandemic that has taken lives and so much more, and a national election that challenged the U.S. belief in a united nation with liberty and justice for all. Though a new year is only the turn of a calendar page, it allows and encourages

new life, new perspective, new hope, and new energy. Let the life of the gentle and humble Saint André Bessette—who spent many years as a doorman for his monastic community—be our inspiration. May compassion and love of neighbor guide us into this new year.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 4:11-18; Mark 6:45-52 (214). *"If God so loved us, we also must love one another."*

Thursday, Jan 07, 2021

CHRISTMAS WEEKDAY

And now for an announcement . . .

Even in an age when people are bombarded with messages, announcements can have particular cachet. They appear over and over in the gospels, from angels announcing Christ's birth to Jesus' announcement in today's gospel that he came to fulfill the words of Isaiah. The church continues to make plenty of announcements, from the calendar items announced at Mass to "announcements" in the form of pastoral letters and encyclicals about how to live contemporary Christian life. You probably announced your faith in a formal way at your Confirmation. How can you "announce" Christ today through your words and actions?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 4:19—5:4; Luke 4:14-22a (215). *"He said to them, 'Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.'"*

Friday, Jan 08, 2021

Out of stillness, creation

As the Christmas season draws to a close, some treasure its highlights, others dread the January "blahs," and all of us could do well to follow Jesus' model in the gospel. After he cures a leper, the crowds and the demands on him increase. Many of us would plough into the need, then the adulation. Instead, he withdraws and retreats. This wintry season offers a time to withdraw and reflect. Think, for example, of the solitude necessary to create the kind of sacred art that Giotto was known for. He died on this day in 1337, so perhaps you can bring him to mind as you channel your own inner artist in the winter stillness. Create something new today!

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 5:5-13; Luke 5:12-16 (216). *"But he would withdraw to deserted places to pray."*

Saturday, Jan 09, 2021

CHRISTMAS WEEKDAY

Make space for Christ

This is the final day of the Christmas season. But it's always Christmas, every day of the year. Christ comes in our humanity, born into our human flesh. We are always united with Christ in a communion of divinity and humanity, realized in Jesus, shared with us. We celebrate that communion in the central act of our worship: We eat and drink the Real Presence of Christ in us. But like John the Baptist proclaims in today's gospel, that presence of Christ must increase in us as our own egos decrease. This is the way to fulfillment. Let Christ lead you today.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 5:14-21; John 3:22-30 (217). *"He must increase; I must decrease."*

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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