

Sunday, Jan 07, 2018

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Bless this threshold

Think of everything that goes on in your home. Whether you live in a studio or on an estate, home is where the action is. Meals eaten, laundry folded, conversations shared, faults confessed, injuries forgiven, promises made, dreams spoken out loud, victories celebrated, defeats laid to rest, births welcomed, wanderers embraced, sickness tended, disappointments endured, deaths grieved—these are the many elements by which the vitality of our homes is measured. Doesn't a space this important deserve a New Year's blessing? Celebrate a ritual for these rooms where love puts down its roots.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12 (20). *"Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance."*

Monday, Jan 08, 2018

FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Be prepared

Moments of great insight and personal revelation, such as the experience Jesus had when he emerged from the waters after John baptized him, are a gift from God. But the ground is ours to prepare. It is doubtful that Jesus arrived at this moment of his life, which marked the beginning of his public ministry, without having spent a good deal of time in prayer and quiet reflection. We can do the same. Working with the limitations of time and the circumstances of your life, create a time and space every day for prayer and quiet contemplation or meditation. Many people make it the first thing in their day. That way it doesn't get lost. Prepare the ground, so that when the Spirit "descends like a dove" with a revelation for you, it will find a solid place to perch.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 or 55:1-11; Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38 or 1 John 5:1-9; Mark 1:7-11 (21). *"One mightier than I is coming after me."*

Tuesday, Jan 09, 2018

FIRST WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

What possessed you?

It's worthy to note that the "unclean spirits" in the gospel stories speak in the plural: "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?" Why is that? The "possessed" person is one who has lost his center, whose soul is divided, split and without grounding or foundation in the "Holy One of God." He is dominated by one voice, then by another. No wonder he speaks in the plural. Today, we might take a moment to ask ourselves, *What is my center? From where do my thoughts and actions flow?* Then make any necessary adjustments.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 1:9-20 or 1:1-8; Mark 1:21-28 or 1:14-20 (306 or 305). *"The man with the unclean spirit cried out, 'I know who you are, the Holy One of God!'"*

Wednesday, Jan 10, 2018

Healer, heal thyself

You may have heard the expression "wounded healer." It suggests that you don't have to be perfectly healthy to help others. But you have to be careful not to bring your unresolved problems into helping relationships with others, or you could do a lot of damage. Scripture makes it clear that taking care of your personal spiritual health should come first. Peter's mother-in-law

took to her bed when she was ill and only served the apostles after Jesus healed her. You can give of yourself only if you have something to give. Think about some ways you can improve your spiritual health—by doing some spiritual reading, praying more, seeking the sacrament of Reconciliation, or going on a retreat.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 3:1-10, 19-20; Mark 1:29-39 (307).

"Jesus took her by the hand and lifted her up. The fever left her, and she began to serve them."

Thursday, Jan 11, 2018

Take in the outcast

In the gospel era, lepers were considered rejects of society. According to the law of Moses, they had to announce their presence to everybody within earshot so they could be avoided. Yet, with a simple choice, a word, and a gesture, Jesus restored a leper to health so he could be around others without being afraid. How many people will we encounter today who, by their appearance or their language, will announce their rejection by society? Part of doing God's will is choosing to welcome the stranger and include those whom society rejects into our lives.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 4:1-11; Mark 1:40-45 (308). *"A leper knelt before Jesus and said to him, 'If you choose, you can make me clean.'"*

Friday, Jan 12, 2018

Stick with the basics

The Gospel of Mark is the story of Jesus told in simple language for simple folk, without big words or extra commentary. But even without embellishment, extraordinary things happen—friendship so phenomenal that a paralytic makes an unlikely grand entrance followed by a more dramatic exit. It's plain to see Jesus works wonders, not just forgiving unforgivable sins but proving his right to do so by giving the paralyzed power to walk. If we're paralyzed today, it's because we've made life more muddled than Mark, wrapped up in rationalizations and fancy phrases when all we really need is "Jesus saves."

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 8:4-7; Mark 2:1-12 (309). *"They removed the roof above Jesus, and let down the mat on which the paralytic lay."*

Saturday, Jan 13, 2018

MEMORIAL OF HILARY, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Make the ask

Saint Hilary of Poitiers (d. 368), a midlife convert, felt great passion for the Christian concept of God—the Trinity—and fought hard against the Arians, who denied the divinity of Christ. For Hilary, Jesus wasn't simply a holy person; Jesus was the Christ, the second person of the Trinity. Therefore, Hilary argued, it is through Jesus that we find our way to God's grace: "We have been promised, and he who made the promise is trustworthy: 'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.'" No matter what you've done or failed to do, your sins will be forgiven, if you just ask.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1a; Mark 2:13-17 (310). *"All the crowd came to him and he taught them."*

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



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