



SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 2016 SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD
Bless our home

We Catholics are great believers in the sanctity of time, person, and place. We honor special feasts, declare some glorious souls as saints, and worship in holy space. We even bury our dead in consecrated earth. Today we observe the annual Blessing of the Home—surely among the most significant spaces in our lives. Gather some objects that symbolize the holiness of home: a kitchen dish, a souvenir from a shared vacation, a family heirloom. Offer personal prayers to bless your home and each of its members for the year ahead.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12 (20)*. "Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you."

MONDAY, JANUARY 4 FEAST OF ELIZABETH ANN SETON, RELIGIOUS
Surf the transitions!

Imagine being born to one identity, only to lose it to compelling forces. Elizabeth Bayley was born in New York a citizen of the British Empire. Yet shortly thereafter, the Revolutionary War reorganized her family's loyalties toward a new realm. In a similar way, her devotion to the Church of England was tested after her husband's death on the shores of Italy. Wandering through Italy's Catholic churches, Elizabeth Bayley Seton was magnetically attracted to the beauty of the Eucharist. Catholicism became her destiny. Be fearless in seasons of transition.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 3:22-4:6; Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25 (212)*. "Beloved, do not trust every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God."

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5 FEAST OF JOHN NEUMANN, BISHOP
Power for the people!

Power often corrupts. So we watch politicians rise and fall, and religious leaders are not exempt from the temptations of unchallenged authority. Count Bishop John Neumann among the good leaders. Small in stature, he was large in courage and conviction. Mid-19th-century European immigrants in America were in need of spiritual leaders, and Neumann answered the call with zeal, being willing to walk 15 miles through rugged territory to confirm a single child. He collaborated with religious sisters and lay leaders to serve his sprawling Philadelphia diocese. Whatever authority you have, put it at the service of the common good.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 4:7-10; Mark 6:34-44 (213)*. "When Jesus saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them."

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6 FEAST OF ANDRÉ BESSETTE, RELIGIOUS
Don't let narrow-mindedness limit your vision

An epidemic breaks out, a religious brother volunteers to attend the sick, and amazingly, no one he attends dies. People flock to his monastery where his prayers bring comfort and relief to multitudes. He takes no credit and attributes all the healing to Saint Joseph. What's not to like about the story of Saint André Bessette of Quebec? Yet people complained: Some believed he was a charlatan, others objected that "diseased" people put those at the monastery and its school "at risk." Not-in-my-backyard thinking can crop up in the holiest of situations, where people in great suffering are finding relief. Reason to pause the next time you are ready to complain about something that affects your comfort zone.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 4:11-18; Mark 6:45-52 (214)*. "He saw that they were tossed about while rowing, for the wind was against them."

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7 CHRISTMAS WEEKDAY
Celebrate the un-holidays

In the Walt Disney animation of *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice stumbles upon a party where everyone's singing "A very merry un-birthday to you!" Wouldn't it be great to celebrate your birthday every day without getting older? Well, perhaps we can call this time an "un-Christmas"—not the big day anymore, but the effect of the Incarnation continues to unfold in you. Its significance can't be grasped in just a day. And Christmas Day is only the *beginning* of the season, *not* the conclusion. Let its mystery seep into your soul and move you to see Christ in others. Without tinsel or Santa, can you make a little Christmas happen for someone today?

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 4:19-5:4; Luke 4:14-22a (215)*. "He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all."

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8 CHRISTMAS WEEKDAY
Theology on tap

Water is a precious resource. It can be easy to forget the scarcity of clean water when every tap in our society flows freely. Yet, 750 million people lack access to clean water. That's well over twice the population of the United States. Water gives and helps sustain life, it cleanses and purifies as well. It was central to Jesus' ministry and is central to the ministry of the church. Without it, what would Baptism look like? Today, remember the new life given in the waters of Baptism and help conserve water so that others might simply live.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 5:5-13; Luke 5:12-16 (216)*. "This is the one who came through water and Blood, Jesus Christ."

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9 CHRISTMAS WEEKDAY
Live outside the box

There's a popular saying going around on social media these days: "Life begins where your comfort zone ends." If anyone lived that adage, it was John the Baptist, and he challenged everyone to do the same. Even the very place where John conducted most of his ministry and baptized Christ—on the Jordan side of the Jordan River—is an unpleasant spot: hot, dusty, full of flies. In the New Testament, Jordan was called Peraea, which means simply the "land beyond." John was willing to go the distance for his mission. Are you?

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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