

Sunday, Jan 06, 2019

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

We bow to a higher authority

From the first moment of his papacy, Pope Francis impressed the world with his humility. The newly minted pope bowed his head and invited us, the church, to bless him. How rare it is for leaders on the world stage to approach their role with humility and reverence! The typical response to the bestowal of power is a rising spirit of arrogance and aggression. We observe the contrast between the Magi who prostrate themselves before an infant, while King Herod snarls and plots violence with his yes-men. How do we wield the authority we hold in our hands?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12 (20). *"They prostrated themselves and did him homage."*

Monday, Jan 07, 2019

MEMORIAL OF RAYMOND OF PEÑAFORT, PRIEST

And for your penance . . .

What if you went to Confession and for your penance the priest assigned you a book to write? This actually happened to Raymond of Peñafort (1175-1275), who felt that his life as a university teacher had been too soft and easy. When he asked his Dominican superiors to give him a harsh penance in retribution, they asked for a book to guide confessors. Later, in the "creative confessions" department, Raymond found himself the pope's own confessor. He assigned the pope the penance of swiftly hearing and expediting all petitions of the poor! Be creative in repenting, and be sure to do it whenever needed (more often than we like to admit).

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 3:22—4:6; Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25 (212). *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."*

Tuesday, Jan 08, 2019

CHRISTMAS WEEKDAY

See God and love

No one, scripture says, has seen God and lived. But of course scripture also tells of numerous encounters with God in which someone came away without being reduced to a pair of smoking sandals. Today it's not impossible to see God either: in other people, who are made in the image and likeness of God and carry God's spirit in them like a temple, to use Saint Paul's metaphor; in the sacraments, which make God present in a special way, especially in the Eucharist; in prayer, where we give expression to our relationship to God. Perhaps the most powerful way to pick up on the presence of God, though, is through love—in particular the kind of self-giving love that God has for creation, that Jesus has for the world. Where there is that kind of love, there God is.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 4:7-10; Mark 6:34-44 (213). *"Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."*

Wednesday, Jan 09, 2019

CHRISTMAS WEEKDAY

Walk on

The disciples were terrified at the sight of Jesus walking on water. Indeed, God's power as evidenced in Jesus' miracles may seem terrifying, perhaps because the display of mastery over the forces of nature reminds us of our own limitations. None of us would last a minute trying to walk on water—but is that because of our physical limitations or because of our faith limitations? In the

gospel story, Peter actually does manage to take a few steps across the water toward Jesus, until he focuses on his own fears instead of Jesus' invitation. Bad move for Peter—and for us.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 4:11-18; Mark 6:45-52 (214). *"But immediately Jesus spoke to them, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'"*

Thursday, Jan 10, 2019

CHRISTMAS WEEKDAY

Keep your Christmas present

You remember Christmas—"May your days be merry and bright" and all that? Often we think of "getting through the holidays" rather than savoring, like fine wine, the implications of "God with us." What Christmas celebrates is nothing less than the most radical moment in human history: the leap from the divine to the human, piercing the veil, God taking root in skin and bone and changing our destiny forever. The lights may be packed away, the gifts exchanged, but that's the small stuff. How have I been changed by these days?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 4:19—5:4; Luke 4:14-22a (215). *"News of him spread throughout the whole region."*

Friday, Jan 11, 2019

CHRISTMAS WEEKDAY

Count on God's mercy

Can any of us doubt that Jesus would choose the welfare of suffering people who come to him? Still, we often pray—and live—as if we doubt that God has our best intentions at heart. God's mercy is so clear and tangible, at the crèche and at the cross! If we ever find ourselves wondering if God really cares about the likes of us, we might bow and contemplate Jesus in the straw or nailed to wood.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 5:5-13; Luke 5:12-16 (216). *"The leper bowed and begged Jesus, 'Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.'"*

Saturday, Jan 12, 2019

CHRISTMAS WEEKDAY

Back to the future

The month of January is named after Janus, the Roman god of portals and doorways, of endings and beginnings. He is traditionally pictured with two faces: one looking back to the past, the other forward to the future. Tomorrow we celebrate the Baptism of the Jesus, which marks the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of ordinary time. That means today is a good day to look back over the Christmas season now ending and ask ourselves: What were some of the highs and lows? What could I do differently next year? Then look forward into the future: What must I let go of to embrace more fully the present moment? How do I want to live?

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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