



SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 2017

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Home is where the sacred is

Sometimes it seems we're much more comfortable with the divine Jesus: solemn, distant, "up there." However, he dwells "down here" in our midst as well. *Epiphany*, the showing forth of Jesus on earth, is a kind of second Christmas, a celebration that God became a human being, just like us. The manifestation of God-with-us is a blessing on our world, and on our humanity, which raises our life in the flesh to something profoundly holy. Traditionally, it's a time to bless the home, to remind ourselves that our earthly home is a sacred place—and that our heavenly home also awaits.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12 (20)*. "We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage."

MONDAY, JANUARY 9 FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Beyond our grasp

Did Jesus "need" to be baptized? Not for the removal of the effects of original sin. But Jesus took every means available to reveal the way to salvation. And so he went before us into the river Jordan and up the road to Calvary to show us that the way to life is not to avoid death, but to pass through death to life everlasting. Baptism is a doorway that welcomes us into that mystery. Theologian Karl Rahner said, "Some things are known not by grasping them, but by being grasped." Let the mystery of Baptism grasp you. You will never be the same.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7; Acts 10:34-38; Matthew 3:13-17 (21)*. "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?"

TUESDAY, JANUARY 10 FIRST WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

Turn down the lights and plant a tree

The tree may have been on the curb a week ago. But the Christmas season officially ended yesterday. The church's season of "Ordinary Time" now begins, but it doesn't have to be business as usual. Along with New Year's pledges to diet and exercise, why not slim down your carbon footprint too? In the United States, today it's [National Cut Your Energy Costs Day](#). It's not just about saving money but also about saving the earth in little ways: Change the furnace filter. Take shorter showers. Insulate leaky sills. Turn off lights in other rooms. Carpool. Love Creation, glorify its Maker.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hebrews 2:5-12; Mark 1:21-28 (306)*. "You crowned him with glory and honor, subjecting all things under his feet."



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

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11

Listen with authority

Where does authority come from? Good teachers and managers know that authority isn't acquired merely by gaining a title. It has to be earned. "Because I said so!" may occasionally be a necessary fallback position for managers and harried parents, but it reveals a failure of authority rather than the expression of it. True authority flows from an authentic relationship with God. That's why Jesus was able to speak so persuasively that he cast out demons and, perhaps even more miraculously, reached people whose hearts were hardened. Humble prayer and honest listening to God are ways we can increase our own authority—at home, at work, and in the community.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hebrews 2:14-18; Mark 1:29-39 (307)*. "Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed."

THURSDAY, JANUARY 12

FEAST OF MARGUERITE BOURGEOYS, MISSIONARY, RELIGIOUS FOUNDER

Set out on your voyage of faith

Prompted by a call to live in service to God, young Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620-1700), foundress of the Congregation of Notre Dame, was teaching poor children in France when she heard of the foundation of Ville Marie (later to become Montreal). She decided to travel across the sea to establish schools and teach French and native children. She is recognized as one of three cofounders of Montreal and was called "mother of the colony." Like Jesus, Marguerite had numerous responsibilities and challenges in her ministry, but she persevered. Let the example of Jesus' and Marguerite's missionary zeal inspire you to go out of your way to be a healing presence for someone today.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hebrews 3:7-14; Mark 1:40-45 (308)*. "If you wish, you can make me clean."

FRIDAY, JANUARY 13

A flesh and blood God

A lot of things get passed off as "God's will" for us—most of them are realities over which we have no power. "Acts of God" like hurricanes and tornadoes get lumped into this category, as well as famine, disease, and misfortune. Would God really bring disaster upon us to wake us up, punish the wicked, or call us to account? In some ancient Hebrew stories, God does seem to act sometimes like the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain, pulling levers and manipulating events to some divine purpose. But in Jesus, God's will is made manifest in the flesh. God chooses to heal, to forgive, and to save.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hebrews 4:1-5, 11; Mark 2:1-12 (309)*. "They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'"

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14

Reconcile yourself

Many of us these days aren't quite sure how sin is a problem. We now understand the source of much of our behavior lies buried in past events and hidden impulses. The downside of this awareness, however, has been a greater difficulty for many to take personal responsibility for our actions. Forgiveness is the way God opens the path of goodness after our own choices have blocked it. In the sacrament of Reconciliation we learn to acknowledge the damage we do and seek to transform it through the power of God's mercy and grace. Consider visiting a church Reconciliation room near you!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Hebrews 4:12-16; Mark 2:13-17 (310)*. "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."