

Sunday, Feb 02, 2020

FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

Family histories

Life can change in a heartbeat. A newborn is presented for an inconspicuous customary blessing. Then destiny grips his family with a startling prophetic utterance. The holy purpose of families stirs to life in our commemoration of this story, as we ponder the mission of our own families. How do we share our gifts and hospitality? How do we exemplify the love that binds us? Today the U.S. Catholic community especially observes a National Day of Prayer for the African American Family, with its unique challenges and special witness within our national story. Listen: The prophets are still whispering.

TODAY'S READINGS: Malachi 3:1-4; Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 2:22-40 (524). *"Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many."*

Monday, Feb 03, 2020

MEMORIAL OF BLAISE, BISHOP, MARTYR

Be a healing presence

During this time of year, lots of us worry about coughs and colds. Well, we Catholics have a saint for that: Saint Blaise, the patron of throat ailments. Many churches offer special blessings of the throat on this day. Blaise was a healer of bodily and spiritual ailments. When he retreated to a cave to pray, people continued to seek him to be made well. He even healed sick animals who came to him. Are you the kind of person others turn to for caring? How can you help make others whole?

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Samuel 15:13-14, 30; 16:5-13; Mark 5:1-20 (323). *"They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

Tuesday, Feb 04, 2020

Illness escapes easy answers

Today's gospel has dramatic stories of healing: Jairus' daughter is at death's door until Jesus works a miracle. And a woman with a hemorrhage finds respite through Christ. Despite the many times Jesus cured the sick, our faith doesn't simply teach "illness bad, Jesus good." It has a nuanced view of bad health. Illness is "among the gravest problems confronted in human life," states the Catechism; it can lead to "anguish and self-absorption." But illness can also be a path toward maturity, compassion, and gratitude, the Catechism continues. Take a moment today to meditate on how illness—your own and others—impacts your faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Samuel 18:9-10, 14b, 24-25a, 30—19:3; Mark 5:21-43 (324). *"He took the child by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha kum,' which means, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise!'"*

Wednesday, Feb 05, 2020

MEMORIAL OF AGATHA, VIRGIN, MARTYR

Noble is as noble does

What is it about Saint Agatha, born in Sicily in 235, that she is one of only seven women named in the Canon of the Mass? Could it be her work as a deaconess? Was it the brutal torture she endured at the hand of Roman prefect Quintian? Was it her miraculous intervention to save a city from destruction by a volcano? The answer is likely in this exchange from *The Acts of the Martyrdom of Saint Agatha*: "What is your condition?" asks Quintian. Agatha responds, "Not only was I born free, but of noble family." Quintian: "If you claim to be free and noble, why do you show yourself to live and dress like a slave?" "Because I am a servant of Christ,"

Agatha says. Remember the freedom that comes with a commitment to love.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Samuel 24:2, 9-17; Mark 6:1-6 (325). *"Many who heard him were astonished."*

Thursday, Feb 06, 2020

MEMORIAL OF PAUL MIKI, PRIEST, MARTYR, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

Learn forgiveness from a role model

We associate the city of Nagasaki, Japan with August 9, 1945 when the United States dropped the second (and last) atomic bomb used in World War II. But nearly 350 years earlier, in 1597, Paul Miki and 25 other Catholics, lay and clergy, children and adults, were martyred for their faith on a hill, now called Holy Mountain, overlooking Nagasaki. Miki used his last moments of life to forgive his executioners: "After Christ's example I forgive my persecutors," he is reported to have said. "I do not hate them. I ask God to have pity on all, and I hope my blood will fall on my fellow men as a fruitful rain." Seek a moment today, and every day, to practice forgiveness in your own life.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-12; Mark 6:7-13 (326). *"He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick."*

Friday, Feb 07, 2020

Street-level charity

While Jeanne Marie Rendu is hardly a household name, most people know of the squalid conditions in 19th-century France described in Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* that compelled Jeanne Marie to act. Taking the religious name Rosalie when she entered the Daughters of Charity, she served the poor in disease-infested, overcrowded Paris and also guided leaders, thinkers, and social activists in her home, including Frederic Ozanam, with whom she later co-founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. She paid attention to the suffering around her and continually asked for God's intervention. "Never have I prayed so well as in the streets," she said. Her advice to her sisters more than 150 years ago still applies today as we encounter the poor among us: "Remember, Our Lord hides behind those rags."

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 47:2-11; Mark 6:14-29 (327). *"[Herod] was very much perplexed, yet he liked to listen to [John the Baptist]."*

Saturday, Feb 08, 2020

MEMORIAL OF JOSEPHINE BAKHITA

Finding grace to overcome

A child of loving Sudanese parents who was kidnapped by Arab slave traders when she was 7, Josephine Bakhita (1869-1947) knew the trauma of loss of family, compounded by 12 years of slavery where she was bought and sold like a commodity. When a master took her to Italy and temporarily left her with the Canossian Daughters of Charity, Josephine found a home that—with the sisters' assistance—she never had to leave. She joined the community and for 42 years served as a cook and doorkeeper known for her gentle and charismatic presence. This amazing woman, whose body bore slavery's scars of 114 lashes, found it possible to proclaim, "The Lord has loved me so much: We must love everyone . . . we must be compassionate!" Practice compassion as best you can today.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Kings 3:4-13; Mark 6:30-34 (328). *"Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while."*

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



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