



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

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 2012

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD

Make a free and fresh beginning

Turning a new page on the calendar always invites a fresh perspective—even more so when it's a brand new calendar! So lose your chains. You're invited today to let go of the old year, both "what we have done" and "what we have failed to do." Time to give and receive pardon for offenses. Time to craft resolutions and adopt new habits. Time to become people of justice and peace. On this eighth and final day of Christmas, accept the gift of your true identity: a free child of God, heir to a land of relentless hope.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21 (18)*

"You are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God."

MONDAY, JANUARY 2 FEAST OF BASIL THE GREAT AND GREGORY NAZIANZEN, BISHOPS, DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

There is strength in numbers

After finishing his education, Saint Basil went on a tour of the desert dwelling places of the first Christian hermits. While he admired their holiness, it seemed like a good idea to him for such people to have a common life together, sharing work, study, and prayer in obedience to a superior. So when he was done with his trip, he and his friend Saint Gregory began what was one of the first monastic communities. Basil recognized long ago that two—or more—Christians can do more than one. Your local church community offers many ways to participate in the living Body of Christ.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 2:22-28; John 1:19-28 (205)*

"Now, children, remain in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence."

TUESDAY, JANUARY 3 FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS

What's in a name?

How you talk about someone by name shows the regard—or lack of it—you have for them. God gave the Israelites the commandment: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." Honoring the name of God, though, means more than not using it casually. It also involves showing respect for whom the name represents. That there is a feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus should come as no surprise. Devotion to Jesus' name goes back many centuries, and the Franciscan saints Bernardine of Siena and John of Capistrano helped to make it popular. Honoring the name honors Jesus the person and his presence in your everyday life.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 2:29; John 1:29-34 (206)*

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4

FEAST OF ELIZABETH ANN SETON, RELIGIOUS

How religious men and women speak God's language

Within Catholic life there are many ways to serve and dedicate one's life to God. Some choose a commitment like marriage. Entering a community as a religious sister or brother, a monk or nun is another way. From the sixth-century monastic Saint Benedict in Italy to Mother Seton, who founded the first congregation of religious sisters in the United States, religious communities have striven to "signify the very charity of God in the

language of our time" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 926). That can mean educating young people, sheltering the homeless, presenting gospel values in corporate boardrooms, or caring for persons with AIDS. What are the religious communities in your neighborhood up to?

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 3:7-10; John 1:35-42 (207)*
"Jesus said to them, 'Come, and you will see.'"

THURSDAY, JANUARY 5 FEAST OF JOHN NEUMANN, BISHOP

Stewardship makes for a seasoned leader

There's a time to build and a time to tear down, the Book of Ecclesiastes says. Bishop John Neumann led the diocese of Philadelphia in the 1850s, a time of explosive growth in the immigrant Catholic population in the U.S. Under his leadership the number of Catholic schools increased from 1 to 200 and on average a new parish opened every month! We live in another era, one in which Catholic schools and parishes are being consolidated, closed, or otherwise changed in many parts of the nation. Each age calls for different gifts but good stewardship is never out of season. Pray that church leaders will be good and faithful stewards of the great legacy entrusted to their care.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 3:11-21; John 1:43-51 (208)*
"You will see greater things than this."

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6 FEAST OF ANDRÉ BESSETTE, RELIGIOUS

Passionate about the Passion

The 20th-century French-Canadian Holy Cross brother André Bessette spent much of his life counseling troubled people. He also had a special devotion to the Passion of Jesus, and when confronted with those who had crises of faith or serious shortcomings in their Christian life, he would deliver lengthy and emotional retellings of the Passion story. "Rarely," wrote one of his Holy Cross brothers, "could a sinner resist the authority of the frail old man who, with tears in his eyes, talked about the Passion of the Lord." Let the story of how Jesus so loved the world that he was willing to give his life for it inspire your own love and sacrifices.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 5:5-13; Mark 1:7-11 or Luke 23-38 (209)*

"This is the one who came through water and Blood, Jesus Christ, not by water alone, but by water and Blood."

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7 FEAST OF RAYMOND OF PENYAFORT, PRIEST

Live with one foot in the future

When Raymond of Penyafort (1175-1275) was born, the average life expectancy was around 35 years. Hence, when Raymond joined the Dominicans at age 47, he might reasonably have expected to have only a few more years to live. Instead, he lived to be 100! We don't know how long we have on earth, so we must make the most of every day. That includes preparing for the future. "If you do not make plans, you leave the future an empty field of chance . . . forfeit to your own unpredictable moods," cautions author Robert Grudin in *Time and the Art of Living*. He continues: "The future will do much for us, [but] we must do much for it." What will you do today to prepare for your future?

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 5:14-21; John 2:1-11 (21)*

"My hour has not yet come."

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