



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

## SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 2012

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

### One who is for all

The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord gets easily swamped by the song “We Three Kings” and the typical crèche scene that includes three royally robed monarchs. While scripture specifies three gifts, though, it does not specify as many persons. Nor are they kings; nor are they necessarily all men. The key, of course, is the actual name of the feast: *Epiphany*—a sudden burst of understanding, a revelation, a light. But even that is not enough. The light who is Christ is called a “light to the nations,” which in Bible-speak means “all the world.” The new translation of the Mass proclaims Jesus’ salvation “for many” rather than “for all,” as we used to say. Words matter, but the point is to celebrate the absolute and pure light that dawns upon all the world in the Incarnation of Christ.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 6-5; Matthew 2:1-12 (20)*

*“Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come.”*

## MONDAY, JANUARY 9 FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD;

NATIONAL VOCATION AWARENESS WEEK BEGINS

### The start of something big

John the Baptist preached a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. When Jesus presented himself for baptism, the stakes got higher: He saw the heavens open and heard a voice proclaim him the beloved Son of God. His public ministry began immediately afterward. The sacrament of Baptism also calls the followers of Christ to something big: repentance and service. Today begins National Vocation Awareness Week, a time to think about how you will live out your call to greatness—in your chosen vocation or in the vocation you are still contemplating. By your baptism you were anointed with the Holy Spirit, which gives you the power to act with justice and compassion.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 or 55:1-11; Acts 10:34-38 or 1 John 5:1-9; Mark 1:7-11 (21)*

*“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing.”*

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 10

### Ask an authority on the subject

Jesus astounded the people who met him along the way not only by the great deeds and signs that he performed and by what he taught—to love one’s enemies or forgive countless times. The amazement of the crowds was also due to the authority with which he spoke, not citing other rabbis or scholars but teaching from his own soul. In the church we often identify “authority” only with the teaching office, the Catechism, the decrees of popes, or the sense of the faithful. But the authority with which each baptized person testifies to Christ is also the authority, the authenticity, of his or her own life of faith, justice, and mercy.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Samuel 1:9-20; Mark 1:21-28 (306)*

*“The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.”*

## WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11

### Appearances aren’t always deceiving

You don’t have to look very hard into Catholic tradition to find stories of supernatural appearances of Jesus, the saints, and especially Mary to believers through the centuries. These kinds of occurrences really go back to biblical times. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit “appeared” in the form of a dove at Jesus’

baptism, Jesus himself appeared to his disciples after his Resurrection, and the risen Christ made a decisive personal intervention in the life of Saint Paul, to name a few examples. Officially the church treads lightly on the subject and does not require Catholics to believe in a particular apparition. Most of us will never have such an experience, but we can indeed learn to make ourselves aware of the presence and guidance of God.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Samuel 3:1-10, 19-20; Mark 1:29-39 (307)*

*“Speak, for your servant is listening.”*

## THURSDAY, JANUARY 12

### Everybody needs some healing

Some days it can be really tough to know and feel that God is with us. Though we believe God is there, it can sometimes feel as though we are miles away from God. Think about a time when you’ve been there; hardship, suffering, grief, and sickness can exacerbate that feeling, yet it is in these times when God draws especially close to us. The church honors such points in life with the Sacrament of Anointing. The sacrament is not only for people near death but for all in need of healing. It is a way in which you can acknowledge and place your pain and fear in the presence of a loving God and your community of faith. In what ways could you use a bit of anointing in your life?

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Samuel 4:1-11; Mark 1:40-45 (308)*

*“Woe to us! This has never happened before.”*

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 13

FEAST OF HILARY, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

### A both/and, not an either/or situation

While we might not remember much about the heresies that roiled the early church, in their day they were the subject of some hard-ball religious conflict. Why all the fuss? Because most of these false beliefs challenged the basic tenets of Christian faith, like the divinity of Jesus. If we believe in one God, some said, how can we also believe that both the Father and Jesus are God? Isn’t that two Gods? Saint Hilary, a church leader who defended the orthodox doctrine, wrote: “Whatever is in the Father is also in the Son; whatever is in the unbegotten is also in the only-begotten.” Have faith in a God who would be so gracious and loving as to take the form of a human being, Jesus.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Samuel 8:4-7, 10-22a; Mark 2:1-12 (309)*

*“Who but God alone can forgive sins?”*

## SATURDAY, JANUARY 14

### Righteousness tests should be left behind

Ever considered serving the church via a vocation to religious life only to conclude you couldn’t “measure up” to the challenge or that you somehow were not “worthy” of the calling? It is no accident that Vocation Awareness Week closes with a gospel passage in today’s Mass readings highlighting the fact that Jesus called to discipleship those whom his society and its religious leaders considered to be unworthy sinners and outcasts. The truth is, all are called to serve in some way. There is no test for righteousness you have to pass first. Rather than focus on your shortcomings, take some time to consider how your gifts, skills, and interests can serve humanity and the church.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Samuel 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1a; Mark 2:13-17 (310)*

*“Many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus and his disciples.”*

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