

Sunday, Jan 12, 2020

FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Farewell to the hidden life

Part of our life belongs to us in a private way. The rest is lived in the public eye at school, work, church, or in the community.

Even if you're not a celebrity, the private part of who you are is shrinking fast, as more of what we do becomes common knowledge and on the record. Jesus, too, had his hidden years, those first three decades we know little about. At his Baptism by John, heaven claimed him and put his identity on the record. His hidden days were over. After our Baptisms, our choices are on the record too.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7; Acts 10:34-38; Matthew 3:13-17 (21). *"I formed you, and set you as . . . a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind."*

Monday, Jan 13, 2020

MEMORIAL OF HILARY, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Let the truth be known

Much like our own times, in the early centuries of the church, many competing ideas circulated about what Christians should believe, including Arianism, which said that God the Father and God the Son were not one. But because of clear-thinking, Spirit-filled people like Saint Hilary, a bishop and later-named doctor of the church, truth prevailed. Truth seems to be taking quite a beating in our own time, so pray for guidance and wisdom and the intercession of Hilary—and like him, stand up for what you know to be true.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 1:1-8; Mark 1:14-20 (305). *"The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

Tuesday, Jan 14, 2020

Choose holiness

It's fun to see the kids dressed up as little red devils at Halloween or to scream with our friends at horror movies. Yet, it is difficult and painful to address the reality of evil in the world. How do we contend with this? Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et exultate (On the Call to Holiness in Today's World)* writes, "We should not think of the devil as a myth, a representation, a symbol, a figure of speech, or an idea. . . . The devil does not need to possess us. He poisons us with the venom of hatred, desolation, envy, and vice." Spend time with God and ask for help in examining your own heart, in rebuking that which is not of God, and in nurturing all that is of God.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 1:9-20; Mark 1:21-28 (306). *"Jesus commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him."*

Wednesday, Jan 15, 2020

Find the perfect word

Imagine having the eloquence and foresight that no word you spoke was without truth. That was God's gift to Samuel in the Old Testament and to many prophets that followed, including Saint Marcarius, whose feast day is today. Saint Marcarius was a fourth-century desert monk celebrated for his prophecies and healing powers. Finding the right words does not come easy for most of us. But if we allow ourselves to be guided by God's word,

we will learn to express ourselves in love—always the perfect response.

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

"Samuel grew up, and the LORD was with him, not permitting any word of his to be without effect."

Thursday, Jan 16, 2020

Close encounters

Leprosy was considered contagious at the time of Jesus.

Following the Mosaic Law, anybody who touched a leper would be banned from society. That's why Jesus encourages those he heals to keep quiet. But good news demands to be shared. The good word gets around. Encounters with the Lord are like that. You've just got to tell somebody! What's your encounter story?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 4:1-11; Mark 1:40-45 (308). *"He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly."*

Friday, Jan 17, 2020

MEMORIAL OF ANTHONY, ABBOT

Let's get our priorities right

How ironic that Saint Anthony of Egypt, a hermit who sought solitude in the desert, would attract the very crowds he was trying to escape. But attract he did—not just admirers who sought advice but disciples who wanted to attain Anthony's same degree of serene single-mindedness for the gospel. Thus some of the first monastic communities formed, teaching adherents to be solitary while also communal, requiring they eschew the trappings of "living in the world." The point of monastic spirituality, after all, is an intentional focus on God's reign rather than the passing preoccupations of the world. How will you seek the reign of God today—can you trust in God instead of the "ways of the world"?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 8:4-7, 10-22a; Mark 2:1-12 (309). *"It is not you they reject, they are rejecting me as their king."*

Saturday, Jan 18, 2020

May we all be one

Every year on this day Christians in the Northern Hemisphere officially begin the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity—an observance lasting eight days, strategically placed between two significant dates for the larger Christian Church. The week begins on the feast of the Confession of Saint Peter, on January 18, and concludes with the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul on January 25. Begun in 1908 as the Octave for Christian Unity—and heavily promoted by the Graymoor Franciscan Friars, as it still is today—the week promotes prayer to sustain the ecumenical spirit of the worldwide Christian Church. Consider some ways you can pray with and for those of other denominations who also love Christ. Embrace the words that Jesus prayed in John 17:21—that "they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You."

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1a; Mark 2:13-17 (310). *"There were many who followed him."*

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



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