

Sunday, Jun 24, 2018

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

Discovering the mystery of you

Each newborn child is a mystery about to unfold in the world. Always there is the potential for joy and pain, great good or tremendous misery. A good bit of what the child becomes is contained in the context of the family: its resources, stability, and capacity to nurture. Parents and children together become what they would never have been without the challenge and the privilege of their relationship. John might never have become the Baptist without Elizabeth and Zechariah. What parts of yourself do you owe to those who took that journey of trust with you?

TODAY'S READINGS: Day: Isaiah 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26; Luke 1:57-66, 80 (587). "All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, 'What, then, will this child be?'"

Monday, Jun 25, 2018

Judge not

It's a well-known part of Christian faith that you shouldn't judge (though of course that hasn't stopped many Christians from doing just that!). Most people understand the command not to judge others as a moral issue: Unless you've never done anything deserving of judgment, don't dole it out to others. But it's also a theological issue—about God. Judgment belongs to God, so not judging becomes a matter of faith: If you believe in and respect God, then don't judge.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 17:5-8, 13-15a, 18; Matthew 7:1-5 (371). "Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye."

Tuesday, Jun 26, 2018

Show yourself the door

During a tour of San Francesco Basilica in Assisi, Italy, a friar took a group of pilgrims through the upper and lower churches and to the crypt where Saint Francis and his companions were buried. Throughout the tour he talked about the life of Francis and the architecture, art, and history connected to him. At the end the friar brought the group back to the upper church and showed them the stunning frescoes attributed to Giotto illustrating scenes from scripture and Francis' life. As he guided the group to the exit he explained that on this wall was the most important scene yet: the door! The exit, he said, is a reminder to go through the doors and spread the Good News to the whole world.

Something to think about next time you exit a church!

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 19:9b-11, 14-21, 31-35a, 36; Matthew 7:6, 12-14 (372). "Enter through the narrow gate."

Wednesday, Jun 27, 2018

MEMORIAL OF CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

The mother of all role models

Bishop Cyril (c. 374-444) was a scholar and writer who promoted the use of the title *Theotokos* ("God-bearer") for Mary, the mother of Jesus. The Council of Ephesus in 431 approved the name, which is used to this day in the Eastern and Orthodox Catholic traditions. In the West, "Mother of God" is more common, but religious historian Jaroslav Pelikan offered a translation that comes closer to the original meaning: "The one who gives birth to the one who is God." However you choose to address the courageous woman who dared to say, "Thy will be

done," you honor her most by responding in the same way to God's invitation in your life.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 22:8-13; 23:1-3; Matthew 7:15-20 (373). "Every good tree bears good fruit."

Thursday, Jun 28, 2018

MEMORIAL OF IRENAEUS, BISHOP, MARTYR

Think before you act

The church calendar identifies the second-century saint Irenaeus as a "bishop and martyr." He was certainly a bishop (of Lyons in France), but his martyrdom may be more legendary. He is remembered primarily, though, not for his death but for what he did in life. His era was a time when Christian doctrine was a boiling cauldron of sometimes wildly conflicting ideas, and it was not clear what would rise to the top. As a theologian, Irenaeus' efforts to defend what was emerging as orthodox dogma made him one of the first people to think about Christianity systematically. Irenaeus teaches us that before we condemn a position we should seek to understand it.

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Kings 24:8-17; Matthew 7:21-29 (374). "The crowds were astonished at Jesus' teaching, for he taught them as one having authority."

Friday, Jun 29, 2018

SOLEMNITY OF PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES

Rock of ages

The *pallium* is an ancient liturgical vestment worn only by the pope and a very few other high church officials on whom the pope bestows it as a symbol of the jurisdiction delegated to them. In honor of Saints Peter and Paul, today is the day of the liturgical year on which these officials receive this symbol of their office. In its current form it is a narrow band of white lamb's wool from sheep raised by Trappist monks, looped and draped over other liturgical vestments. The pallium is a reminder of the serious duty placed on the shoulders of the highest church leaders. Pray today that they may fulfill their offices wisely, faithfully, and with compassion.

TODAY'S READINGS: Day: Acts 12:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18; Matthew 16:13-19 (591). "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."

Saturday, Jun 30, 2018

MEMORIAL OF THE FIRST MARTYRS OF THE CHURCH IN ROME

Don't fan the flames

In the summer of A.D. 64 a terrible fire swept through the city of Rome. Emperor Nero found himself both praised for his efforts to help the victims and also accused of setting the fire. To deflect the criticism, he blamed the city's Christian community, whom many Romans disliked already because they felt Christians set themselves apart from the rest of society. But Nero's move backfired, so to speak. The hideous executions he inflicted on Christians actually aroused the pity of many Romans. The victims continue to witness (*martyr* in Greek) both to the power of faith and to the dangers of prejudice and hate.

TODAY'S READINGS: Lamentations 2:2, 10-14, 18-19; Matthew 8:5-17 (376). "They faint away like the wounded in the streets of the city."

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



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