



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

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2012

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME;

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK BEGINS

Get a complete education

Catholic schools in the United States had a rough start. Partly in response to the religious bias (not to mention anti-Catholicism) in the public schools, the first Plenary Council of Baltimore (1852) mandated that every Catholic parish establish a school. The campaign was so successful that riots ensued, incited by groups such as the Know-Nothing Society, which was committed to eliminating “foreign influence, popery, Jesuitism, and Catholicism” in all aspects of American life. We have come a long way. This year’s theme for Catholic Schools Week, “Faith, Academics, Service,” highlights the three pillars of Catholic education. How can you promote these values?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Deuteronomy 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 7:32-35; Mark 1:21-28 (71)*

“A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you.”

MONDAY, JANUARY 30

Bring hurts to heal

The expression “inner demons” captures something of the helplessness that those in the grip of negative behaviors feel. The ancients took that phrase literally, believing that illness was due to divine punishment for sin or demons taking up temporary residence in a person. The remedy was to seek forgiveness or a healer who could rid you of the bad spirits. While most people nowadays don’t believe that sicknesses and personality problems come from evil spirits or God’s wrath, there is still the need for reaching out to others for help when you cannot help yourself. Medical and other professionals, counselors, family, friends, and especially Jesus the Healer in prayer provide that assistance.

TODAY’S READINGS: *2 Samuel 15:13-14, 30; 16:5-13; Mark 5:1-20 (323)*

“Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you.”

TUESDAY, JANUARY 31 FEAST OF JOHN BOSCO, PRIEST

Love and support your local child

Saint John Bosco was born in Italy in 1815 into a family of farm workers. He became a priest and a teacher, devoting his life to the care and education of abandoned and neglected children. His approach was considered novel at the time: He used love instead of the threat of punishment to shape the behavior of his students. John embraced the spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales and dedicated his work to him when he founded the Society of St. Francis de Sales (also known as the Salesians of Don Bosco). How can you support teachers and those who care for children? What are some ways you, in the spirit of John Bosco, can extend love, compassion, and respect to children, especially those most in need?

TODAY’S READINGS: *2 Samuel 18:9-10, 14b, 24-25a, 30-19:3; Mark 5:21-43 (324)*

“Jesus took the child by the hand and said to her, ‘Talitha koum,’ which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise!’”

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1

Drop everything

Would you ever consider stopping all you are doing and going in an entirely different direction? With obligations to family and jobs it’s unlikely you would suddenly turn your back on your responsibilities to pursue something else, but in a way that’s what the first apostles did. Their recognition of Jesus to be the savior

was immediate and their decision to literally drop everything was just as abrupt. They saw something so compelling and necessary for their lives that they had no hesitation in following him on the spot. You might not imitate their footloose example to the letter, but their actions do show how quick disciples of Jesus should be, whatever their situation, to respond without hesitation!

TODAY’S READINGS: *2 Samuel 24:2, 9-17; Mark 6:1-6 (325)*
“They left everything and followed him.”

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2 FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD;

WORLD DAY OF CONSECRATED LIFE

Vow to live in service to others

In announcing the first World Day of Consecrated Life in 1997, Pope John Paul II remarked that February 2, the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, was selected because it is “an eloquent icon of the total offering of one’s life for all those who are called to show forth in the church and in the world . . . ‘the characteristic features of Jesus—the chaste, poor, and obedient one.’” Today we honor and cherish those who have taken vows to religious life, and we can also reflect on how all of us are called to consecrate our lives in service to God and humanity.

How will you serve?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Malachi 3:1-4 or Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 2:22-40 or 2:22-32 (524)*

“The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.”

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3 FEAST OF BLASE, BISHOP, MARTYR

Full-throated blessing

One of the most popular traditional devotions in the church is the blessing of throats on this day, invoking the intercession of Saint Blase, whose feast we celebrate. Blase was arrested in 316 A.D. during a persecution of Christians, and on the way to prison tradition has it that he miraculously healed a young child who was choking. After his death the story of the cure spread throughout the region of present-day Armenia, and through the centuries the devotion grew. Blase was also a physician, and today is a good day to give thanks for the many miracles that modern medicine also makes possible. Thanks to modern medicine, many are alive and well today (perhaps including you or a loved one) who would not have been so in centuries past.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Sirach 47:2-11; Mark 6:14-29 (327)*

“Mighty powers are at work in him.”

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4 FEAST OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Solitude is not always confining

The monk and author Thomas Merton wrote: “There is no true solitude except interior solitude.” Solitude does not have to be a physical place, though it can be, nor does it have to involve silence, though it might. Rather, as Merton said, solitude is an inner space where you can rest quietly and alone in God’s presence—with no expectations and perhaps no words either—and experience the grace of God for what it is: a freely given gift you do not have to earn. Today, a Saturday and the traditional day for remembering Mary, join her in solitude to keep “all these things in your heart.”

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.”

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Scripture quotes come from the New American Bible.

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