

January 1

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Annual World Day of Peace

We begin this new year by honoring the motherhood of Mary. When the angel Gabriel came to Mary she had the choice whether to become the mother of the Prince of Peace or to reject God's will. Though confused, Mary surrendered herself completely to the will of God. It's been said that Mary first received into her heart what she then conceived in her womb—the Word of God. She was able to receive the Word because her heart was immaculate with no sinful obstacles to God's will. Mary's heart was 100 percent devoted to God.

There are many resolutions that I could make today, but the most important one is to offer every day of the coming year to God, praying that his will be done in me just as it was done in Mary. I know that when God's will is done perfectly on earth as it is in heaven, there will be justice, harmony, and peace.

Jesus, as I begin this new year, I look to your Mother as the example I want to follow. This is my resolution: to live one day at a time, offering each day to you, asking that God's will be done in me and in my life. Your Blessed Mother's offering of herself allowed you, the Prince of Peace, to come into the world. As I follow her example, I believe that you will make me an instrument of your peace just as she was. Amen.

Daily Word

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Mt 5:9).

Evening Review

In what ways was I an instrument of peace today?

January 2

Saints Basil and Gregory Nazianzen (fourth century)

Today’s saints share a common feast because of the close friendship they shared from the time they were students. In time, they both became bishops whose sound teaching led to their being named two of the four major doctors of the Eastern Church.

Saint Gregory said this about their friendship: “Our one single object and ambition was virtue, and a life of hope in the blessings that are to come. With this end in view we ordered our lives and all our actions.”

These saints demonstrate the importance of friendship. Friends either help one another to follow a good path or support each other in living foolishly. Each of us was created for heaven, and we are given each day to walk closer to our goal. We are also given to one another to help each other to attain heaven.

Jesus, you told your followers: I no longer call you servants, but “friends” (Jn 15:15). Friends share their interests and desires. May your desires be mine today. May I desire the salvation of the people

whom I will meet today as much as you do. May I be a true friend to them as much as you are a true friend to me.

Daily Word

“A friend is a friend at all times” (Prv 17:17).

Evening Review

How did my friendship with Jesus help me to be a friend to others today?

January 3

The Most Holy Name of Jesus

Following Jewish law, Jesus was circumcised eight days after his birth and given a name. In his case it was the name that the archangel Gabriel told Mary she was to call her Son. Today we celebrate a feast in honor of the name of Jesus.

A name represents the person who carries it. To “come in the name” of another is to represent that person. To honor the name of Jesus is to honor him.

The name of Jesus is all-powerful: “There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved” (Acts 4:12). Saint Paul said that this name is “the name that is above every name” and “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend” (Phil 2:9–10). It’s a holy name and ought never to be misused.

Many people are more comfortable calling Jesus “Christ” or “Lord,” but those are titles. Friends are on a first-name basis. Since Jesus called his disciples “friends,”

we are free to address the Second Person of the Holy Trinity by his name.

Jesus, you told us to pray, asking God the Father for what we need and desire in your name (Jn 14:13). When we pray in your name we know that we are praying as you yourself prayed. We have many needs and desires, but ultimately we pray your own prayer: "Abba, Father . . . not what I will but what you will" (Mk 14:36). I offer myself to you now and ask that your will may be done in each moment of my day. Amen.

Daily Word

Blessed be the name of Jesus!

Evening Review

How did I bring glory to the name of Jesus today?

January 4

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774–1821)

Born in New York City, Elizabeth Ann Seton was raised in the Episcopal Church. She married a wealthy businessman and had five children, but during a visit to Italy in 1803, her husband became ill and died. A Catholic family befriended her, and when she returned to the United States she became a Catholic. Upon receiving the Eucharist for the first time, she wrote a friend: "At last, at last, God is mine and I am his! I have received him!"

Elizabeth moved to Baltimore, where she opened a school for girls in 1808. When several young women

joined her in this work, they began the Sisters of Charity, the first American religious congregation for women. Pope Paul VI canonized her in 1975, the first native-born US citizen to be given this honor.

In the Eucharist, Jesus gives me the greatest gift—himself. I in turn make a gift of myself to him with my daily offering. I renew it now with these words of Saint Elizabeth Ann:

How consoling, how sweet, the presence of Jesus to the longing, harassed soul! It is instant peace and balm to every wound! What would be my refuge? Jesus is everywhere. . . .Yes, everywhere! But in his sacrament of the altar, as actually present and real as my soul within my body. In his sacrifice, daily offered, as really as once offered on the cross. Merciful Savior! Can there be any comparison to this blessedness? Adored Lord, increase my faith, perfect it, crown it. Having drawn me to thy fold, keep me in thy sweet pastures and lead me to eternal life.

Daily Word

Jesus, as you gave yourself to me, so I give myself to you.

Evening Review

With what acts of charity did I offer myself to Jesus today?

January 5

Saint John Neumann (1811–1860)

John Neumann was born in what is now the Czech Republic. He came to the United States as a seminarian. After

his ordination he was sent to Buffalo, where he served German-speaking immigrants. In time he joined the Redemptorist order and became the bishop of Philadelphia. There he established a Catholic educational system and promoted eucharistic devotion in which parishes offered forty straight hours of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

When he canonized Saint John Neumann in 1977, Blessed Paul VI said: “To accomplish his task, love was necessary. And love meant giving; love meant effort; love meant sacrifice. Love still means giving oneself for others, because Love has come down to humanity; and from humanity love goes back to its divine source! The eucharistic sacrifice was the center of his life, and constituted for him what the Second Vatican Council would later call ‘the source and summit of all evangelization.’”

I join myself and my day now to the perfect offering of Jesus in the eucharistic sacrifice by praying these words of Saint John Neumann:

How much I love you, O my Jesus. I wish to love you with my whole heart. Take entire possession of me. To you I consecrate all the powers of my soul and body, my whole being. Would that I could infuse into all hearts a burning love for you. What great glory would be given to you here on earth, if every heart were an altar on which every human will were laid in perfect conformity with your will to be consumed by the fire of your love.

Daily Word

Heart of Jesus, burning furnace of charity, make me one with you.

Evening Review

In what ways did I share the burning love of Jesus with others today?

January 6

Saint André Bessette (1845–1937)

A humble brother of the Congregation of Holy Cross, Saint André Bessette has been called “God’s doorkeeper” and the “miracle man of Montreal.” He served the College of Notre Dame in Montreal as the porter and once joked, “My superiors showed me the door and I stayed there forty years!” His humility and holiness led people from all over to seek his prayers and counsel. He said: “I am ignorant. If there were anyone more ignorant, the good God would have chosen him in my place.”

He encouraged those who asked for help to turn to Saint Joseph. He often touched them with a medal of the saint or anointed them with oil from a lamp that he kept burning in front of a statue of Saint Joseph. Doctors have attested to the miraculous nature of the subsequent healings, and it’s estimated that between 1910 and 1937 ten thousand people were cured. Saint André always gave credit to Saint Joseph. More than a million people came to pay their respects at his funeral.

Like his patron Saint Joseph, André Bessette was a humble instrument in God’s hands. He was a magnifying glass through which a ray of God’s love shone to bring about great physical and spiritual healings.

Saint Joseph, foster father of the Son of God, help me today to be like your devoted servant Saint André. May all my thoughts, words, and actions magnify the love of God so that it may touch all the people I will meet or think about or pray for. Amen.

Daily Word

“My soul magnifies the Lord.”

Evening Review

How did God’s love touch others today through me?

January 7

Saint Raymond of Penyafort (1175–1275)

Raymond, a professor of philosophy, Church law, and civil law, joined the Dominicans at age forty-seven. The pope asked him to organize all the Church’s teachings and documents. This work gained Raymond the title “father of Canon Law.” He continued his teaching and writing until his death at one hundred years old, demonstrating that one is never too old to serve God.

Laws are often seen as restrictions on our freedom. But laws are part of nature. As physical beings we follow certain laws—some by necessity, like gravity, and some by choice, like eating nutritious food and getting enough sleep. As spiritual beings, too, there are spiritual laws built right into our nature. Made in the image and likeness of God, we’re made by and for love. That, Jesus taught, sums up the law.

I commit myself to following the law of love every moment of this day with this prayer adapted from the writings of Saint Raymond:

I look on you, Jesus, the author and preserver of faith. As I drink the cup that you offer me today, I give thanks to you, the giver of all blessings. May you, the God of love and peace, set my heart at rest and speed me on my journey. May you shelter me in the hidden recesses of your love and bring me at last to that place where I will repose forever in the vision of peace, in the security of trust, and in the restful enjoyment of your riches.

Daily Word

“Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with all their heart” (Ps 119:2).

Evening Review

How did I follow or not follow God’s law of love today?

January 8

The Gospel tells the amazing story of the Magi who followed a star that led them from their homes to the distant small town of Bethlehem. We know them as the three kings or wise men. They came from the East, Gentile territory, to find the newborn king whose birth was shown to them in ancient writings and in the stars.

At one point, however, they do not seem very wise. Surely King Herod’s reputation must have reached them. He was so jealous and possessive that he killed his own family members whom he feared wanted to replace him