

Jan 5-10, 2026: Jan 5 Monday: St. John Neumann, Bishop (USA): For a short biography: <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-john-neumann/>

Mt 4: 12-17, 23-25: 12 Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; 13 and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulon and Naphtali, 14 that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 15 The land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles -- 16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned. 17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, 23 proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people. 24 12 His fame spread to all of Syria, and they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases and racked with pain, those who were possessed, lunatics, and paralytics, and he cured them. 25 And great crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, 13 Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan followed him.

The context: Today's Gospel describes the beginning of Jesus' mission of preaching and healing in Galilee. He chose that area as the ideal spot because it was the most fertile land in Palestine. In addition, it was the most populated area, with 204 villages around the Sea of Galilee housing Jews and Gentiles. The Jews there belonged to the tribes of Asher, Naphtali and Zebulon. The people were open to new ideas because they had been exposed to various religious beliefs and the culture of traders from all over the known world.

Preaching the Good News: Jesus started preaching the Good News about God the Father and about God's Kingdom. Since it was God the King's message, it carried God's authority and certainty. It was "Good News" because Jesus introduced to his hearers God his Father as a loving, merciful, providing, forgiving Father Who wants to save everyone from the bondage of sin. It was also "Good News" of hope and peace. As a continuation of John's message, Jesus, too, invited his hearers to repentance and the renewal of their lives. Matthew identified Jesus' preaching and healing ministry in Galilee as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah.

Life message: As Christians we have been given Jesus' mission to continue. Hence, our exemplary, transparent lives must be our message radiating Christ's love, mercy, forgiveness and spirit of humble and committed service.

Jan 6 Tuesday: St. Andre Bessette, Religious, USA: Mk 6: 34-44: 34 As he went ashore he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. 35 And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, This is a lonely place, and the hour is now late; 36 send them away, to go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat.& 37 But he answered them, You give them something to eat.; And they said to him,;Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?; 38 And he said to them,;How many loaves have you? Go and see.; And when they had found out, they said,;Five, and two fish.; 39 Then he commanded them all to sit down by companies upon the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. 41 And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. 42 And they all ate and were satisfied. 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44 And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

The context: Today's Gospel describes Jesus' miraculous feeding of a great multitude. The story is told in all four Gospels and serves as Jesus' way of introducing to his hearers a merciful, providing God. This miraculous feeding was meant to remind people of God's provision of manna in the wilderness and to foreshadow the true Heavenly Bread, which Jesus would offer His followers. Jesus took pity on the growing physical hunger of his listeners as he preached, and he challenged his Apostles to feed them. But they had with them only five loaves of bread and two dried fish. Jesus took these, said a prayer of blessing broke them and asked the Apostles to distribute them till the hungry people were fully satisfied. Since it was mid-April, springtime in Israel, the people could sit comfortably on green grass in their groups of hundreds and fifties as Jesus instructed. After serving a generous meal, the Apostles collected twelve wicker baskets of leftover bread and fish pieces, a vivid proof and reminder of God's generosity in giving. Life messages: 1) We will not, by ourselves, be able to feed the hungry millions in the world. But today's Gospel challenges us to do our humble share in alleviating hunger and poverty in our

neighborhood. 2) God will amplify our little contributions and reward our good will and generosity.

Jan 7 Wednesday: St. Raymond of Penyaafort, Priest: For a short biography:

<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-adrian-of-canterbury/>)

Mk 6: 45-52: 45 Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. 47 And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, 49 but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; 50 for they all saw him, and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said,; Take heart, it is I; have no fear." 51 And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

The context: The event presented by today's Gospel is the scene immediately following Jesus's; miraculous feeding of the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish. Sensing the danger of being seized by the people and; made King as the leader of a revolt, Jesus promptly instructed his Apostles to leave the place by boat. He dismissed the crowd and went to the mountain to pray in solitude. A double miracle in the sea: When the Apostles in the boat were several furlongs away from the shore, they faced an unexpected storm on the sea caused by the rush of hot wind from the desert blowing through the gaps of the Golan Heights onto the Sea of Galilee. Recognizing His Apostles's; danger, Jesus went toward their boat, walking on the stormy sea. Jesus calmed the frightened disciples as he approached the boat. As soon as Jesus got into the boat, the storm ceased miraculously, to the great astonishment of the Apostles.

Life messages: 1) Let us approach Jesus with strong Faith in His ability and availability to calm the storms in our lives and in the life of the Church. Church history shows us how Jesus saved his Church from the storms of persecution in the first three centuries, from the storms of heresies in the fifth and sixth centuries, from the storms of moral degradation and the Protestant reformation movement in the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and from the storms of clergy sex-abuse scandals in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

2) Let us ask Jesus to protect us when we face storms of strong temptations, storms of doubts about our religious beliefs, and storms of fear, anxiety and worries in our personal lives. Experiencing Jesus' presence in our lives, let us confess our Faith in him and call out for his help and protection.

Jan 8 Thursday: Lk 4: 14-22: *Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth* 14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. 16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the Sabbath day. And he stood up to read; 17 and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." 20 And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

Scripture explained: Today's Gospel describes how Jesus participated in the Sabbath prayer of the synagogue in his native place with a band of his disciples. The prayer began with "Shema" prayer followed by the recital of the "Eighteen Blessings," praising and thanking God. Then four passages from the "Torah" the book of Law were read and explained by a priest, followed by a selection from the Prophets, which was read and interpreted by an invited scholar or guest or volunteer. Finally, the prayer was concluded with a priest or the synagogue president blessing the assembly, using the blessing from the Book of Numbers (6: 22 ff). Since Jesus had become popular as a miracle working preacher in Capernaum, he was given the chance to read from the Book of the Prophets and to interpret the Scripture. Jesus, handed the Scroll of the prophet Isaiah, opened it and read his prophecy on the mission of the expected Messiah. Surprising everyone, Jesus claimed that he was

the One sent "*to bring glad tidings to the poor, liberation to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and freedom for the oppressed*"—language that reflects the Biblical year of Jubilee. To the great amazement and disbelief of his own townsmen, Jesus declared that Isaiah's prophecy was being fulfilled at that very moment "in their hearing," because the prophet was foretelling and describing Jesus' mission and ministry. Jesus' mission would be to give liberation to everyone who would listen to his "Good News," accept it and put it into practice. Luke reports that the initial reaction of the people was surprise at the power and eloquence of this son of their soil.

Life messages: 1) We need to receive Christ's freedom, live it and pass it on to others: As members of Christ's Mystical Body, we share in the freeing, saving mission of Jesus. But we are captives of sin. We need Christ to set us free. We are often blinded by our evil habits, addictions and need for financial security. Once we receive true liberation from Christ, we have to share it with those we encounter in our daily lives, families, neighborhoods, parishes and workplaces. 2) We need to let the power of the Holy Spirit fill us, and to be ready to have miracles done through us. Today's Gospel tells us that Jesus performed miracles because he was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us be ready to become Spirit-filled instruments of Christ's saving freedom.

Jan 9 Friday: Lk 5: 12-16: 12 While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and besought him,; Lord, if you will, you can make me clean¹³ And he stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be clean And immediately the leprosy left him. 14 And he charged him to tell no one; but ;go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to the people.; 15 But so much the more the report went abroad concerning him; and great multitudes gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. 16 But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed. The context: Today's Gospel describes Jesus touching a man sick with a severe case of leprosy and healing him instantly. Biblical "leprosy" rarely indicated Hansen's disease (leprosy proper); mostly, the term referred to skin diseases like ringworm, psoriasis, leukoderma, vitiligo and some types of skin cancer. The suffering of lepers in Biblical times was chiefly due to the way they were treated by the religious society of the day (Interpreter's Bible). They were deemed unclean, unfit to be counted among a people who considered themselves "a kingdom of priests,

a holy nation” (Ex 19:6). “Leprosy” was also a terrible disease because its victims were separated from their families and society. Besides, lepers were treated as sinners deserving no mercy because they were seen as being punished by God with their contagious disease. The leprosy given by God as a punishment to Miriam, the complaining sister of Moses, to Gehazi, the greedy servant of the prophet Elijah and to the proud the King Uzziah, supported the Jewish belief that leprosy was God’s punishment for sins. Mosaic restrictions on lepers: The Mosaic Law, as given in Leviticus, demanded that, first, the priest declare the leper unclean, and then that the leper a) keep his garments rent and his head bare, b) muffle his beard, c) cry out, Unclean, unclean and d) dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp. As a general rule, when a Jewish leper was healed, he had to go to the local priest for confirmation that he was now clean and was permitted to mix with the general public.

Life Messages: 1) The strong faith of the sick man prompted him to violate the Mosaic Law prohibiting him from joining a crowd and approaching Jesus. The sympathy and mercy of Jesus prompted Jesus to violate the Mosaic Law which forbade anyone to touch an untouchable leper. Thus, Jesus teaches the lesson that the essence of Christianity is to touch the untouchable, to love the unlovable, and to forgive the unforgivable.

2) By sending the cured man to the priests to get their certification of his freedom from disease, Jesus teaches us that we should pray for healing and, at the same time, go to the doctors who share God’s wisdom in healing. Healing normally happens when man’s skill combines with God’s grace.

Jan 10 Saturday: Jn 3: 22-30: 22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them and baptized. 23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people came and were baptized. 24 For John had not yet been put in prison. 25 Now a discussion arose between John’s disciples and a Jew over purifying. 26 And they came to John, and said to him, ;Rabbi, he who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, here he is, baptizing, and all are going to him.; 27 John answered, No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven. 28 You yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him. 29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands

and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore, this joy of mine is now full. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

The context: Today's Gospel passage shows the loveliness of John the Baptist's humility. John was responding to his disciples who complained that many among them were deserting John to join the new preacher, Jesus, whom John had baptized. John's explanation: John told them plainly who he really was and what his mission was. He told them that he was only a forerunner of the Messiah and that his mission was to prepare a people for the Messiah by preaching repentance. He was challenging his hearers to receive the baptism of repentance as their first step in renewing their lives, so they could welcome Jesus the Messiah into their lives. John explained further that his role was to be the "friend of the bridegroom" (shoshben), Jesus. As the shoshben arranges the meeting of the bride and groom, arranges the details of the wedding, presides over the wedding, guards the bridal chamber and leaves happily, John prepared the bride, namely, the Jewish nation for receiving her bridegroom, Jesus the Messiah, by baptizing the people who were willing to repent and then baptizing Jesus and introducing him to the people as the "Lamb of God."

Life messages: 1) Our mission, as St. Francis de Sales puts it, is to "bloom where you are planted." God has given a unique mission to each one of us, and we are expected to accomplish that unique mission by receiving God's strength through the various means Jesus has instituted in his Church. No one can receive anything except what has been given from Heaven." 2) True humility and trusting faith in God are necessary for us to accomplish our life's mission by using God's freely given gifts. (Fr. Tony) L/26

JOKES OF THE WEEK:

1) Baptism of a cat: Johnny's Mother looked out the window and noticed him "playing church" with their cat. He had the cat sitting quietly and he was preaching to it. She smiled and went about her work. A while later she heard loud meowing and hissing and ran back to the open window to see Johnny baptizing the cat in a tub of water. She called out, "Johnny, stop that! The cat is afraid of water!" Johnny looked up at her and said, "He should have thought about that before he joined my church."

2) Three times: Too many people come to Church three times primarily. They're baptized, they get married, and they have their funeral service at the Church. The first time they throw water on you, the second time rice, the third time dirt!

3) Baptized in luxury: When our church was renovated, adding a Baptismal pool, we were pleased. So was our daughter. While riding in the car with my daughter and her friend, we went past a pond. My daughter's friend proudly declared, "I was baptized in that pond." My daughter responded with no less pride: "Oh, I was baptized in a Jacuzzi at our church." (Pastor Davis)

4) "Born again." When Jimmy Carter was elected President of the United States, he described himself as a "born-again" Christian. For many Americans this was an unfamiliar term. By the time of the next election primaries, nearly all the candidates were claiming to be "born-again." Political satirist Mark Russell suggested, "This could give Christianity a bad name."

5) A keg of beer and a case of whiskey: Before performing a [Baptism](#), the priest approached the young father and said solemnly, "Baptism is a serious step. Are you prepared for it?" "I think so," the man replied. "My wife has made appetizers and we have a caterer coming to provide plenty of cookies and cakes for all of our guests." "I don't mean that," the priest responded. "I mean, are you prepared spiritually?" "Oh, sure," came the reply. "I've got a keg of beer and a case of whiskey."

6) Baptism Catholic, Baptist & Jewish style: A Catholic Priest, a Baptist Preacher and a Rabbi were sitting around drinking coffee. Someone made the comment that preaching to people isn't really all that hard, a real challenge would be to preach to a bear. One thing led to another, and they decided that each would find a bear and attempt to convert it to their religion. Seven days later, they all came together to discuss their experiences. Father Flannery, who had his arm in a sling and had various bandages on his body and limbs, went first. 'Well,' he said, 'I went into the woods to find me a bear. And when I found him, I began to read to him from the Catechism. Well, that bear came after me and began to slap me around. So I quickly grabbed my holy water, sprinkled him and, Holy Mary Mother of God, he became as gentle as a lamb.' Reverend Billy Bob the Baptist spoke next. He was in a wheelchair and had an IV drip. 'I went out and found me a bear. And then I began to read to my bear from the Bible! But that bear came after me. We wrestled down one hill, until

we came to a creek. So, I quickly dunked him and baptized his hairy soul. And just like you said, he became as gentle as a lamb. The Priest and the Reverend both looked down at the Rabbi, who was lying in a hospital bed. He was in a body cast and traction with IV's and monitors running in and out of him. The Rabbi looked up and said: "Looking back on it, circumcision may not have been the best way to start?"

7)" Size seven." The subject of reincarnation came up at a church meeting. One overweight woman in the group said, "This idea of reincarnation sounds great. I would like to come back as a size seven." – via Rev. F. A. Boddie, St. Stephen Church Port Huron, MI

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