

Epiphany

Dear parishioners,

Today is the feast of Epiphany, a word which means “revealing.” It is the day we celebrate the fact that the Child Jesus was revealed not only to the Jewish people, but also to the whole world. In the Gospel we hear that the Magi came from foreign lands to adore the Baby Jesus. In the responsorial psalm we proclaim: “*Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.*” (Ps. 72:11) Also in the first reading we hear the words: “*Your light has come... upon you the LORD shines... Nations shall walk by your light*” (Is.60:1-3)

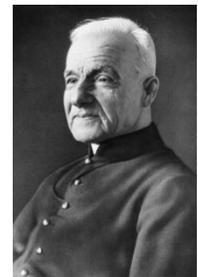
It is important that every nation “walk by His light.” In this time before elections we pray that that this will be true of OUR OWN NATION! It is important not only to talk the talk of religion but also walk by its light! Our nation is not a Catholic nation. But nevertheless, there are Catholic saints who have walked in these United States. This weekend we celebrate the Feast Days of three Roman Catholic saints who lived in America. On Saturday, January 4, was the Feast Day and the anniversary of the death of St Elizabeth Ann Seton. Today, January 5 is the Feast Day and the anniversary of the death of Saint John Neuman, and tomorrow, January 6 is the Feast Day and the anniversary of the death of Saint Andre Bessette. What I would like to emphasize about all three of these saints is that they each learned their Catholic faith OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES, in Catholic countries where people walk and by the light of the Catholic culture and way of life.

The first saint is St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, who was the first native-born American saint. She was born into a wealthy Episcopalian family in New York City in 1774, She married and had five children. They moved to Italy however, in order to find a healthy climate for her husband who nevertheless died there in Italy. While in Italy, Elizabeth Ann befriended Catholics who convinced her to convert. When her children had grown, she founded the first American order of religious sisters, who later became known as the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph. She died in Emmitsburg Maryland on January 4, 1821.



Today, January 5, is the anniversary of the second saint, St. John Neumann, who was Bishop of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He, too, learned his Catholic faith in a Catholic country. He was from Bohemia, which is now the Czech Republic. As a young man he studied theology and learned eight languages. He wanted to be a priest but the bishop would not ordain him because there were already too many priests in Bohemia! He used his language skills to write to many other bishops in other Catholic countries throughout Europe, but they all answered that they already had too many priests! Finally, he came to America in 1836 and was ordained a priest in New York City. Eventually he became bishop of Philadelphia and was known for his heroic efforts to spread the faith, especially among the poor immigrants who lived in rural areas.

The saint whom we celebrate tomorrow, January 6 is St. Andre Bessette (1845-1937). He was known as “the Miracle Worker of Montreal.” He lived in Montreal Canada, although he lived for a short time in New York where he worked for several years before he entered religious life. He was unable to keep a job because he was sickly and uneducated. The one thing he was good at was praying, and doing penance. Eventually he was recognized for his sanctity and he was permitted to enter the Congregation of the Holy Cross as a lay brother. He never became a priest and was assigned to menial tasks. It was soon discovered, however, that he had a gift of healing. Many people brought their sick people to him and thousands were cured. Br. Andre was humble and he always attributed the cures to the intercession of St. Joseph, his favorite saint. Br. Andre became so famous that many people donated money to fulfill



his dream of building the huge shrine called the Oratory of Saint Joseph which now sits on a hill overlooking Montreal. When “Brother André” died on January 6, 1937 at the age of 91, and more than one million people came to the funeral. He was canonized a saint by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010. His Feast Day is January 6.

Fr. Mark