**Scripture and Feast Day Notes**

**First Sunday After Theophany**

**From Today’s Readings**

**Luke 4:14-30** Jesus is in Galilee teaching to the delight and appreciation of his listeners. But in a synagogue one day, as He preaches the purpose of His mission for the poor, the sick, and the oppressed (again to an admiring congregation), He challenges their understanding of this mission, proposing that outsiders often grasp it better than they do. They are enraged, ready to drive him out of town and even kill (!) him. *Discuss/reflect: This long-ago event rings true today. Has your parish ever been challenged to consider whether they are truly fulfilling the purpose of the Church or just paying mild lip service? If they were challenged, what do you think would be the reaction?*

**John 2: 1-11** In the Gospel of John, the miracle at the wedding of Cana is the first “sign” of Jesus’ sovereignty over all Creation and that He was indeed the Messiah. So much of note in this renowned story: The very first words “on the third day” call to mind Jesus’ glorious resurrection; the *servants* know who it was who turned the water into wine but not the “higher ups;” the wine steward confides in the bridegroom thinking he is responsible for the new wine when it was actually Jesus, the *true* bridegroom; the jars are filled “to the brim” pointing to God’s abundance. *Discuss/reflect: In verse 5, Mary tells the servants to “do whatever He tells you,” (Interesting: Pharaoh instructs his people to follow Joseph with the same words in Genesis 41:55.) How do you get at what Jesus is saying to you in your life? Do* you *heed His words?*

**1 Timothy 1: 1-11** Paul urges his protégé Timothy to be diligent against the “myths and genealogies” that so distracted people of that time (we have our *own* infamous distractions). In addition, an emphasis on the law has many losing sight of the simple Gospel doctrines of love and sincere faith. *Discuss/reflect: Is God more a “lawgiver” or a “lover” in your life?*

**Isaiah 54: 1-13** What a bold declaration of love from God to His people! The Lord foresees His return to His beloved spouse, Israel, and her descendants overflowing into neighboring nations and cities. Never again will His covenant with her be broken and He will rebuild Jerusalem (54:11- “O afflicted city!”) with precious stones. *Discuss/reflect: Read the description of a restored Jerusalem in Revelation 22:11-21. What does this fantastical imagery convey to you? What qualities of such stones help restore a city?*

**Tuesday, January 18, St. Antony the Hermit**

St. Antony was one of the most beloved and well-known of the “desert fathers and mothers” who in the 3rd century chose to live in prayerful solitude or in small communities in the desert wilderness in the Middle East and, primarily, Egypt. By the time St. Antony had died in the mid-4th century, thousands of faithful had been drawn to this lifestyle following his example. Another revered saint of the Armenian Church, St. Athanasius (who is remembered on January 22 this year), wrote in his famous life of St. Antony that so many had followed him "the desert had become a city.” This astounding movement was the early foundation of Christian monasticism. *Reflection: The desert fathers and mothers centered their lives in prayer. When someone asked Antony to pray for him, he said: “I will have no mercy upon you, nor will God have any, if you yourself do not make an effort and if you do not pray to God.” Do you make time to pray, communicating with the most important Person in your life?*

 *Department of Christian Education/Diocese of the Armenian Church (Eastern)* *elisea@armeniandiocese.org*