

Sunday, Dec 01, 2019

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Twenty-five reasons to smile

It's Advent! Jesus is coming soon. Colored lights dance against the dark. Carols exalt us (and the "Jingle Bells" dogs make us laugh). John Lennon, who imagined a world without religion, couldn't imagine one without Christmas. Holiday cards keep on coming. Tinsel. Evergreens. Angels. Lighting family Advent wreaths. Sleigh bells. Generous hearts. Visitors. Parties. Cookies with sprinkles. Sparkly sweaters. Fuzzy mittens. Manger scenes. Nativity plays. Flash mobs singing "Messiah" at the mall. Children's faces. Reconciliations. The hope of peace on earth. Good will within reach everywhere.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:37-44 (1). "At an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

Monday, Dec 02, 2019

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Warming up to Advent

Today is the first weekday in Advent, and the readings underscore the season's sense of warmth and joyful anticipation. As our days grow cooler, Isaiah provides an image of God protecting the Israelites from the elements: "the Lord's glory will be shelter and protection." The psalm, too, trumpets a sense of joy and protection under God: "Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord." Then the gospel brings us an Advent sense of happy expectation, with Jesus envisioning the faith-filled centurion at the heavenly banquet. Today, as you slip on a sweater to fight a chill, or share a meal with others, take heart in being part of the worldwide Christian community beginning our Advent season of warmth and joyful anticipation.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 4:2-6; Matthew 8:5-11 (175). "Many will come from the east and the west, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the kingdom of heaven."

Tuesday, Dec 03, 2019

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Welcome everybody

How can you live out Catholic teaching to defend the sacred life and dignity of every precious human being? In lots of way, of course. But one for today is the observance of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, promoted by the United Nations since 1992. Think about how you can support the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities and help include them "in every aspect of political, social, economic, and cultural life." Promote awareness and celebrate their achievements; and if you yourself have a disability, celebrate your own achievements as well! Order an event pack for your organization at idpwd.org.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24 (176). "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see."

Wednesday, Dec 04, 2019

MEMORIAL OF JOHN DAMASCENE, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Come to your senses

Saint John of Damascus is famous for opposing the Iconoclast heresy of the 700s. Iconoclasts said it was wrong to venerate sacred images of any sort, but John wrote three different treatises to explain why ours is essentially a "smells and bells" religion, honoring the Incarnation by using all five senses God gave to both us and Jesus. "When we see the crucifix, we remember Christ's

saving Passion," he wrote. "We fall down to worship not the piece of wood, but the One who is imaged." And when one of John's mentors berated him for writing hymns—saying they weren't a worthy spiritual pursuit—it is said that the Blessed Mother berated the mentor in a dream! Be sure to enjoy the sights, sounds, and tastes of this holiday season—remembering our Creator, who asks that we don't love abstractly but "in the flesh."

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Matthew 15:29-37 (177). "They all ate and were satisfied."

Thursday, Dec 05, 2019

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Can you lend a hand?

December 5 is the day set aside by the United Nations General Assembly as International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development. It is a long title but its purpose is something we all understand: to encourage governments to recognize volunteer efforts that promote development and peace. Advent is a season of hope, and volunteers by their generosity of hearts and hands give us reason to hope for this world. Say a prayer of gratitude for volunteers throughout our world whose sacrifices promote the common good. Ask for grace to be a sign of hope today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27 (178). "None of those who cry out, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of my Father."

Friday, Dec 06, 2019

MEMORIAL OF NICHOLAS, BISHOP

Protect the innocent

In every household where children live, shoes could be lined up outside the door this morning, full of candy and tiny treats. This brief preview of Christmas is mercifully given to assuage the plaintive query, "Will we ever get there?" From spare biographical details about Saint Nicholas, bishop of Myra in the fourth century, marvelous legends have arisen. All underline his protection of children, so let's invoke him during an era of terrible child exploitation. In his honor, place the National Human Trafficking Hotline in your phone or on your fridge: 888-373-7888. Call if anything seems amiss.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 29:17-24; Matthew 9:27-31 (179). "But a very little while . . ."

Saturday, Dec 07, 2019

MEMORIAL OF AMBROSE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Uproot income inequality

Saint Ambrose (c. 340–397) was the bishop of Milan and one of the four original doctors of the church along with Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great. Ambrose taught the necessity of being united with the poor. He said that charitable giving was not an act of generosity but rather a restitution of resources that God had originally provided to all but have been taken over by the rich and powerful. Speaking in the United States in 2014, Pope Francis said that income inequality in our society was the "root of all social evil." Catholics need to fight against income inequality.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Matthew 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6-8 (180). "His heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd."

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



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