

Sunday, Dec 03, 2017

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Mindfulness 101

Be aware of your surroundings. Look where you're going. Think before you speak. Remember to breathe. Be here now. Pithy reminders to be mindful have been sprinkled into the popular diet for so long, they tend to join the background noise we train ourselves to ignore. Too bad: Mindfulness isn't just for monks and yoga fans. Jesus invites us to live in watchful awareness of our times, ready to respond in any given situation. Practice being present to every person and each hour today. Where is the Spirit drawing you this Advent season?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37 (2). *"What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!' "*

Monday, Dec 04, 2017

MEMORIAL OF JOHN DAMASCENE, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Imagine if you can

It's hard to get somewhere if you don't know where you're going. That's true not only in travel but in the larger sense of life goals as well. Contemplation of religious images helps us focus on the inward journey toward holiness. Such images can even aid in establishing a relationship with a spiritual guide in the person of the saint. John of Damascus championed the use of images to ignite the religious imagination. This season let's imagine together what a just nation should look like.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 2:1-5; Matthew 8:5-11 (175). *"Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith."*

Tuesday, Dec 05, 2017

ADVENT WEEKDAY

To know you is to love you

In these times of war, political conflict, and growing poverty, it's hard to imagine a state of affairs in which wisdom and justice reign and everything works together for the good. Yet that's exactly the possibility God has promised and offered from the prophets to Jesus. The more we learn the ways of God—and the more we follow them—the closer we get to that place where all have what they need and act justly toward one another.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24 (176). *"There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord."*

Wednesday, Dec 06, 2017

MEMORIAL OF NICHOLAS, BISHOP

A jolly good tradition

Saint Nicholas spoke out against heresies and was imprisoned for a time for his Christian beliefs. His faithfulness is exemplary, but charity remains his signature virtue. What started with Nicholas tossing a few bags of coins into a poor family's yard has been transformed over centuries of retelling, embellishing, grafting, and adapting into the magical tales of Ole Saint Nick (Father Christmas, Santa Claus, Kris Kringle), whose yearly ambition is to deliver gifts to every girl and boy. We may not bring out our best robes and a fatted calf for the annual return of Santa, but cookies and milk serve nicely to show our gratitude to Saint Nick for inspiring ole souls of every stripe to be more jolly and generous.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Matthew 15:29-37 (177). *"My heart is moved with pity for the crowd."*

Thursday, Dec 07, 2017

MEMORIAL OF AMBROSE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

God works in strange ways

When a dispute arose about who was to be the new bishop of Milan, Ambrose (c. 339-397) stepped in to try to mediate the dispute. He so impressed those involved that they decided to elect him bishop, even though he was not baptized, much less ordained. So he was baptized and ordained priest and bishop at the same time! Do something today about resolving a major conflict in your life, but be careful—you might be put in charge!

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 40:25-31; Matthew 11:28-30 (178). *"They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength."*

Friday, Dec 08, 2017

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY; PATRONAL FEAST DAY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rejoice with Mary today

Today we celebrate not only the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but also the anniversary of the declaration of this solemnity and the doctrine behind it. In a sense this day answers a question: How could Jesus, who was human in every way but sin, be born without original sin? Answer: Mary must have been without sin, therefore she was "immaculately conceived." In a larger sense this day encourages us to honor the special holiness and closeness to God of Mary as the woman who brought the Savior into the world. It also declares God's grace and love to be greater than sin's destructive effects. Pray to Mary today and rejoice that we can turn to such a wonderful figure.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38 (689). *"Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."*

Saturday, Dec 09, 2017

MEMORIAL OF JUAN DIEGO CUAUHTLATOATZIN

More than meets the eye

There are many accounts of the apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe in 1531 to Saint Juan Diego, an indigenous Mexican who had converted to Catholicism after the Spanish conquest. There are also many questions about the historical accuracy of those accounts. But great stories also serve a purpose beyond historical literalism—they speak to our hearts of greater truths that are sometimes best captured in epics. A great mythic story is not necessarily false—it can be true at a deeper, more symbolic, and powerful level than facts alone can approach. Dip into some deeper truth by searching online for good accounts of the Guadalupe story.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Matthew 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6-8 (180). *"At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them."*

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



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