

Sunday, Dec 22, 2019

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Finding our place in Joseph's story

You had every intention of doing it. You'd thought it all out, weighed pros and cons, and made your decision. It was reasonable, practical. Family and friends were behind you all the way. But then something happened. A dream, a phone call, a look from a stranger on the bus—something that maybe wasn't even related to your decision, but it spoke to you. It said: Don't do that, do this instead. And all these years later, you can't even explain it to yourself. Only that you trusted your intuition, and you'd do the same thing today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 7:10-14; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-24 (10). "Joseph her husband . . . decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream."

Monday, Dec 23, 2019

MEMORIAL OF JOHN OF KANTY, PRIEST

Rising above sin and division

Today is the memorial of John of Kanty. A 15th-century Polish scholar and priest, he was known for his simple lifestyle and generosity to the poor. He had enemies, however, who schemed to have him demoted from professor at the University of Krakow to parish priest (a job he felt unprepared for). It took him years to win over his flock, but eventually he did, and eventually he was reinstated as a professor. Sin and division within the church caused harm to John of Kanty, yet he persisted in living a good life. Take a moment to draw hope from people you know who persist in living generously and lovingly in today's imperfect church.

TODAY'S READINGS: Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Luke 1:57-66 (199). "O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law: Come to save us, Lord our God!"

Tuesday, Dec 24, 2019

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Light it up!

The longest night of the year took place on the winter solstice, December 21, and just a few days later, we await the coming of the Light of the World. Tonight the anticipation reaches its peak as people gather to celebrate—in some cases with very bright festivities indeed! Take Las Parrandas de Remedios, Cuba's famous fireworks festival on Christmas Eve. *Parranda* is a street party, and travel guides will tell you this is one not to miss. Make your own fireworks of joy—in your church, home, and heart—because your Savior is born.

TODAY'S READINGS: Morning: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67-79 (200). "The dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness."

Wednesday, Dec 25, 2019

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

Hope is born!

Saint Augustine wrote these beautiful words describing the Incarnation of Jesus: "God so loved us that for our sakes he, through whom time was made, was made in time. Older by eternity than the world itself, he became younger in age than many of his servants in the world. God, who made man, was made man. He was given existence by a mother whom he

brought into existence. He was carried in hands which he formed; he was nursed at breasts which he filled. He cried like a baby in the manger in speechless infancy—this Word without which human eloquence is speechless." Let us rejoice in a God who loves to use what's small and meek to accomplish great things. Merry Christmas!

TODAY'S READINGS: Day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18 (16). "Let all the angels of God worship him."

Thursday, Dec 26, 2019

FEAST OF STEPHEN, FIRST MARTYR

Let the children lead the way

In religious art, Saint Stephen, first martyr and one of the first seven deacons in the church, is pictured as a very young man. He must have taken to the new Christian faith in a big way, because despite his youth he was already said to be filled with the Holy Spirit and a miracle worker. Look around our world today. Once again we find deeply committed young people, not only animating the church through events such as World Youth Day, but taking the lead on many of the most pressing issues of global concern, such as climate change. Lend an ear to what young people in your life are saying—you may find some ageless wisdom there!

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Matthew 10:17-22 (696). "They could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke."

Friday, Dec 27, 2019

FEAST OF JOHN, APOSTLE, EVANGELIST

Testify with your life

Sometimes a platoon of veterans will get together every five years, until their numbers dwindle to a few lone survivors. Or a group of college girlfriends will have an annual reunion—until one is left with no one else to reunite with. John the evangelist, a.k.a., the beloved disciple, was said to have outlived all the other apostles. Perhaps it felt lonely—or perhaps it drove him to spend every last day recounting and recording for posterity the incredible events that he witnessed firsthand. Keep your eyes open and pen at hand—God is at work in your own life and you are the living testament!

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 1:1-4; John 20:1a, 2-8 (697). "We have seen it and testify to it."

Saturday, Dec 28, 2019

FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS

Children first

The Holy Innocents' only crime was that they were the same age as the baby Jesus. The local king, Herod, was a jealous man who had few scruples about killing people. When he heard that wise men from the east were en route to honor a newborn king, Herod was beside himself. He demanded that they tell him where he also could "honor" this baby king. When they ignored him, Herod did the unthinkable and ordered that all of Bethlehem's male babies and toddlers be put to death. Say a prayer today for the children of our world who have had their innocence robbed from them through war, grinding poverty, or abuse. Let their protection be our highest priority.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 1:5—2:2; Matthew 2:13-18 (698). "A cry was heard at Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation: Rachel bewailing her children."

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



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