

Sunday, Dec 24, 2017

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, CHRISTMAS EVE

Yes, yes, yes!

2017 can seem like a litany of bad news. Floods, famine, and earthquakes. Conflicts, threats, and shootings. Headlines fixed our gaze on horror, relentless as it was real. Our personal lives may be just as anxious, logging illnesses, financial upsets, imperiled relationships. While it's natural to recall difficult events in blazing detail, it takes more effort to compose a litany of good news that's just as true. Give yourself a present that will last all year. Begin a grace box, jotting down something wonderful you hear, see, or receive every day. You'll have 365 reasons to be merry next year!

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38 (11). *"And coming to her, the angel said, 'Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.'"*

Monday, Dec 25, 2017

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

Word is spreading!

Words are powerful things. They encourage love, underscore hate, and kindle fear. Words create reality because what we speak does take on flesh and live with us. Have you not wished for the chance to say what was left unsaid, in a moment that is gone forever? When God spoke a word into being in Genesis, the whole world resulted. Later, God spoke Divinity into Mary's body and the world was saved from itself. This Christmas, give voice to your heart and say what needs to be said to those you love.

TODAY'S READINGS: Vigil: Isaiah 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Matthew 1:1-25 (13); Night: Isaiah 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (14); Dawn: Isaiah 62:11-12; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:15-20 (15); Day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18 (16). *"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory."*

Tuesday, Dec 26, 2017

FEAST OF STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR

Follow Stephen's lead

Some things, we feel sure, are impossible to forgive. But then we reluctantly recall that Jesus forgave his crucifiers, and Stephen, the first martyr of the church, forgave his murders in faithful imitation of his Lord. Believe it or not, today Stephen (d. 35) is known as the patron saint of masons and bricklayers—a strange role for a man who was stoned to death! Yet, why not? We are all pledged to bless those who curse us. What better way to do that than to take up the cause of your old enemy? Pray for your persecutors today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Matthew 10:17-22 (696). *"You will be dragged before governors and kings because of me."*

Wednesday, Dec 27, 2017

FEAST OF JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

Time to see the light

Today is a day to celebrate the unique perspective on Jesus the writings of John have to offer. In particular, light and darkness. John sees Jesus as the light of the world, and so it is customary to light candles on this day. As the evening falls today, light a candle and say a favorite prayer in honor of the One who said, "I have come as light into the world" (John 12:46).

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 1:1-4; John 20:1a, 2-8 (697). *"The life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it."*

Thursday, Dec 28, 2017

FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS

Stand up for the least of these

No sooner do we celebrate the birth of one baby when the Bible recalls the slaughter of other babies. Like the infant Moses before him, the Messiah escapes to Egypt with his family. Let's not look the other way as this reading comes up each year, but let it be a reminder: Children still are victimized by adults who abuse their power—personally, professionally, or politically. Let's change that. What can you do today to be an advocate for children?

Check out childrensdefense.org for some ideas.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 1:5—2:2; Matthew 2:13-18 (698). *"Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt."*

Friday, Dec 29, 2017

MEMORIAL OF THOMAS BECKET, BISHOP, MARTYR

Get your priorities straight

In the 12th century, Thomas Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury, stood firm against King Henry II in the latter's efforts to establish himself as absolute ruler over everything in his kingdom, including the church. Becket's refusal to submit to the king's ultimate authority cost him his life. The stakes are not always that high in the tensions between church and state, but people of faith must prepare themselves for difficult choices. Be clear about which of your loyalties are temporal—finite and fleeting—and which are eternal—everlasting and true for all time.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 2:3-11; Luke 2:22-35 (202). *"This child is destined to be a sign that will be opposed so the inner thoughts of many will be revealed."*

Saturday, Dec 30, 2017

SIXTH DAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

We all have a role to play

Anna is one of nine female prophets noted in the Bible. She was also a widow who spent most of her life in the work of worship and proclamation at the temple. This was unusual, because in Hebrew tradition, widows were more often looked upon as problems: Who would marry them, support their children, and feed them? In the early church, the fortunes of widows were reversed. The holy office of widows became an honored station in life. Those formally consecrated as widows became ministers of charity, freed from accountability to men as they used their own wealth, traveled, and played a vital public role in the community. How might your station in life be "consecrated"?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 2:12-17; Luke 2:36-40 (203). *"There was also a prophet, Anna, who never left the temple."*

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



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