



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2016

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

Look for the love on Christmas

Christmas Day is here! After weeks of preparation, are you filled with excitement? Exhausted? Perhaps a bit of both? On this holy morning, imagine sitting and talking with Mary, mother of the newborn. She carried the child in her womb for nine months; she labored and gave birth. Perhaps she was exhausted that morning, perhaps she was filled with hope and joy—perhaps, like you, a bit of both! The essence of this day is the birth of that child, who came to bring love to us all. Look for that love today in the smile of a child, the story of a parent, a meal at your table, or a word of gratitude.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (14).*

"You have nothing to fear! I come to proclaim good news to you."

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26 FEAST OF STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR

Deacons on the front line

Stephen was a deacon in the early church. Evidence suggests that both women and men served as deacons in the early church, and Pope Francis recently established an official commission to study the question of the diaconate of women. The word "radical" means going back to "the root," so if radical change is ahead for the diaconate, it will be deeply rooted in Christian history and tradition. Pray for wise discernment by all those involved in the commission.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Matthew 10:17-22 (696).*

"You are my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake you will lead and guide me."

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27 FEAST OF JOHN, APOSTLE, EVANGELIST

Tell him I AM sent you

Each gospel has an emphasis, and John's is the divinity of Christ revealed in signs of service: feeding multitudes, raising Lazarus, forgiving the adulterous woman, turning water into wine, and washing feet like a slave. In John, Jesus often uses the divine name, I AM: in the poetry of vine and branches, the good shepherd, the bread from heaven. Because you are baptized, divinity lives in you as well. As the hustle of the holidays continues, feed, not thousands, but one hungry person; wash someone's feet by volunteering somewhere; be a good shepherd, a mentor to a young person; be a forgiving, divine vessel of joy. Show that love does not die as Christmas Day passes by.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 1:1-4; John 20:1a, 2-8 (697).* *"What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes."*



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

©2016 by TrueQuest Communications. TakeFiveForFaith.com; 800-942-2811; mail@takefiveforfaith.com. All rights reserved. Daily email sign-up and App available online. Art may be subject to additional copyright. Noncommercial reprints permitted with the following credit: Reprinted with permission from TakeFiveForFaith.com. Scripture citations from the New American Bible Revised Edition. Contributors: Alice Camille, Peg Ekerdt, Sister Colleen Gibson, S.S.J., Daniel Grippo, Deacon Pedro Guevara-Mann, Father Larry Janowski, O.F.M., Jennifer Tomshack, Patrice J. Tuohy

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28 FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS

Martyrs of today

Our Christmas joy is interrupted today. We remember the children who were slaughtered in Bethlehem by King Herod. Such tragedies continue today—pray for all who die daily from violence and neglect. Pope Francis has reminded us many times that these are the martyrs of today. On this Christmas weekday we must stop and reflect on the fact that even though there may be darkness and a rejection of life, the light of love, the light of Christmas, shines much brighter and scatters hatred and brings about a new world.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 1:5—2:2; Matthew 2:13-18 (698).* *"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29

MEMORIAL OF THOMAS BECKET, BISHOP, MARTYR

Fight for what's right

We teach kids to stand up to bullies, but how often do we adults do the same? How many times do we ignore hurtful, inappropriate comments to others in person and online? How often do we fail to advocate for those in our city, country, and world who aren't being treated fairly? It's not easy to risk the repercussions of doing the right thing, but we are called to do so nonetheless. Find courage in the example of Saint Thomas Becket, who gave his life for standing up to someone—his friend, boss, and king—who was in the wrong.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 2:3-11; Luke 2:22-35 (202).* *"Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled."*

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

All you need is love

"Jesus himself was born into a modest family." So writes Pope Francis in his letter, "The Joy of Love." We tend to think of that small family as perfect, but we presume, too, that they worked, prayed, and traveled together as many families do today. Although we don't know their daily rituals and routines, we do know that the child of the family became a man of justice and compassion who showed us how to love. To celebrate this Feast of the Holy Family, put love on your lips and in your heart and do something today that imitates the Lord's unconditional love.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14 or Colossians 3:12-21; Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23 (17).* *"Over all these virtues, put on love which binds the rest together and makes them perfect."*

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31 MEMORIAL OF SYLVESTER I, POPE

Keep the Christmas spirit alive

Don't you wish the wonder of Christmas lasted longer than one day? Well, it actually does! The Nativity of the Lord is celebrated on the liturgical calendar as an Octave—that is, eight days long—in this case, from December 25 to January 1. Easter is also celebrated as an Octave, because the importance of these two events demands a full week of attention. Because today is also the feast day of Sylvester I, who was pope during the Council of Nicea, which affirmed that Jesus was both human and divine, take time to contemplate this part of the mystery of Christ's birth.

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 John 2:18-21; John 1:1-18 (204).* *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory."*