



TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Samuel 1:24-28; Luke 1:46-56 (198)*. "My spirit finds joy in God, my savior . . . his mercy is from age to age."

### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23 FEAST OF JOHN OF KANTY, PRIEST A man for this season

It seems a little unfair to John Kanty to give him a memorial two days before Christmas. It would be like a child whose birthday is so close to Christmas there might be fewer presents! For John, however, a day and season of giving would be a further incentive to give away the shirt on his back, literally, since his money and clothing were at the disposal of the poor of Krakow, Poland. Even his intellectual gifts, which were many, were at the disposal of others. He was a man who knew how to effect what so many wish were true: that the Christmas spirit abided year-round.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Luke 1:57-66 (199)*. "Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths."

### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24 ADVENT WEEKDAY Ready or not here God comes

Christmas is near upon us—yet again. With the setting of the sun, the celebrations of the Eve begin. Take a moment, in this Year of Mercy, to remember that God became one with us to show us how to live and to love. Advertising budgets to the contrary, Christmas is not about finding the perfect gift, creating the perfect meal, or sharing the festivities with the perfect family, grateful as we are for all good things in our lives. It is also the season to search for and find the merciful presence of Emmanuel (literally, God-with-us). Take a deep breath and spend a moment in quiet prayer asking for patience and peace in the days to come.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Morning: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67-79 (200)*. "All this is the work of the kindness of God . . . to guide our feet into the way of peace."

### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25 SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS) Be a bearer of Good News

The word *Christmas* comes from the Old English words "Cristes moesse," meaning the "mass or festival of Christ." Christmas is not only a time to celebrate the historical birth of Jesus Christ. It is also a wonderful time to consider the ways that we can continue to be bearers of Christ in the world today. How might you do this through your everyday words and actions? In the coming year, how might you proclaim this Good News of great joy in our world?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Night: Isaiah 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (14)*; *Day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18 (16)*. "I proclaim to you Good News of great joy; today a Savior is born for us, Christ the Lord."

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26 FEAST OF STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR Profiles in courage

Who's on your personal roster of heroes? Most of us are quick to catalogue figures from the history books: pioneers, leaders, entrepreneurs. Perhaps a few martyrs like Saint Stephen or Oscar Romero, or truth tellers like Nelson Mandela or Cesar Chavez, or often our mothers and fathers. Past heroes aren't enough, however; we too must be counted among the brave. On this second day of Christmas, give the gift of a courageous example, especially to the young, the weak, and those who lack the consolation of faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Matthew 10:17-22 (696)*. "As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'"

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2015 FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT Stay the course

John the Baptist didn't waste any time getting started on his life's work of heralding the coming of the Messiah—while still in the womb, he leapt with joy in the presence of his not-yet-born Lord. Some people are blessed to have callings that are a given, but not everyone figures theirs out right away. It can take a long, frustrating time, full of false starts and failures. Trust that those experiences are useful to learning what your true vocation is. God has a plan for you, always has, even before you were in the womb.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Micah 5:1-4a; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45 (12)*. "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

### MONDAY, DECEMBER 21 FEAST OF PETER CANISIUS, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH Embrace the outsider

To imagine the life of the 16th-century Dutch Jesuit Peter Canisius, who lived during the height of the Reformation, we might look to our present Pope Francis. Like Francis, Peter lived energetically, but also took to heart the Jesuit pattern of study, reflection, and prayer. For example, the easy way to challenge the thinkers of the Reformation would be to vilify them, but that's where daily "reflection and prayer" produce effects. While his fellow Catholics might attack Protestants such as John Calvin, Peter—as Francis might—said that with such an approach "we do not cure patients, we make them incurable." What is your attitude toward outsiders?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Song of Songs 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Luke 1:39-45 (197)*. "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb."

### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22 ADVENT WEEKDAY Keep your eyes on the prize

At this moment, we may well be concerned with last-minute shopping and counting the gifts to be given to family and friends. It is so easy and tempting to get distracted, yet in faith we are called to the corporal works of mercy, such as caring for the poor and lowly and feeding the hungry. In this Year of Mercy, generosity born of mercy for all of God's children should help us reset priorities and make good decisions as we edge nearer to this feast of Incarnation. Our joy then on Christmas Day will bear witness to our belief that "it is in giving that we receive."



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

©2015 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, Father Larry Janowski, O.F.M., Sister Maxine Kollasch, I.H.M., Jennifer Tomshack, Patrice J. Tuohy, Sister Julie Weira, I.H.M.