



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2016 SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT What's in your spiritual DNA?

Genealogy is popular these days. Perhaps you've traced your family lineage and learned where your ancestors came from and what their names were. It's meaningful to learn your family history and heritage because it's a part of your identity. From the Bible, we know the genealogy of Jesus, and at Christmastime we hear about Jesus' ancestor, Jesse, a good man from Bethlehem who fathered King David. Teach the children in your life about their faith inheritance as Christians by making a Jesse Tree with them as a crafts project—and reflect on what you've inherited from Jesse, too.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12* (4). "A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom."

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5 ADVENT WEEKDAY Civil rights are sacred

On this day in 1955, the day of Rosa Parks' trial, the historic bus boycott began in Montgomery, Alabama in protest of her arrest. That day, some 40,000 African-American commuters chose to walk to work, no matter the distance. Despite many efforts (some violent) to put an end to the boycott, it lasted for a year. In June 1956, a district court declared that racial segregation laws were unconstitutional and in November of that year the Supreme Court upheld that ruling. We often forget that our notion of civil rights comes from our Christian heritage. Let's pray for rights for all, especially those who are most marginalized by our society.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 5:17-26* (181). "Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God."

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6 MEMORIAL OF NICHOLAS, BISHOP Generous thoughts

Nicholas was a beloved fourth-century bishop who has been appropriated as a patron saint of sailors, fishermen, merchants, broadcasters, the falsely accused, repentant thieves, brewers, pharmacists, archers, pawnbrokers, and students! But for most of us, he is associated by legend with Christmas and immortalized in Clement Moore's poem, "A Visit from Saint Nicholas." His feast is like a little Christmas, a reminder that the feast you are about to celebrate in 18 days has little to do with material gift-giving and everything to do with generous love-giving. Stories about Nicholas involve anonymous generosity to someone in need. Be generous today in honor of old Saint Nick!

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 40:1-11; Matthew 18:12-14* (182). "Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord God."

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7

MEMORIAL OF AMBROSE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Be a spirited voice for unity

We live in polarized times. How can we find our way past our divisions? Perhaps Ambrose, a holy man from the fourth century, can suggest a way forward. Back in the day, arguments over the divinity of Christ spilled into disputes over church leadership. Ambrose, who at the time wasn't even a baptized Christian, appealed to all factions and was spontaneously called forth as bishop by popular acclaim. The Spirit moves in surprising ways. Be a force for unity wherever you find division: in your church, your community, your family.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 40:25-31; Matthew 11:28-30* (183).

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8 SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY; PATRONAL FEAST DAY OF THE UNITED STATES Mary, mother of America

It's been one month since Election Day in the United States. Whether your candidate won or lost, today is an opportunity to pray for our nation. In tumultuous times, it's comforting to know that we have an advocate in the Blessed Mother, patroness of the United States. Mary watches over each one of us and in a special way our country. As we celebrate her Immaculate Conception, let us ask her intercession on behalf of our nation—that we might have the courage and perseverance to follow her example of fidelity to grace and obedience to God's will.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38* (689). "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9 MEMORIAL OF JUAN DIEGO CUAUHTLATZIN Happy Juan Diego day

Some Europeans in the newly conquered Americas considered natives to be less than fully human. But God chose Juan Diego, a poor, humble native man, to be his messenger by sending Our Lady of Guadalupe to him. This meant that all indigenous people were important. In 2002 Pope John Paul II canonized him as the first indigenous saint of the American continent, saying, "Happy Juan Diego, true and faithful man! Look with favor upon the pain of those who are suffering in body or in spirit, on those afflicted by poverty, loneliness, marginalization, or ignorance. May all people, civic leaders and ordinary citizens alike, always act in accordance with the demands of justice and with respect for the dignity of each person, so that in this way peace may be reinforced."

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 48:17-19; Matthew 11:16-19* (185). "Wisdom is proved right by her deeds."

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10 ADVENT WEEKDAY What are we waiting for?

An empty chair at the Passover table waits for Elijah. He's the mysterious prophet in 2 Kings who flew to heaven on a fiery chariot. Elijah's return is anticipated as the hour of restored justice. Jesus tells us not to wait on Elijah: The time for justice is already here. Since 1948 on this day, the United Nations has promoted International Human Rights Day. It's a time to declare that equality, freedom, peace, hope, dignity, rule of law, prosperity, and justice belong to all, not just to the lucky ones. Stand up for global human rights.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11; Matthew 17:9a, 10-13* (186). "Elijah will indeed come and restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come."



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

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