

Sunday, Dec 09, 2018

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

A guide to keep us safe

If you've ever traveled to previously unknown places, you appreciate the importance of having a reliable guide. A good guide speaks the language, knows the lay of the land, and anticipates obstacles along the way. John the Baptist is such a guide for our Advent journey. He cautions us to prepare the way for deeper access to the divine mystery we approach in this season. John tells us that the right spirit for this encounter is repentance: a turning around, a fresh effort. Some of us may need to be forgiven. Others have some forgiving to do. Heed this guidance!

TODAY'S READINGS: Baruch 5:1-9; Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6 (6). *"A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'"*

Monday, Dec 10, 2018

ADVENT WEEKDAY

In praise of caretakers

When a person is seriously ill or injured, it is easy for the caretakers to get overlooked as we focus our sympathies and attention on the stricken person. But even when it is a labor of love, caretaking is hard work, unending and exhausting in many cases. Next time you visit an ill person, make it a point to offer the caretaker some concrete help: bring along a home-cooked meal, do the laundry, or relieve them for an afternoon so they can run some errands or simply take some personal time. Let's take care of the caretakers in our midst—we will need them ourselves some day!

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 5:17-26 (181). *"Some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed."*

Tuesday, Dec 11, 2018

MEMORIAL OF DAMASUS I, POPE

Don't get too comfortable

When Saint Damasus rose to the position of pope in the fourth century, the church faithful were in the midst of coming to terms with their legalization into the Roman state and the subsequent decline of their persecution. It was within this context that Damasus led the church to a veneration for the local martyrs of their past. Enjoying now a state of legal security, Damasus believed that honoring local martyrs and seeking their intercession and protection would instill in Catholics an appreciation for their distinctive spiritual identity. Today in America, Catholics enjoy a freedom and comfort in their faith as few ever have, yet across the globe faithful people continue to be martyred. Look to the figure of these martyrs today as a reminder of faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 40:1-11; Matthew 18:12-14 (182). *"If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray?"*

Wednesday, Dec 12, 2018

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Hail Mary, who is with us

"Where are you going, my son?" With these words, the Blessed Virgin Mary is said to have greeted the indigenous *campesino* (and now, saint) Juan Diego when she appeared to him in 1531, an event the people of the Americas celebrate today. The image the Virgin of Guadalupe impressed on Juan Diego's cape shows a

mestizo woman who wears the band of a pregnant indigenous woman and a flower, symbol of renewal. Mary came to all the peoples of the Americas in the form of a Native American. It is her way of saying she is with us. Put yourself in the care of Guadalupe.

TODAY'S READINGS: Zechariah 2:14-17 or Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; Luke 1:26-38 or Luke 1:39-47 (690A). *"Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."*

Thursday, Dec 13, 2018

MEMORIAL OF LUCY, VIRGIN, MARTYR

She saw clearly

The church celebrates the memorial of Saint Lucy, who was killed in a Roman persecution in the year 304. Her name means "bringer of light" and reminds us of the promise of the birth of the Christ, the light of the world. Try saying this prayer to Lucy: "Saint Lucy, you did not hide your light under a basket, but let it shine for the whole world, for all the centuries to see. We may not suffer torture in our lives the way you did, but we are still called to let the light of our Christianity illumine our daily lives. Please help us to have the courage to bring our Christianity into every corner of our day. Amen."

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 41:13-20; Matthew 11:11-15 (184). *"Among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist."*

Friday, Dec 14, 2018

MEMORIAL OF JOHN OF THE CROSS, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

How to see light in the dark

Locked in a stifling-hot prison cell, Saint John of the Cross produced "The Spiritual Canticle," an exquisite poem of divine praise. It wasn't that John was exempt from suffering. On the contrary, says Thomas Merton about his favorite saint, "For the saint, suffering continues to be suffering, but it ceases to be an obstacle to his mission, or to his happiness, both of which are found positively and concretely in the will of God." Another Saint John—the Baptist—also kept sight of his divine mission during his painful imprisonment. Advent represents a time when we, too, are in captivity. The wait for our salvation can be excruciating. Follow the way of saints and focus on your mission—to love and serve the Lord.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 48:17-19; Matthew 11:16-19 (185). *"To what shall I compare this generation?"*

Saturday, Dec 15, 2018

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Stop and look around

Advent invites you to see ordinary life with special eyes, deeply enough that ordinary people and experiences are holy, the stuff of salvation. Advent is a time—stop there! A time. Snag it! Hold it! Use it! Discover that your daily life and the people in it are all messengers of God so that one day you will not have to say, "If only I had seen. If only I had slowed down. If only I hadn't hustled past Jesus as I rushed through my day—and my life."

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11; Matthew 17:9a, 10-13 (186). *"Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him but did to him whatever they pleased."*

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



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