

Sunday, Dec 10, 2017

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Might makes right?

Strength is good; weakness is bad. These are primary lessons of the playground and if we don't embrace them, we may live to suffer their effects. Yet even a fighter like Saint Paul would come to appreciate the opposite lesson: that power reaches perfection only in weakness. John the Baptist would frame it another way: "Jesus must increase, and I must decrease." It turns out that might rarely makes right, and more often seeks as much wrong as it can get away with. Jesus wields divine might *for* right. When you have the upper hand, consider laying it down.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8 (5). "And this is what John proclaimed: 'One mightier than I is coming after me.'"

Monday, Dec 11, 2017

MEMORIAL OF DAMASUS I, POPE

Good bookkeeping helps

The pontificate of Damasus (366-384) occurred during a stormy time in the early church, with controversies and divisions on all sides. Perhaps Damasus' greatest contribution was his insight that a standardized version of the Bible was desperately needed to clear the air. In 382 he commissioned a highly respected scholar named Jerome to revise the Bible into a more accurate and updated Latin version, working directly from the original Greek and Hebrew. Saint Jerome's monumental effort came to be known as the *Vulgate*, meaning "translated into a native language." Even though Latin long ago stopped being a language of everyday use, the Vulgate still holds an honored position in the church. Be grateful for the Good Book and open it up today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 5:17-26 (181). "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?'"

Tuesday, Dec 12, 2017

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Viva Guadalupe!

Mexican Catholics have long revered the Virgin of Guadalupe as a symbol of God's compassionate presence among the people. She is also an important symbol of Mexican nationalism. In 1810, when Father Miguel Hidalgo initiated the movement that led to Mexican independence, he and his followers carried a banner of Guadalupe and shouted, "Death to bad government, long live the Virgin of Guadalupe!" Guadalupe was proclaimed "Patroness of the Americas"—including the United States—by Pope Pius XII in 1946. She continues to serve as an apt symbol of loving care for all God's people. Perhaps you can attend a celebration of her feast day today, or find your own personal way to commemorate the feast.

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). "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

Wednesday, Dec 13, 2017

MEMORIAL OF LUCY, VIRGIN, MARTYR

Shed some light on the season

Saint Lucy is one of those early saints about whom we know little, though we have some wonderful legendary stories about her that have to do with her name, which means "light." We remember her because she lived—and died—in a time when

Christians, to remain faithful, regularly paid the price of their lives. Today we also cross over the midpoint of the Advent season, when we prepare for the coming of the One who is the way, the truth, and the light. Celebrate this saint of light and clear sight by keeping your inner eye open for the Light of the World.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 40:25-31; Matthew 11:28-30 (183). "Lift up your eyes on high and see."

Thursday, Dec 14, 2017

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

A closer walk with thee

Saint John of the Cross, a Spanish mystic, was born in 1542. He wrote *The Dark Night of the Soul*, which explores the doubt and spiritual dryness all serious Christians experience on their spiritual journey. Though difficult and painful, the dark night of the soul is an invitation to a deeper closeness with God through greater trust and abandonment to God's will. Saint John wrote, "Oh night that guided me, Oh night more lovely than the dawn." During the holiday season it's not unusual for people to experience doubt and emptiness. Pray to Saint John of the Cross to shore up your faith and give you courage on your way toward God.

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 15, 2017

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Stay true to the spirit

Some folks never have a good word for anybody. This was true in the time of Jesus, when people criticized John the Baptist for fasting, and then spoke badly of Jesus for feasting! Then when Jesus performed healing miracles, some thought he acted by the power of the devil. When he refused a miraculous rescue to save himself from the cross, they said God had abandoned him. Don't listen to the critics—follow the Spirit's prompting.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 48:17-19; Matthew 11:16-19 (185). "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'"

Saturday, Dec 16, 2017

ADVENT WEEKDAY

John points the way

John the Baptist is a prominent personality in Advent. His style is that of the Old Testament prophets, but he points to the New Testament reality of Jesus. He didn't become a follower of Jesus, even though he was the forerunner of the "one who is to come." John's message is delivered in the "fire and brimstone" language of career prophets like Amos or Jeremiah. But his greatest resemblance is to Elijah, whose return was anticipated before the arrival of the messiah. Like John, we, too, "prepare the way" for Jesus to come into the world.

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."

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



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