



## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2016 FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### The coming of the new law

As we move closer to Christmas, the O Antiphons in the Liturgy of the Hours highlight the prophecy that foretold Jesus' coming. Today, we pray, "O *Leader of Israel, giver of the law to Moses: rescue us with your mighty power!*" Time and again, God has rescued his people. Faith and divine law go hand-in-hand. Just as the Israelites tried to hold fast to the law of Moses, we are called to embrace Jesus as a new embodiment of that law. He is coming to renew the face of the earth, may his birth at Christmas renew the law in our lives.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 7:10-14; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-24* (10). "They shall name him *Emmanuel*, which means "God is with us."

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 19 ADVENT WEEKDAY

### Hope starts early

A child is born, and a surge of hope arrives with it. Truthfully, we have no idea who this stranger will be. The color of a baby's eyes may change; this tiny being may grow to be seven feet tall. She might be president of her own company. He may be a priest, a plumber, a playwright. So much potential lies hidden in each new person. Why not support our children with every possible resource? We pray in thanksgiving for the hope new life brings: "O *Root of Jesse's stem, come save us without delay!*"

TODAY'S READINGS: *Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Luke 1:5-25* (195). "For the boy shall be consecrated to God from the womb."

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20 ADVENT WEEKDAY

### Be free

Freedom is talked about, legislated, protested for. But what is freedom? Some definitions seem watery: We want to do as we like without restrictions. We want Mom or the government or the church off our backs. A better sense of liberty is the capacity to become more than the sum of our givens. The imprint of divine nature distinguishes us: makes us self-creators, re-inventors, transcendents of present circumstances. We pray for the right key to unlock our best selves: "O *Key of David, come and free the prisoners of darkness!*"

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 7:10-14; Luke 1:26-38* (196). "Elizabeth has conceived a son in her old age... for nothing will be impossible for God."

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21

MEMORIAL OF PETER CANISIUS, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

### May calmer minds prevail

Saint Peter Canisius is remembered for being the calm voice in the midst of a storm. For Catholics in 16th-century northern Europe, the storm was the Protestant Reformation. While most partisans on both side of the divide used strident words and sometimes violent actions, Peter called for reason. Rejecting the inflamed rhetoric against Protestants that was coming from his associates, he said, "With words like these, we don't cure patients, we make them incurable." Think twice before you criticize those who see things differently. Keep the dialogue open.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Song of Songs 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Luke 1:39-45* (197). "O *Radiant Dawn, shine on those in darkness and the shadow of death.*"

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22 ADVENT WEEKDAY

### Kinship with all

In today's antiphon for vespers we pray, "O *King of all nations: save us, whom you formed from the dust!*" That is a reminder that all people come from the same source and have been formed by the same God. Each one of us is made in God's image and likeness. The kingdom of God is one of kinship. If we take the time to truly come to know one another, we will find the glimpses of God all around us. We just need to look!

TODAY'S READINGS: *1 Samuel 1:24-28; Luke 1:46-56* (198). "He remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever."

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23 ADVENT WEEKDAY

### O come, O come Emmanuel!

"O *Emmanuel: come to save us, Lord our God.*" Every day for the past seven days, the church has prayed the O Antiphons, using the ancient words and divine images found in the Old Testament. In these prayers, people of faith asked God to come and free us, to rescue us, and to shine on us. Today, the divine word is *Emmanuel*, which means "God-with-us." As today unfolds, remember that God is with you right now and will be with you through thick and thin, stress and peace, sorrow and joy. It is your job to pay attention and notice God's presence in the insights, conversations, and events of your days—and then to act accordingly.

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."

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24 ADVENT WEEKDAY

### God is with you always

What's in a name? In the case of Emmanuel, it's *all* in that name. "God-with-us" in the infant whose birth we celebrate; "God-with-us" in Jesus' forgiving sinners; "God-with-us" in Jesus weeping over a friend's death; "God-with-us" in feeding thousands with bread and countless people with his word; "God-with-us" carrying the cross; "God-with-us" on Christmas morning and in his last words, "I am with you always." God is with you today and always because Jesus has lived up to his name. Is there someone you ought to be with tonight?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Morning: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67-79* (200). "I have been with you wherever you went."



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

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