

Sunday, Dec 06, 2020

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Begin at the end

Beginnings are really the Act II of endings. That's why we hear so much Apocalypse in the early Advent readings. Something has to give way for the new thing to arrive. In order to move into the new house, you have to leave the old one. That goes for the life of the world to come, as well. So when John the Baptist summons us to prepare the Lord's way, he simultaneously obliges us to repent our former way. Consider what obstacles need to "pass away" to "make straight" the path of the Christ child's arrival into your heart.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8 (5). "The heavens will pass away with a mighty roar, and the Earth and everything done on it will be found out."

Monday, Dec 07, 2020

MEMORIAL OF AMBROSE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

To the moon and beyond

You think you're busy? Ambrose, one of the four first doctors of the church, challenged emperors and combated heresies. He converted Saint Augustine and championed celibacy. He was a prolific theologian and contributed to the music of the church. He was so admired he was made a bishop by popular acclaim. Ambrose did a lot of different things—who of us could keep up?—but he had one vision that we can all get behind: that the church rise "like a growing moon" above fleeting worldliness.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 5:17-26 (181). "We have seen incredible things today."

Tuesday, Dec 08, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (PATRONAL FEAST DAY OF THE USA)

Original grace

The Immaculate Conception is so key to Catholic consciousness, it's hard to believe it hasn't been around forever. The teaching—that Mary was born without original sin—was in fact opposed by scholarly saints like Anselm, Aquinas, Bernard, and Bonaventure. They insisted that, because sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, Mary would need salvation as much as the rest of us. But the Council of Trent concluded that Mary had been spared, and popular piety began to revere her Immaculate Conception. The significance? Perhaps, as theologian Elizabeth Johnson eloquently points out, it's that "grace is more original than sin."

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38 (689). "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."

Wednesday, Dec 09, 2020

MEMORIAL OF JUAN DIEGO CUAUHTLATOATZIN

Celebrate the messenger of love

Born in 1474 near modern-day Mexico City, Saint Juan Diego was named Cuauhtlatoatzin (Talking Eagle) and according to tradition lived among his Chichimeca people until the conquest of Mexico in 1521. At the age of 50, Juan Diego was baptized by Franciscan missionaries and began attending daily Mass. While he walked to Mass on December 9, 1531, the Blessed Mother appeared to him with a special request. So begins the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose feast we celebrate in three days. Today, we honor Juan Diego, the first indigenous saint of the Americas, canonized in 2002, who spent the rest of his life as a

prayerful hermit tending the first shrine built to Guadalupe. On this Advent day, we pray for the grace to imitate his humility, trust, and faithfulness.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 40:25-31; Matthew 11:28-30 (183). "They that hope in the LORD will . . . soar as with eagles' wings."

Thursday, Dec 10, 2020

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Walk the simple but elusive path to peace

As Christians await the Prince of Peace, today the world celebrates this year's Nobel Peace Prize awardee—the U.N. World Food Program—for their heroic efforts in war-torn lands in the midst of the pandemic. Human beings are prone to conflict, but the craving for peace and reconciliation runs deep across cultures and faiths. The perennial question is how to achieve it. Here's a simple but profound answer that has been put forth by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development for decades: "If you want peace, work for justice." Ask yourself what step toward justice you can take today.

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 11, 2020

MEMORIAL OF DAMASUS I, POPE

Stormy weather

If we think we've got it tough—juggling the gift list, social schedule, family feuds, and ailing bank account—consider Damasus. He embodied the truism that faith is more a compass than an insurance policy. When he was elected pope, another faction chose someone else. What followed were violent battles, scandals, accusations, heresies, and troubled relations with the Eastern Church. While we might sing carols about the Prince of Peace, the hard reality of human life has, since the Incarnation, also involved moments of hurricane-force wind. Today, let's welcome whatever problem we're reluctant to engage, knowing it might be our teacher.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 48:17-19; Matthew 11:16-19 (185). "If you would hearken to my commandments, your prosperity would be like a river."

Saturday, Dec 12, 2020

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Celebrate the feast!

The apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Mexico City's Tepeyac Hill in 1531 was a game changer. Images of the Virgin had typically carried a distinctly European flavor. The Virgin of Guadalupe, however, had indigenous features. She would become the first *Mestiza* image, for a people who comprise the racially and culturally diverse population of modern-day Mexico. Under her spiritual care and influence, a variety of peoples could unite at least in spirituality. For Mexican Americans, and Latinos everywhere, *la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* is among the biggest religious celebrations of the year. Join the *fiesta*.

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). "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord."

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



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