

Sunday, Dec 20, 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (O KEY OF DAVID)

Unlocking every door

Those who have been incarcerated know exactly what it means to face a locked door. So do folks who have been institutionalized with mental illness. But even those of us who have not been behind a literal door may find ourselves living under a sentence of fear, bitterness, depression, or unforgiveness. We may be locked out of relationships that are important to us because of resentment or past actions. Poverty is often a prison that keeps opportunity and hope out, while also fostering despair within. O Jesus, Key of David, unlock every door that keeps us from experiencing your freedom!

TODAY'S READINGS: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38 (11). *"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."*

Monday, Dec 21, 2020

ADVENT WEEKDAY (O RADIANT DAWN)

Just before dawn

They say it's darkest just before the dawn, and today we've reached that moment on the darkest day of what has been a very dark year. Our hope in the worst of circumstances reaches a crescendo in today's O Antiphon: "O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death." We've reached the edge of a dramatic precipice in our waiting. Have faith and get ready—daybreak is coming.

TODAY'S READINGS: Song of Songs 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Luke 1:39-45 (197). *"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."*

Tuesday, Dec 22, 2020

ADVENT WEEKDAY (O KING OF ALL NATIONS)

The unexpected king is arriving

Today's O Antiphon heralds the Messiah's long-expected arrival as king. But clearly Jesus is not a typical king—because God's kingdom is not a typical earthly kingdom. Jesus will later proclaim, through the Beatitudes, that the kingdom of God is the inverse of what we humans expect. "Blessed are the meek," he insists—and the poor, the persecuted, and those who mourn. In fact, according to Saint Matthew's version of the Final Judgment, Jesus will be the king wielding harsh judgment against all who've neglected the "least of these." How will you serve our expected-but-unexpected king today?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 1:24-28; Luke 1:46-56 (198). *"He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly."*

Wednesday, Dec 23, 2020

ADVENT WEEKDAY (O EMMANUEL)

Do not doubt—God is with us

As we the church celebrate Evening Prayer—whether in monasteries or in our own homes, the domestic church—tonight we pray or sing the seventh and final O Antiphon of Advent with these words: "O Emmanuel, our king and giver of law, come to save us, Lord our God." The name *Emmanuel* means God-with-us. As the season of Advent longing comes to a close, in a world that is in need of God's compassionate and saving presence, let us pray tonight for eyes to see and hearts to embrace the presence

of God-with-us in the events and conversations of these holy holidays. Indeed, O come, O come Emmanuel.

TODAY'S READINGS: Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Luke 1:57-66 (199).

"What, then, will this child be?"

Thursday, Dec 24, 2020

ADVENT WEEKDAY

More than a song and dance

For many Catholics of Mexican heritage, today is the final celebration of Las Posadas, nine days of reenacting Mary and Joseph's search for *posada*, shelter. Each day the ritual is the same: Participants knock on doors, sing songs begging for shelter, while hosts respond with songs denying shelter, and finally end with the glorious moment when the door is opened wide and the Holy Family is given shelter for the night. The repetition drives home the desperation of the most famous migrant family and migrants of all times and places, including our own. Can you take some action in support of migrants and refugees this Christmas season?

TODAY'S READINGS: Morning: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67-79 (200). *"Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!"*

Friday, Dec 25, 2020

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

The Light shines upon us!

Today as we gaze upon a tiny infant born in difficult circumstances, we are also gazing upon a powerful love that has transformed the world—and us. Fragility and strength, new life and enduring love—these are not mutually exclusive. In the Incarnation, we encounter a God who has loved us since before the creation of the world and who longs to draw close and bring us life. This life is not to be "spiritualized" but to be incarnate in our whole life, including our places of pain and challenge. Saint Athanasius writes, "For the Lord touched all parts of creation, and freed and undeceived them all from every deceit." What is the freedom that God has begun to unfold within you?

TODAY'S READINGS: Vigil: Isaiah 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Matthew 1:1-25 (13); Night: Isaiah 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (14); Day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18 (16). *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone."*

Saturday, Dec 26, 2020

FEAST OF STEPHEN, FIRST MARTYR

Don't cloak your compassion

Even the greatest among us have their darkest moment. The great Saint Paul had such a moment before his conversion, when he looked on approvingly and guarded the cloaks of those who stoned the church's first martyr, the young and courageous deacon Stephen. Saul of Tarsus, as Paul was known before his conversion, no doubt was convinced that righteousness called for such a cruel and harsh death sentence. Be on guard for misguided righteousness wherever it rears its head, especially when that head is on your own shoulders. It rarely leads to compassion or mercy, God's signposts. Saint Stephen, pray for us.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Matthew 10:17-22 (696). *"Stephen, filled with grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people. . . . They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him."*

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



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