

Sunday, Nov 29, 2020

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Keep your eyes open

Nothing is more empowering than a fresh start. Advent brings with it a new gospel to guide us through the new liturgical year: Mark, the shortest of the four narratives about Jesus. Consider reading all 16 chapters at the start of the liturgical year to grasp the breathless beauty of Mark's story. Reflect on other ways to stay alert to new spiritual discoveries, in keeping with Jesus' summons: "Watch!" Pay attention, not just to the news of the day but also to the movements of the Spirit in you. Where might you be prompted to forgive, be generous, get involved, or keep silent?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37 (2). "What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

Monday, Nov 30, 2020

FEAST OF SAINT ANDREW, APOSTLE

First responder

Saint Andrew has a special place in the collective heart of Scotland. He is sometimes known as the "first called" apostle because of his early encounter and following of Jesus, alongside his better-known brother and fellow fisherman Simon Peter. When confronting his own crucifixion in the year 60, it is said Andrew chose an X-shaped cross, or saltire, because he felt unworthy to be crucified on the same kind of cross as Jesus. That saltire is now Scotland's national flag. Follow the Scottish example: Give first-called Andrew a special place in your heart.

TODAY'S READINGS: Romans 10:9-18; Matthew 4:18-22 (684). "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Tuesday, Dec 01, 2020

ADVENT WEEKDAY

A light shines in the darkness

In this first week of Advent, the church highlights the theme of hope. We remember that the "people who walk in darkness will see a great light." Good news at this time of long nights as we are reeling mentally, physically, financially, emotionally from the coronavirus pandemic and find it hard to cope. But today is also World AIDS Day, a time to remember another virus-borne pandemic that has killed more than 30 million worldwide, calling to mind the inspiring way our world can come together at its best to respond to terrible diseases. Pray for an increase in hope and healing today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24 (176). "There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain."

Wednesday, Dec 02, 2020

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Martyrs in our time

Forty years ago today, four American churchwomen were murdered and dumped in a shallow grave in a cow pasture in Santiago Nonualco, El Salvador. Maryknoll sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline sister Dorothy Kazel, and lay missionary Jean Donovan were victims of the country's civil war, killed by members of the Salvadoran National Guard. The women knew they faced danger and yet they could not leave the people. Jean Donovan wrote in a letter two weeks before her death: "Several times I have decided to leave El Salvador. I almost could, except for the children, the poor bruised victims of this insanity."

Inspired by the life and martyrdom of Archbishop Saint Oscar Romero, all four women shared a commitment to the church's "preferential option for the poor." Ita, Maura, Dorothy, and Jean—you walk with us still and we remember.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Matthew 15:29-37 (177). "Jesus summoned his disciples and said, 'My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for . . . they have nothing to eat.'"

Thursday, Dec 03, 2020

MEMORIAL OF FRANCIS XAVIER, PRIEST

Gain from apparent loss

While focus is often on Francis' youthful fervor, which sparked his missionary adventures in Asia, less emphasis falls on his maturation. In Japan, he learned to appreciate local culture, connecting it with the gospel. While ocean travel in the 16th century was perilous, long separation from Ignatius of Loyola may have been an even greater suffering. Francis was one of Ignatius' first companions at the founding of the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, as they are commonly known. And imagine Francis' disappointment when he couldn't reach his ultimate dream destination: China. Have you ever had a "dream deferred," an unrealized goal? What have you learned from the apparent failure that you might not have learned from success?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27 (178). "That house . . . did not fall, because it had been founded on rock."

Friday, Dec 04, 2020

MEMORIAL OF JOHN DAMASCENE, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

An iconic witness

History takes some strange turns. John Damascene is considered one of the great fathers of the Eastern church, known today for its beautiful iconographic representations of the communion of saints. Yet back in the seventh century, John had to *defend* the use of icons against a movement in the East to ban them. And who protected him from being arrested by his powerful opponents? The Muslim caliph of Damascus under whose rule John lived and served administratively. Beneath the twists of history, search for the hidden story of salvation, unfolding through the centuries and before our eyes in these iconic times as well.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 29:17-24; Matthew 9:27-31 (179). "Then he touched their eyes and said, 'Let it be done for you according to your faith.' And their eyes were opened."

Saturday, Dec 05, 2020

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Pay it forward

Why is it that the season of Lent seems to get all the instructions of what to do—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—but with Advent, we have no handy summary about what to actually do during the season—besides wait? Sure, we have our creches and wreaths, maybe even a Jesse tree or, better yet, an Advent calendar with chocolate hidden behind each door. While all these customs are good, how can we "effect"—that is, bring about—the new life we so eagerly await? The world may have an answer for us. Today marks International Volunteer Day. How can you put into action on behalf of others your faith and expectation of new life in God?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Matthew 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6-8 (180). "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give."

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



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