

Sunday, Dec 12, 2021

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Queen of Mercy, watch over us

Often, we seek guidance, wondering like those around John the Baptist: *What should we do?* The answer's a simple one: show mercy. Our adversaries, family members, and we ourselves may be in need of such compassion. When La Virgen Morena (the Brown Virgin) appeared to Juan Diego in Mexico and left her image on his cactus-fiber cloak, her promise of mercy to all who appealed to her was sealed on the Americas. Our Lady of Guadalupe, now patroness of Mexico and empress of the Americas, extends her reign across two continents and around the globe. Respond with mercy today.

TODAY'S READINGS: Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18 (9). *"The crowds asked John the Baptist, 'What should we do?'"*

Monday, Dec 13, 2021

MEMORIAL OF LUCY, MARTYR

I can see clearly now

In these darkening days of December, the Scandinavian festival of light held on Saint Lucy's feast day is a cheerful sight to brighten spirits. In these countries—and wherever Scandinavians are found—girls dress as Lucy in long white gowns with wreaths of candles on their heads, carrying sweets in procession as songs are sung. Similar practices can be found in Italy and Croatia. Whether you belong to those ethnicities or not, why not incorporate the festival into your family holiday traditions? Saint Lucy is the patron and protector of eyesight—ask her to help you focus yours, to see more clearly the coming of the radiant king.

TODAY'S READINGS: Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a; Matthew 21:23-27 (187). *"By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?"*

Tuesday, Dec 14, 2021

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

Carried by love

Saint John of the Cross was named a doctor of the church for his profound, poetic writings on Christian mysticism. As a spiritual phenomenon, mysticism is difficult to explain. Central ideas, though, connect love and suffering. Today, pause to remember the tragic school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary and contemplate this meditation by John and remember to love: "I saw the river over which every soul must pass to reach the kingdom of heaven, and the name of that river was suffering. And I saw a boat which carries souls across the river, and the name of that boat was love."

TODAY'S READINGS: Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Matthew 21:28-32 (188). *"Then will I remove from your midst the proud braggarts, and you shall no longer exalt yourself."*

Wednesday, Dec 15, 2021

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Jesus, our justice and our peace

The coming of Jesus into the world was ultimately the coming of true justice and peace. In today's psalm, these two virtues are said to have "kissed" when the Messiah arrived on Earth. What an incredible image! Every promise of God finds its yes in the One who frees us from sin and death. In the gospel reading, Jesus proves by his miraculous love that he is the long-hoped-for Messiah. Today, remember that as we anticipate Christmas, the

fulfillment of all our hopes and dreams is the justice and peace of Jesus. Perhaps not what we expected, but what we need!

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 45:6c-8, 18, 21c-25; Luke 7:18b-23 (189).

"Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven."

Thursday, Dec 16, 2021

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Differently blessed

Today's first reading refers to an idea repeated many times in the Bible: that children are a blessing from God. Catholic teaching on situations where bearing children is not possible is not the inverse, however. The church has never taught that infertility or any other limitation is a punishment or "curse" from God. To the contrary, Catholic tradition emphasizes that persons in every situation or condition deserve our full attention, respect, and caring concern. How can you practice empathy toward those whose family life has taken a less common direction?

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 54:1-10; Luke 7:24-30 (190). *"Among those born of women, no one is greater than John; yet the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he."*

Friday, Dec 17, 2021

ADVENT WEEKDAY (O WISDOM)

Make the wise choice

Today the church begins to sing the O Antiphons to accompany the Advent evening prayer of Mary's Magnificat. These short, sung phrases remind us of our need for salvation and our desire to embody the divine characteristics of our Savior. Today we pray for knowledge. This is not the knowledge that wins arguments around the dinner table, but the knowledge that shines a light on who we are, where we came from, and what we are called to do. It is the knowledge that comes with discernment and brings us peace. May wisdom be our teacher.

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17 (193). *"O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love: come to teach us the path of knowledge!"*

Saturday, Dec 18, 2021

ADVENT WEEKDAY (O SACRED LORD)

Walk each other home

The theme for this year's International Migrants Day is "Reimagining Human Mobility." U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres calls upon citizens of the world to "seize the opportunity of the recovery from the pandemic to implement safe, orderly, and regular migration and enable migrants to build more inclusive and resilient societies." Today's O Antiphon recalls the migration of Israel from Egypt to Palestine and asks God to guide the movement of peoples. Because we all can trace our ancestry back to migrating people at one time or another, it is appropriate today to pray for people on the move seeking new homes and new lives in new lands.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 23:5-8; Matthew 1:18-25 (194). *"And they shall name him Emmanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"*

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



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