

Sunday, Dec 19, 2021

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (O FLOWER OF JESSE'S STEM)

Your place on the tree

Family trees are an endless source of fascination. Whether you've explored yours through DNA tests or old photo albums and family stories, you know that a ragtag line of other people's chances and choices contribute to who you are. The Advent Jesse Tree teaches children about many risk-takers and seekers throughout biblical history who contributed to the arrival of Jesus. Folks like Jesse himself, the father of David who contributed to the lineage of the kings of Israel and, without suspecting it, the future King of the Universe. What might your legacy be, and how do you claim your place in the great story?

TODAY'S READINGS: Micah 5:1-4a; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45 (12). *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."*

Monday, Dec 20, 2021

ADVENT WEEKDAY (O KEY OF DAVID)

He's on his way

Today's Great Antiphon—the fourth of seven ancient prayers said during Advent vespers leading up to Christmas Eve—is "O Key of David, come and free us!" Each Antiphon is a call to Christ using a messianic title from prophecy, and today's reminds us that we are captives liberated by God's grace. The answer to our cries is embedded in the titles themselves. The seven titles in Latin—*Sapientia, Adonai, Radix Jesse, Clavis David, Oriens, Rex Gentium, and Emmanuel*—in reverse order form the acrostic ERO CRAS, which means "I am coming soon."

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 7:10-14; Luke 1:26-38 (196). *"The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever."*

Tuesday, Dec 21, 2021

MEMORIAL OF PETER CANISIUS, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH (O RADIANT DAWN)

Let the light shine

The Protestant Reformation was an age of strife and contestation, especially in Germany, ground zero of the upheaval in 1517. Into the morass stepped a learned Jesuit scholar, amazing preacher, and gifted writer—Peter Canisius, whose rational arguments in support of Catholicism proved quite persuasive. Peter's three written catechisms were so effective, German-born Pope Benedict XVI told a papal audience in 2011, that later generations of Germans simply referred to them as "the Canisius." On what's the longest night of the year for many, tap the faith of Peter Canisius to reflect upon the ways that Jesus is our Radiant Dawn.

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."*

Wednesday, Dec 22, 2021

ADVENT WEEKDAY (O KING OF ALL NATIONS)

God of surprises

God acts in ways we least expect. The long-awaited Messiah was expected to be a military leader who would lead his people, Israel, to victory and out of oppression. Instead, he was born in a stable to a young woman of the village and a carpenter who would be his foster father. Today that young woman makes a bold proclamation, "He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones

but lifted up the lowly." As we come closer to Christmas, ask God to help you look for him in the unexpected so that he might refashion you. After all, history is full of unexpected saints—why not you?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 1:24-28; Luke 1:46-56 (198). *"[God] has looked upon his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed."*

Thursday, Dec 23, 2021

ADVENT WEEKDAY (O EMMANUEL)

Hear our plea

What is more poignant than an expression of heartfelt longing? Today anyone taking part in the longstanding tradition of Evening Prayer, or vespers, sings, "O Emmanuel, come to redeem us!" It's a plea of yearning. For centuries on this day near Christmas, Catholics have opened their hearts and prayed for a savior. Let this vulnerable prayer of hope and desire for all that Christmas represents—light, life, salvation—be a kind of mantra as you go about your day.

TODAY'S READINGS: Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Luke 1:57-66 (199). *"When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son."*

Friday, Dec 24, 2021

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Thanksgiving on Christmas Eve

For many Catholics, Christmas Eve is brimming with meal preparation, cleaning, wrapping last-minute stocking stuffers, and Midnight Mass. It can also be a difficult day for those missing loved ones. In whatever situation you find yourself, take a moment and join the church in praying the Canticle of Zechariah, also known as the Benedictus. As he awaited the birth of his son John (later known as the Baptist), Zechariah sang a canticle of gratitude to God for setting us free from all that binds. May this prayer bring freedom and joy to us all!

TODAY'S READINGS: Morning: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67-79 (200). *"In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness."*

Saturday, Dec 25, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

The weary world rejoices

The efforts of people of goodwill everywhere in the quest for peace and justice continue, and our leader is born anew today! Spiritual author and priest Henri Nouwen put it well: "The world is not whole. . . . But it is into this broken world that a child is born, who is called Son of the Most High, Prince of Peace, Savior. I look at him and pray, 'Thank you, Lord, that you came. . . . Your heart is greater than mine.'" Our hope and our hearts increase today. Rejoice!

TODAY'S READINGS: 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). *"And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."*

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



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