

TODAY'S READINGS

He came . . . to testify to the light. (John 1:7)
How many times have you watched a TV courtroom drama? A witness takes the stand and promises to “tell the truth the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” Our job is to figure out who the credible witness is.

For the people who came to be baptized by John in the Jordan River, there was no question that John was telling the truth. Here was a credible witness, someone many considered a prophet—and maybe even the Messiah! But in today’s Gospel, John has a different testimony. First, he testifies that he is not the Messiah. Neither is he Elijah or “the Prophet” promised by Moses (John 1:21). Then he testifies to Jesus, “whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie” (John 1:27).

John may have been Jesus’ first witness, but countless others have followed in his footsteps—and you can too! Your testimony is important. It may even lead someone to decide to follow Jesus. We should always be ready to share our stories whenever the opportunity arises.

And it doesn’t take a lot of work to get ready.

First, set a timer for three minutes. Then write down some ways in which you have experienced Jesus working in your life. Be specific: This is where I was then; this is what was missing in my life. Now, this is where I am; this is what my life is like—and it’s because of the grace of God. Don’t limit your story to one initial experience of conversion, either. Talk about any situation in which you have sensed God speaking to you and leading you.

Stories like these demonstrate that it is possible to have a living and loving relationship with God. As you share them over time, people’s hearts can change. Like John the Baptist, you too can “make straight the way” for the Lord to enter people’s lives (John 1:23)!

“Jesus, I want to be a credible witness for you! Give me the right words to say. Help me to live in a way that testifies to your light within me!”

Taken from *The Word Among Us*, Advent 2011, Vol. 31, Number 1: Used with permission.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Sunday 11th Is 61:1-2,10-11 / 1 Thes 5:16-24 / Jn 1:6-8,19-28

Third Sunday of Advent

Monday 12th Zec 2:14-17 / Lk 1:26-38

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Tuesday 13th Zep 3:1-2,9-13 / Mt 21:28-32

St. Lucy

Wednesday 14th Is 45:6-8,18,21-25 / Lk 7:18-23

St. John of the Cross

Thursday 15th Is 54:1-10 / Lk 7:24-30

Friday 16th Is 56:1-3,6-8 / Jn 5:33-36

Saturday 18th Gn 49:2,8-10 / Mt 1:1-17

Sunday 18th 2 Sm 7:1-5,8-12,14-16 / Rom 16:25-27 / Lk 1:26-38

Fourth Sunday of Advent

LAS LECTURAS DE HOY

De generación en generación, Dios suscitó siervos que proclamaran su Palabra y formaran parte de su pueblo; hombres y mujeres que reflejaran algo del Mesías prometido, por medio de quien Dios derramaría su Espíritu Santo con abundancia sobre los creyentes. El Salvador vendría a liberar a los presos, dar buenas noticias a los pobres y consolar a los afligidos (Isaías 61,1-2). ¡Con qué ansias debe haber esperado el pueblo escogido el cumplimiento de estas palabras!

Sabemos que todas nuestras esperanzas y anhelos se cumplen en la persona de Jesucristo, en cuyo nacimiento llegó al mundo la maravillosa gracia de Dios. Cristo, al morir en la cruz, destruyó el poder del pecado que nos mantenía esclavizados; tras ascender al cielo, derramó el Espíritu Santo sobre los creyentes. Ahora, todo lo que Dios desea darnos se encuentra a nuestro alcance por medio de Jesús;

por ejemplo, la purificación de nuestra conciencia, la curación de recuerdos traumáticos, la eliminación de las amarguras y la posibilidad de controlar los impulsos naturales, especialmente el carácter violento.

Pero hay mucho más que Dios desea hacer en nosotros, y por eso nos invita a acudir a la cita diaria con Él en la oración, porque el Señor está siempre esperándonos con los brazos abiertos.

Hermano, recibe el Sacramento de la Reconciliación en este Adviento y pídele al Espíritu Santo que continúe actuando profundamente en tu interior. Si al confesar nuestros pecados tenemos la plena confianza de que somos perdonados, el Señor nos sana y nos restablece. Su obra comenzó cuando fuimos bautizados en la muerte y la resurrección de Jesucristo; ahora, el Señor continúa actuando en nuestro ser, en la medida en que nos entreguemos de corazón para que Él nos lave y nos purifique.

“Padre eterno, Dios de la paz, te rogamos que nos santifiques por la acción del Espíritu Santo, para que seamos dignos de recibir tu gracia y todas tus bendiciones y seamos así dignos hijos tuyos.”

Escogida con el permiso de *La Palabra Entre Nosotros*, Vol. 31, Número 6: Adviento 2011.

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS NEEDED FOR CHRISTMAS!

To current and prospective ministers of hospitality, will you please help us this Christmas? If you can volunteer for a Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, please sign up in one of the books at the Cathedral entrance, or contact us at 202-587-5143 or Reply@stmatthewscathedral.org. Many thanks!

HIGHLIGHTS



See the insert for details on Lessons and Carols, to be presented this evening, Sunday, December 11 at 7:30pm.



RITE OF RECEPTION INTO THE FULL COMMUNION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Today, Sunday, **December 11** at the 5:30pm Mass, we will celebrate the Rite of Reception into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church with Janet Ali. Jan was baptized in the United Church of Christ and has been preparing for several months to make a profession of Catholic faith and receive the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. Please join us in welcoming Jan and keep Jan in your prayers.

CELEBRATE THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Today we also celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe here at the Cathedral at the 1pm Spanish Mass, followed by refreshments and music in the West Conference Room. All are welcome.

FIND THE PERFECT GIFT—*BE A STAR* AND LEAD OTHERS TO HIM

Join parishioners from all over the archdiocese in the second year of an exciting Advent Evangelization campaign to invite people to reconsider the spiritual meaning of Christmas. Jesus, the perfect gift, changes lives. Parishioners are placing signs in their yards or windows that read “FindthePerfectGift.org.” On that website are a series of short reflections inviting people to think about the meaning of gift-giving. The signs remind us that just as the star in the East led the Wise Men to Jesus, we too can guide people to an encounter with our Lord. **Call the rectory at 202-347-3215 to receive a sign and post it in your yard or window, or pick one up at Mass this weekend.** Use it as an opportunity to talk with neighbors and friends about the feast of Christmas and the gift Jesus has been for you.

Watch for *Find the Perfect Gift* TV spots on WJLA and Comcast—we hear that the commercial is super!

RESPECT LIFE

ADULT AND FAMILY RALLY AND MASS FOR LIFE

The Archdiocese of Washington and the Association of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities will sponsor the annual *Adult and Family Rally and Mass for Life* at the Cathedral on the morning of the March for Life, Monday, **January 23**. The Rally will kick off at 9am with prayer, music and inspirational speakers including Loretta Fleming from the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment, and the St. Margaret of Scotland Gospel Choir. Mass begins at 10am. Registration is required. Register at <http://adultrally4life.eventbrite.com>.

CATHEDRAL CALENDAR

December 11 – December 18

SUNDAY—Third Sunday of Advent - Gaudete Sunday

A second collection to benefit the fund for Retirement for Religious is taken at all Masses.

Las clases de Catecumenado y Catequesis Familiar continúan a las 11:00 de la mañana.

Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe durante la misa de español y después en el salón de conferencias del Oeste.

Always Our Children meets for a Pot Luck Celebration at 3:30pm in the East Conference Room. *Lessons and Carols* is held in the Cathedral at 7:30pm, followed by a sing-along in the Great Hall.

MONDAY—The Book Club meets at 6:45pm in the West Conference Room.

The Liturgy Committee meets at 6:45pm in the East Conference Room.

TUESDAY—Las Reflexiones de Adviento continúan hoy a las 7 de la tarde en el salón de conferencias del Oeste.

WEDNESDAY—Breaking Open the Word meets at 7pm in the West Conference Room.

THURSDAY—The Knights of Columbus meet at 7:30pm in the West Conference Room.

SUNDAY—Fourth Sunday of Advent

Las clases de Catecumenado y Catequesis Familiar continúan a las 11:00 de la mañana.

COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

PREPARATION OF THE HEART—REPENTANCE & RECONCILIATION

The whole power of the sacrament ... consists in restoring us to God's grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship. (CCC, 1468)

Daytime Penance Service & Evening Confession

Hour—All are welcome to experience the love and mercy of Christ through the Sacrament of Penance at the Advent Communal Penance Service, *Come Home for Christmas*, on Tuesday, **December 20** at 12:10pm in the Cathedral. More than a dozen priests including confessors in American Sign and Spanish will be available for confessions.

Can't make it during the day? Confessions also will be heard in English and Spanish that evening from 6 to 7pm.

Extra Daytime Confessors—During the fourth week of Advent, **December 19 - 23**, two confessors will be available in the Cathedral each day from 11am to Noon.

NEWS & NOTES

ALWAYS OUR CHILDREN

Rejoice! Always Our Children, the Gay and Lesbian Ministry of the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle, will have a Pot Luck Celebration today, Sunday, **December 11** from 3:30 to 5:15pm in the **East Conference Room** to celebrate Gaudete Sunday. Come and rejoice with us!

GIVING TREE REMINDER

Thanks to all who are participating in our Giving Tree this year. If you have taken a Giving Tree tag from the tree, please be sure to bring your new, **wrapped** gift back to St. Matthew's not later than Monday, **December 12**. Many thanks for your generosity.

COME—LET US ADORE HIM!

Join your parish family and friends for Eucharistic Adoration next Monday, **December 19** from 6 to 7pm. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available during the hour.

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

During Advent, a season of waiting, conversion and hope, we have the opportunity to reflect upon the many blessings of the Lord, particularly those graces experienced at St. Matthew's. We rely upon your gracious generosity, which enables us to help build up the Kingdom of God in our parish and our community. Please use the envelope in your offertory packet or in the pews marked "Christmas Offering." We sincerely appreciate your generosity and pray that this Christmas brings many blessings to you and your loved ones.

CHRISTMAS FLOWER OFFERINGS

Each year every effort is made to decorate the Cathedral for Christmas in a way that truly reflects the noble simplicity of that holy season. In order to do so again, your generous support is requested. Please use the envelopes marked "Flower Offering" located in the pews. We know that many requests are made this season, and so truly appreciate any assistance you can give.

CHRISTMAS DECORATION HELP NEEDED

On-the-Job Training! On Friday, **December 23** we will decorate the Cathedral for Christmas in one session. We need 10-15 volunteers beginning at 9am to prepare poinsettias, decorate wreaths and assemble the Crèche, put lights on the trees and place poinsettias in the chapels. Come for as long or as little as you are able. Snacks will be served. To help, contact Fr. Regan at 202-347-3215 or kregan@stmatthewscathedral.org.

YOUNG ADULTS

C+YA MINISTRY MEETING - Sunday, December 11 – 4 to 5pm – Cathedral (Room TBA) - All are welcome to meet and discuss the Cathedral Young Adult ministry, share ideas, and plan upcoming activities. Contact Carolyn at cwait.10@gmail.com or Jillian at jillian.mcmahon@gmail.com for more information.

CATHEDRAL YOUNG ADULTS GOOGLE GROUP & EMAILS – Want to stay up-to-date on all of the C+YA events and activities? Check out our Google group:<http://groups.google.com/group/StMatts-YAM>. Join and you'll automatically get the email updates.

FAITH FORMATION

BOOK CLUB: A CHRISTMAS CAROL

All are invited to join the St. Matthew's Book Club this Monday, **December 12** to discuss Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, perhaps the most famous Christmas related novel ever produced. The club will explore the religious dimensions of the work as well as many other aspects of this famous tale. They will meet in the West Conference Room at 6:45pm. Please contact Paul Zummo at pzummo@gmail.com if you have any questions.

BECOMING CATHOLIC

Throughout the year, adults come forward seeking to learn about the Catholic faith. For those who are interested in learning about the Catholic faith or thinking about becoming Catholic, St. Matthew's offers Inquiry, a casual, ongoing conversation about the Catholic faith, once a month. Inquiry is the first step in the process of discerning one's commitment to full initiation in the Catholic Church. Inquiry meets on the second Wednesday of the month from 6:30 to 7:30pm in the East Conference Room. A brief overview of the adult initiation process (RCIA), which begins formally in June, can be presented after Inquiry for those who are interested. The next Inquiry will be held Wednesday, **December 14**. For more information, contact Heather Kinney at hkinney@stmatthewscathedral.org.

ADULT CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

St. Matthew's offers adult Confirmation preparation for *active Catholics who have received both the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist* in the weeks between Easter and Pentecost. The celebration of adult Confirmation occurs at a special Mass on Pentecost Sunday, which will be May 27 in 2012 (Memorial Day weekend). The preparation includes five weekly sessions on consecutive Thursday evenings -- tentatively set for April 19, 26 and May 3, 10, and 17 -- and a Saturday retreat tentatively set for May 19. Registration begins in January, so please follow announcements in the bulletin and the website for information on how to register.

NOTICIAS DE LA PARROQUIA

ENCUENTRE EL REGALO PERFECTO

Sea parte de la nueva evangelización: encontrar el regalo perfecto es una iniciativa de Adviento de la Arquidiócesis de Washington, que invita a los católicos a compartir con los vecinos y amigos, a considerar el gran don de Dios al enviarnos a su Hijo a la tierra. Cuando alguien le pregunte acerca de la campaña, comparta con ellos el enlace a la página digital: findthepperfectgift.org o regaloperfecto.org y comparta con ellos la diferencia que puede hacer una relación con el Señor en su vida.

FIESTA DE NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE

Venga y únase a nosotros a la celebración de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe aquí en la Catedral en la misa de español de 1 de la tarde el domingo **11 de diciembre**. Después de la misa habrá refrescos y música en el salón de conferencias del Oeste. ¡Todos están invitados!



REFLEXIONES DE ADVIENTO

Las reflexiones son a las 7:30 de la noche en el salón de conferencias del Oeste tendremos las reflexiones de Adviento, tomando como referencia las promesas mesiánicas del profeta Isaías. Esperamos nos ayuden a prepararnos para celebrar la Navidad con un corazón renovado y bien dispuesto.

Semana 3. Martes **13 de diciembre**

¡Alégrate! *El Señor esta contigo*

Obispo Francisco González, S.F.

Semana 4. Martes **20 de diciembre**

¡Levántate y brilla! *que ha llegado tu Luz*

Empecemos esta época del año con una buena preparación ¡Les esperamos!

¿HA ESTADO USTED EN FÁTIMA?

Mons. Jameson les invita a que se unan a él y a otros feligreses y amigos de San Mateo a un viaje fabuloso de peregrinación a Madrid, Fátima y Lisboa en Abril de 2012! El itinerario está designado a mostrar lo mejor de Madrid dejando tiempo libre para explorar a su propio paso. Pase tiempo en el lugar famoso de Fátima donde Nuestra Señora se apareció seis veces a Lucia, Jacinta y Francisco, con tiempo para reflexión, y oración. Finalmente, descubrir partes interesantes de Lisboa y ciudades de los alrededores. El grupo saldrá de Washington, el miércoles **11 de abril de 2012**, y regresará el domingo **22 de abril de 2012**. La fecha final para inscribirse será el **1 de febrero de 2012**. Para más información, recoja un folleto en la rectoría, también pueden llamar a Mons. Jameson al 202-347-3215.

OFRENDAS FLORALES

Ayúdenos a todos a disfrutar la belleza de este tiempo de Navidad haciendo una contribución por medio de los sobres marcados "Ofrenda de Flores" que se encuentran en los bancos. Su donación nos ayudará a decorar la Catedral apropiadamente durante estos días. Gracias por su apoyo y generosidad.

OFRENDA NAVIDAD

Durante el Adviento, tiempo de espera, de conversión y de esperanza, tenemos la oportunidad de reflexionar sobre las muchas bendiciones del Señor, en particular los dones experimentados en San Mateo. Como siempre dependemos de su amable generosidad, la cual nos permita construir el Reino de Dios en nuestra parroquia y en nuestra comunidad. Por favor utilice el sobre que fue enviado o los sobres que hay en los bancos con el letrero "Ofrenda de Navidad." Agradecemos sinceramente su generosidad y pido a Dios que esta Navidad trae muchas bendiciones a usted y toda su familia.

CONFESIONES EN ADVIENTO

Servicio Comunitario al Mediodía y Confesiones en la Tarde—Les invitamos a que experimenten el amor de Cristo a través del Sacramento de la Confesión en el Servicio Comunitario de Adviento, el martes **20 de diciembre**, a las 12:10 del mediodía. Habrá varios sacerdotes disponibles, incluyendo sacerdotes en español y otros idiomas.

¿No puede venir durante el día? Esa tarde también habrá confesiones de 6:00-7:00 tendremos sacerdotes disponibles, incluyendo un sacerdote en español.

Confesores extra—Durante la cuarta semana de Adviento del **19 de diciembre al 23 de diciembre**, dos sacerdotes estarán disponibles para confesiones de 11 de la mañana a 12 del mediodía.

LECTURAS DE LA SEMANA

Domingo 11	Is 61:1-2,10-11 / 1 Tes 5:16-24 / <i>Tercer domingo de Adviento</i>	Jn 1:6-8,19-28
Lunes 12	Za 2:14-17 / Lc 1:26-38 <i>Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe</i>	
Martes 13	So 3:1-2,9-13 / Mt 21:28-32 <i>Santa Lucia</i>	
Miércoles 14	Is 45:6-8,18,21-25 / Lc 7:18-23 <i>San Juan de la Cruz</i>	
Jueves 15	Is 54:1-10 / Lc 7:24-30	
Viernes 16	Is 56:1-3,6-8 / Jn 5:33-36	
Sábado 17	Gé 49:2,8-10 / Mt 1:1-17	
Domingo 18	2 Sam 7:1-5,8-12,14-16 / Rom 16:25-27 / <i>Cuarto domingo de Adviento</i>	Lc 1:26-38

MASS INTENTIONS**Sunday, December 11**

5:30pm (vigil) – Dolores Smalley
 7am – Stabat Mater Prayer
 Apostolate
 8:30am – All Parishioners
 10am – George Beischer
 11:30am – Msgr. William H. Kierman
 1pm – Aura y Lola Benavides
 5:30pm – Martha La Vera

Monday, December 12

7am – Josephine Klug Kuhn
 8am – Margaret Smyth
 12:10pm – Souls in Purgatory
 5:30pm – Mr. Jim Vidas

Tuesday, December 13

7am – Thanksgiving to St. Lucy
 8am – Mrs. Betty Sharker
 12:10pm – Dennis Scanlon
 5:30pm – Evelyn Karpinski

Wednesday, December 14

7am – Socorro Vergel De Dios (living)
 8am – Patrick McNamara
 12:10pm – Raquel Toral Torres
 5:30pm – Kimberly Wilson (living)

Thursday, December 15

7am – Carmel Xuereb
 8am – Peter Gore (living)
 12:10pm – James T. Molloy
 5:30pm – William M. Ringle, Jr.

Friday, December 16

7am – Josephine Klug Kuhn
 8am – John Kekeh
 12:10pm – William O'Brien
 5:30am – Vianella Veras Guichardo

Saturday, December 17

8am – Mass of Thanksgiving
 12:10pm – Mrs. Sandra Vidas
 5:30pm – Richard Douglas Longo

Sunday, December 18

7am – David Colantino
 8:30am – Douglas Ritter
 10am – Msgr. Edward Westenberge
 11:30am – All Parishioners
 1pm – Consuelo y Catalina Leon
 5:30pm – Cipriano Agpasa

To arrange a Mass intention, speak to our receptionist in the Rectory.

There is no fee but an offering is customary. Intentions are reserved in advance so particular dates may be unavailable.

MARRIAGES

Couples who are interested in celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage at the Cathedral are encouraged to visit the parish website to review our guidelines for weddings. The next step is to call the Rectory at 202-347-3215 and ask for the priest of your choice or the priest on duty, who can speak to you about marriage preparation and the possibility of scheduling your wedding ceremony at the Cathedral. Couples are expected to contact us **at least nine (9) months in advance** of the date on which they hope to celebrate their wedding.

BAPTISMS

Parents who wish to have their child baptized at the Cathedral should contact the Baptismal Coordinator at the Rectory at 202-347-3215 x555. Parents are encouraged to make contact with us **at least six (6) months in advance** of a desired baptismal date, at which time they may ask for the priest of their choice to perform the Baptism. This early contact enables parents to be scheduled for the necessary sacramental formation session before the child's baptism and allows time for sponsors to obtain letters from their parish pastor.

CATHEDRAL TOURS

Visitors are invited to schedule a guided tour of the Cathedral or to do a self-guided tour using the color brochures available at the inside entrance to the Cathedral. Guided tours are given free of charge. Donations to the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle are always appreciated and may be given to your tour guide or to our receptionist at the Rectory. To schedule a guided tour, contact us at 202-347-3215 x512 or 202-587-5143 or mhurley@stmatthewscathedral.org.

Please check our parish website regularly for updates on liturgies and events at St. Matthew's!

www.stmatthewscathedral.org

**** PARISH PILGRIMAGE **
TO SPAIN AND PORTUGAL**

Join Msgr. Jameson and fellow parishioners and friends on a pilgrimage to Madrid, Fatima and Lisbon in April 2012! The itinerary showcases the best of Madrid while affording you time to explore the city. Spend time at the famous site in Fatima where Our Lady appeared six times to Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco and take time to reflect and pray. Discover interesting, artsy and unique parts of Lisbon and hip surrounding towns. The group will leave Washington on Wednesday, April 11, 2012, and return on Sunday, April 22, 2012. Enroll by **February 1, 2012**. For more information, see the brochure on our website, pick one up at the rectory or call Msgr. Jameson.

**CHRISTMAS CARDS &
OTHER GIFT ITEMS**

St. Matthew's is pleased to offer a 48-page souvenir book on our beautiful Cathedral church written by Richard Schmidt and Claudia Rousseau, with Joseph Carey, Nancy McKinley and Elizabeth Sullivan. It features the Cathedral's history, art and architecture vividly portrayed through photographs by local photographer, Neil Greentree.

Also available are sets of six note cards picturing the art of the Cathedral, boxed sets of ten **Christmas cards** featuring St. Matthew's Crèche, Christmas ornaments and several CD recordings of the Cathedral's *Schola Cantorum*. CD titles are listed on our website.



**St. Matthew's
Crèche -
Christmas cards
available in
boxed sets of 10
cards &
envelopes**

Items are available for purchase in the Rectory during office hours. Unless otherwise indicated in this bulletin, the Rectory is open Monday through Thursday from 9am until 8pm and Friday through Sunday from 9am until 4pm. You also may order items by contacting us at 202-347-3215 x 517 or at gharrington@stmatthewscathedral.org. MasterCard and Visa are accepted.



St Matthew's Cathedral

presents

December 11, 2011 at 7:30pm

A Festival of Lessons and Carols

featuring

The Great O Antiphons in Latin Chant

and the music of

Franz Biebl

Andrew Carter

Michael Praetorius

Renaissance Carols

*Followed by a Christmas Carol Sing-along in the Great Hall.
with Christmas Cookies, Eggnog and Wassail*

Join us for our annual, much-anticipated evening of splendid choral music, hymns and songs and inspiring readings presented by the *Schola Cantorum*, Saint Matthew's Festival Singers and the Cathedral Lectors.

1725 Rhode Island Ave, NW Washington DC

Free and open to the public. Donations will be gladly accepted.





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

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2011

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Nothing too great to bear

In his book *God, I Have Issues*, author Mark Thibodeaux, S.J. recounts an encounter with a black bear while hiking alone in the woods of New Mexico. Thibodeaux manages to let out a roar that he “had not thought possible for any human being.” His roar scares off the bear—twice! Later in prayer he wonders, *Why the bear?* God responds, “You see, I have hidden resources inside you that you cannot even fathom. Remember that the next time you face a seemingly insurmountable problem.” Every difficulty, every hardship, every problem is an opportunity to experience the infinite extent of our inner resources, also known as God. Otherwise, how will we know?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28 (8)*

“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks.”

MONDAY, DECEMBER 12 FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Mary, Mary, quite extraordinary!

Imagine being a poor, unwed village girl who learns she will give birth and can’t imagine how or why it is happening. That is the situation Mary found herself in when she received the news that she would bear a son and name him Jesus. How would you react? Denial? Refusal? Hysteria? Flight? Mary chose none of these options. Though she didn’t understand, she trusted the messenger of the Lord, responding: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” What courage! What faith! What a role model for us all!

TODAY’S READINGS: *Zechariah 2:14-17 or Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; Luke 1:26-38 or 1:39-47 (690A)*

“Nothing will be impossible for God.”

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13

MEMORIAL OF LUCY, VIRGIN, MARTYR

A spark turns into flame

Little is known about the life of Saint Lucy beyond the fact that as a young woman she was accused of being a Christian and martyred in Syracuse (now part of Sicily) in 304. Yet a rich tradition of stories and images of a brave and steadfast disciple of Christ have built up around these spare details. Indeed, Lucy is one of the “remnant” of humble and lowly people left in our midst who light the way to Christ. Imagine the legacy you can leave for generations to come with a simple trace of faith.

TODAY’S READINGS: *1 Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Matthew 21:28-32 (188)*

“But I will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly.”

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14

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

Don’t be left in the dark

Darkness can be terrifying, whether the pitch black of the night sky or the desolation felt at low points in life. Saint John of the Cross was no astronomer or psychologist, but he knew profound darkness. The Carmelite mystic of 16th-century Spain struggled to understand and articulate the challenges a person faces as she or he grows closer to God. You’d think it would get easier, but, as Saint John notes, it gets harder and harder to unhook from the things that keep us from God, distracting us from our truest

elves. John’s poetry speaks of the transformative power of this dark night of the soul: “Oh, night that guided me, / Oh, night more lovely than the dawn.” Where do you find God transforming your dark nights into dawn?

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 45:6b-8, 18, 21b-25; Luke 7:18b-23 (189)*
“I am the Lord, there is no other; I form the light, and create the darkness.”

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15 ADVENT WEEKDAY

Can you spare some change?

Many people would have a hard time with the idea that God can change. Isn’t God supposed to be unchanging? Wouldn’t thinking anything less be wrong and maybe even downright blasphemous? In a way, yes. Only God—being God—gets the superlatives: all-knowing, all-powerful, eternal, ever the same. We humans, though, can’t make those claims. We tell a human story of God to express what we believe, and we know from our experience that relationships have their ups and downs. While God may not change, our relationship to God has and does, and that fact should not be a source of consternation but of hope for and faith in a divine love that is always offered to us.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 54:1-10; Luke 7:24-30 (190)*

“For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great tenderness I will take you back.”

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16 ADVENT WEEKDAY

No batteries required to be a true Christmas light

There is no doubt that while Christmas is a Christian feast and the holiday has touched the world, sometimes it feels more like an ever-expanding brand than a gift. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if each LED light (sold in packages of 50 for only \$6.95!) were actually displayed to glow in praise of a loving, incarnate God rather than to win the prize for who has used the most electricity on the block? But while we regret the commercialization of the holiday, it’s important to take right steps at home, as Catholic Christian families, to abandon materialism for the sake of the environment—our Christian environment.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Isaiah 56:1-3a, 6-8; John 5:33-36 (191)*

“Observe what is right, do what is just.”

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17 ADVENT WEEKDAY

Trace your holy family tree

The internet has given a boost to this already widespread fascination with genealogy. Any number of websites will do the research for people who want to find out more about their ancestors.

Folks in the ancient world also took a keen interest in their forebears. For them, where you came from and who came before you had a lot to do with your social standing. It’s not surprising, then, that Jesus got the *ancestry.com* treatment not once but twice in the gospels: in Matthew and Luke. While Matthew’s version had some unexpected characters, it also traced Jesus back to David and Abraham and therefore made him worthy of great esteem. Advent is a good time to renew your acquaintance with Christian tradition. Read a good history of the church, like Paul Johnson’s *A History of Christianity*.

TODAY’S READINGS: *Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17 (193)*

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

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Scripture quotes come from the New American Bible.

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