

Sunday, Dec 07, 2025

Put aside your to-do list

Advent can seem like a wintery Lent—purple decor, sober worship, scripture about the end times. While it is about focusing on our inner life, it's not from the perspective of repentance but a passionate desire for God. Unfortunately, a quiet time like Advent is easily shouted down by the madness of a jump-started Christmas. Advent is not a to-do list; it's a gift tied in purple velvet ribbon. Unwrap it—it's "just what you always wanted!" Confront your use and abuse of time. Create and jealously guard little pockets of quiet. Go for a walk in the crisp air. Sit with your address book; picture, pray for, and bless each person you cherish. Turn off the TV, listen to the first part of Handel's *Messiah* and bask in its beauty. Be still. Know God.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12 (4). *"The earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD."*

Monday, Dec 08, 2025

Have a grace-full day

What is grace? One way to think of it is anything that comes from God. We can think of it in terms of what we give to God: prayer and worship, service to others, doing God's will. Or what God sends to us: the gift of creation, love, inspiration, consolation, help, and much more. Mary had grace in abundance—both what she gave and received. Make today a day of prayer to her to intercede for us and inspire us to give and receive God's grace. Here is a simple prayer from Saint Teresa of Calcutta to get you started: "Mary, give me your Heart: so beautiful, so pure, so immaculate; your Heart so full of love and humility that I may be able to receive Jesus in the Bread of Life and love Him as you love Him and serve Him in the distressing guise of the poor."

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38 (689). *"The angel Gabriel was sent ... And coming to her, he said, 'Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.'"*

Tuesday, Dec 09, 2025

Patron of new beginnings

When Juan Diego (1474-1548) was canonized in 2002, he became the first indigenous saint from the Americas. The farmer and mat weaver was in his 40s when Hernán Cortés led the conquest of Spain in 1521, and within three years the first wave of Franciscan monks arrived near Juan's village. Juan and his wife were among the first of the indigenous residents to accept Baptism. Despite their age, the couple opened their hearts to a new beginning and readily uprooted themselves to move closer to the missionaries in Mexico City. Pray to Juan Diego, patron of immigrants and indigenous people, to inspire each of us to redouble our efforts to stand with those seeking a better life in a new land.

MEMORIAL OF JUAN DIEGO CUAUHTLATÓATZIN

Isaiah 40:1-11; Matthew 18:12-14 (182). *"Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God."*

Wednesday, Dec 10, 2025

A song to lift your heart

Asked what liturgical song most fostered and nourished their spiritual life, the majority of respondents in any given online poll will cite "On Eagle's Wings" by Father Michael Joncas. The song, inspired by Isaiah's prophecy and Psalm 91, contains the beautifully crafted refrain: "And He will raise you up on eagle's

wings, Bear you on the breath of dawn, Make you to shine like the sun, And hold you in the palm of His Hand." Remember those words of solace whenever your burden feels too great.

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Isaiah 40:25-31; Matthew 11:28-30 (183). *"They that hope in the LORD will . . . soar as with eagles' wings."*

Thursday, Dec 11, 2025

Found in translation

The pontificate of Damasus (366-384) occurred during a tumultuous period in the Early Church, with schisms and heresies on all sides. Perhaps Damasus' greatest contribution was his insight that a standardized version of the Bible was desperately needed. In 382 he commissioned a highly respected scholar named Jerome to revise the Bible into a more accurate and updated Latin version, working directly from the original Greek (New Testament) and Hebrew (Old Testament) versions. Saint Jerome's monumental effort came to be known as the Vulgate, meaning "translated into a native language." Even though Latin long ago stopped being a language of everyday use, the Vulgate still holds an honored position in the church. Take time for a little scripture reading today.

MEMORIAL OF DAMASUS I, POPE

Isaiah 41:13-20; Matthew 11:11-15 (184). *"I, the LORD, will answer them; . . . That all may see and know."*

Friday, Dec 12, 2025

A labor of love

Artist J. Michael Walker produced his Virgin of Guadalupe series of paintings and sketches from 1995-2020. One of the most memorable portraits in the series is *Ironing, Thinking*, where we see Mary with a slightly careworn expression on her face as she irons her famous cloak of stars while balancing her crown on her head with simple dignity. In trying to capture the spirit of Mexico on canvas, Walker said, "It is only natural that I should have fallen under the spell—along with millions of other devotees—of the Virgin of Guadalupe, whom I portray as a real Mexican woman of Indian descent, going about the myriad tasks by which women hold the world together." Let the Virgin of Guadalupe inspire us to support the dignity of all who labor.

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Zechariah 2:14-17 or Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; Luke 1:26-38 (690A). *"A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."*

Saturday, Dec 13, 2025

Adjust your vision of Christmas

One quality that many saints share is the capacity to look beyond the sometimes horrific circumstances of their lives and see the presence of God. They see with their hearts. Saint Lucy is certainly among those saints with this ability. Tradition tells us that she was raped then tortured and murdered for being a Christian, but she remained steadfast in her faith until the end. Her feast day comes at a good time. Now, midway through Advent, we might be feeling the pressure to conjure up the "perfect Christmas." Today take a moment to pause, adjust your spiritual lenses, and focus on the love that came into the world and continues to sustain us all through the darkest moments into the light.

MEMORIAL OF LUCY, MARTYR

Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11; Matthew 17:9a, 10-13 (186). *"Blessed is he who shall have seen you."*

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



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