

Sunday, Dec 21, 2025

Oh, what a beautiful morning!

Today we name the Messiah “O Radiant Dawn, Sun of Justice, Splendor of Eternal Light!” Anyone whose morning commute includes a sunrise or who has risen early to watch the sun come up knows why primitive peoples and even our oh-so-sophisticated selves find godliness in a sunrise. At the Easter Vigil we sang “May the Morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning!” While Christmas lights have been shining for weeks, today we can think of them explicitly as a reminder of God’s gift of Light to the waiting world. We remember poet Gerard Manley Hopkins’ wonderful “Oh!” at the sight of “God’s grandeur” and this great renewal: “Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs / Because the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.”

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (O RADIANT DAWN)

Isaiah 7:10-14; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-24 (10). “O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness.”

Monday, Dec 22, 2025

A real superpower

Remember when we were kids and we used to play king of the hill? It was an important part of our social learning that the strongest among us would dominate. The same game is played out in world politics as nations rise and fall. The story of Christmas reminds us that Jesus is the world’s only real superpower, though the nations play their games of supremacy for a time. History reduces all empires to dust, but the reign of God endures forever. “Christ has dominion over all creatures,” says Doctor of the Church Saint Cyril of Alexandria, “a dominion not seized by violence nor usurped but His, by essence and by nature.” Pay homage to the King of All by humbly serving others as he would.

ADVENT WEEKDAY (O KING OF ALL NATIONS)

1 Samuel 1:24-28; Luke 1:46-56 (198). “O King of all nations and keystone of the Church; come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!”

Tuesday, Dec 23, 2025

Embrace the gift of love

We end our observance of the O Antiphons today with praise for Emmanuel, our savior. “God is not distant: he is ‘Emmanuel,’ God-with-us. He is no stranger: he has a face, the face of Jesus,” proclaims Pope Benedict XVI in his 2010 Christmas address. “This message is ever new, ever surprising, for it surpasses even our most daring hope.” The one who is to come satisfies all of our greatest longings. We need look no further. All our fretting and straining for answers comes to an end with the birth of Christ. Are we ready for such good news? Can we let go of all the things we often think will bring us happiness—money, recognition, power, beauty, health—and embrace the simple, searing gift of love?

ADVENT WEEKDAY (O EMMANUEL)

Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Luke 1:57-66 (199). “O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law: come to save us, Lord our God!”

Wednesday, Dec 24, 2025

Final preparations

It is no accident that scripture references the birth of John the Baptist on the day before we commemorate the birth of Jesus. John represents the culmination of Jewish prophetic hope for the Messiah, and his birth offers a fitting climax to the Advent season. John’s father, Zechariah, sings praises on the occasion of his son’s

birth. Zechariah’s song, or canticle, is recited daily during the morning prayer of the church’s Liturgy of the Hours. It serves as a lovely closing refrain to the Advent season, our time to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Have you made yourself ready to be guided by God’s compassion “into the way of peace”?

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Morning: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67-79 (200).

“You will go before the Lord to prepare his way.”

Thursday, Dec 25, 2025

Live in the moment of Christmas

Today we celebrate the day God entered God’s own creation by becoming human. How can we authentically honor this day? One way is to notice and truly relish our own experience of being human. So often we hurry through the hours, heedless of the many sensations to be enjoyed. This Christmas may we wake up appreciating the delicious warmth of our beds, the sparkle of our decorations, the aroma of our holiday meals, the laughter of family and friends gathered, the words and music of Christmas liturgy, the taste of the Word made flesh, the glory of the child in the manger, the everlasting embrace of love. At the end of the day, we will know something of what Emily Dickinson meant when she wrote, “To live is so startling it leaves little time for anything else.”

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

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 or 1:1-5, 9-14 (16).

“Today a Savior is born for us, Christ the Lord.”

Friday, Dec 26, 2025

The power and the glory

Saint Stephen’s Day, commemorating the first Christian martyr, is celebrated the day after Christmas, serving as a reminder that just as the naked cross looms above the empty tomb, so also its shadow falls across the crib—Jesus’ and our own. It is into human experience that the Christ is born, an experience that knows death, violence, and cruelty but a humanity also capable of love so true as to lay down life for a friend. Stephen was “filled with grace and power.” It was a power we often forget we possess. It is the power of love, our greatest gift, that gives us the wisdom and strength to endure the worst that life can bring. How will you use your power in the coming year?

FEAST OF STEPHEN, FIRST MARTYR

Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Matthew 10:17-22 (696). “Stephen, fillea with grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people.”

Saturday, Dec 27, 2025

Lend an ear

When we receive a piece of news, often our first impulse is to think, “I can’t wait to tell ...!” We are social creatures, hardwired to live in community with other people, sharing our sorrows and our joys. Moreover, sharing has mathematical properties: It divides and multiplies. When we share bad news, our burden is lessened, and when we share good news, our happiness increases. Of course, the reverse is also true: When we don’t have someone with whom to share our stories, sorrows increase and joys are diminished. As Saint Teresa of Calcutta once observed, “Loneliness is the most terrible poverty.” Who do you know to be lonely? Take time to listen to their good news.

FEAST OF JOHN, APOSTLE, EVANGELIST

1 John 1:1-4; John 20:1a, 2-8 (697). “We are writing this so that our joy may be complete.”

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



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