

**Sunday, Dec 11, 2022**

### 'Tis the season to be generous

Seasonal gift-giving was originally an expression of generosity toward the needy. These days, gift-giving has become many other things, including a source of anxiety or obligation, mindless consumerism, one-upmanship, and often, an annual occasion of snowballing debt. The gifts Jesus brings are different—they are restorative, occasions of good news. Consider offering gifts that fill hearts, not closets. Heifer International, World Wildlife Fund, and PlanUSA are among the many organizations that accept donations in directed ways to honor your loved ones.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11 (7). *"Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk . . . and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them."*

**Monday, Dec 12, 2022**

### We're good enough for God

The appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Saint Juan Diego in December 1531 is reminiscent of the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Mary. Juan and the young Mary were both understandably overwhelmed by what was asked of them. In the Gospel of Luke, Mary is "greatly troubled at what was said." According to later accounts, Juan told Our Lady to pick someone of higher standing as messenger, since he was a "man of no importance." But by accepting the challenge, a Jewish peasant girl became the Mother of God, and an indigenous Mexican persevered in getting a church built in Our Lady's honor. Today, the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City is the most-visited Catholic shrine in the world. Think you're not good enough for God's plan? Trust that God equips us all for what we're called to do.

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

TODAY'S READINGS: Zechariah 2:14-17 or Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; Luke 1:26-38 or Luke 1:39-47 (690A). *"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."*

**Tuesday, Dec 13, 2022**

### Follow the light

Lucy, whose name means "light," is a great saint for these darkening days of Advent. Her name and example personify the "light" mentioned throughout the Bible, not only Isaiah's promises of a future messiah—"people who walk in darkness will see a great light"—but Jesus, who called himself the "Light of the World", while also calling us the same. Scandinavian celebrations of Lucy, with a crown of candles on her head, remind us that she fed persecuted Christians hiding in the catacombs, affixing candles to her head in order to use both hands to serve. How will you be a light to the world today?

MEMORIAL OF LUCY, MARTYR

TODAY'S READINGS: Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Matthew 21:28-32 (188). *"Take refuge in the name of the Lord."*

**Wednesday, Dec 14, 2022**

### In the darkness, a great light

One of multiple doctors of the church celebrated this month, Saint John of the Cross was a renowned priest and friar in Spain, descended from a line of "conversos" (Iberian Jewish converts to Catholicism). A contemporary of another Carmelite saint, Teresa of Ávila, John was, like her, a mystic whose writings have lived far

beyond his own lifetime as classics of European literature. His seminal work, the poem "Dark Night of the Soul," is the basis of a widely held tenant of spirituality involving spiritual distress as a part of searching and growth. (We all have our "dark nights of the soul.") His "Ascent of Mount Carmel" is likewise widely revered. In this season of holy joy as we celebrate the approach of the Messiah, may we likewise honor the legacy of the humble Catholic friar of Jewish descent whose profound and mystical faith has inspired millions the world over.

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

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 45:6c-8, 18, 21c-25; Luke 7:18b-23 (189). *"And Jesus said to them in reply, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard.'"*

**Thursday, Dec 15, 2022**

### The greatest gifts are priceless

The tradition of Christmas gift-giving can be uncomfortable for those wanting to take seriously Catholic teaching about the environment and consumerism. Fortunately, more and more people are open to alternatives: gifts of time or special skills, gifts made from household items, gifts to charitable causes in loved ones' names. How can you celebrate creatively, in keeping with the spirit of Christmas?

ADVENT WEEKDAY

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 54:1-10; Luke 7:24-30 (190). *"I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John."*

**Friday, Dec 16, 2022**

### Truly right and just

The prophet Isaiah tells the Israelites to "observe what is right, do what is just." No easy task, often leading us to ask for some guidance. Fortunately, Jesus showed us the way. As we await the celebration of Christ's coming, take a moment to ponder some of the examples of right and just living Jesus gave us, such as caring for outcasts, being a healing presence, praying, evangelizing, and forgiving. Simply put, follow Christ's advice to love God and your neighbor as yourself and to count your blessings, and let Christ take care of the rest.

ADVENT WEEKDAY

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 56:1-3a, 6-8; John 5:33-36 (191). *"These works that I perform testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me."*

**Saturday, Dec 17, 2022**

### Dip into God's wisdom

Today we begin the recitation of the O Antiphons. The church sings these seven lines during evening prayers (vespers) on the last seven days of Advent, and also uses them as the Alleluia Verse during the daily Mass. Each antiphon is a title for Christ taken from the Book of Isaiah. They go back to an unknown source some 1,500 years ago in medieval Europe, and all begin with "O," thus known as the "O Antiphons." Take an opportunity today to connect to this ancient tradition by enjoying sung versions and explanations of the antiphons on the internet, starting with today's antiphon, O Wisdom.

ADVENT WEEKDAY (O WISDOM)

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17 (193). *"The mountains shall yield peace for the people, and the hills justice."*

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



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