

## Sunday, Dec 27, 2020

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

### The measure of success

Fruitfulness is a sign that we're doing something right. Plant a seed, water it, give it light, and it brings forth a shoot. Neglect it, and get nothing. We measure success in terms of fruitfulness: schooling completed, jobs held, relationships that endure, children raised, financial security, years lived, virtues practiced. God blessed Abram with wealth and years, but to that old man, the only true measure of success was a child. By what standard do you evaluate your life's worth? What's required for you to say in the end: "Lord, now you let your servant go in peace"?

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Colossians 3:12-21; Luke 2:22-40; or Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3; Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19; Luke 2:22-40 (17). "But Abram said, 'O Lord GOD, what good will your gifts be, if I keep on being childless?'"

## Monday, Dec 28, 2020

FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS

### Suffer little children

On the heels of the joyful celebration of the birth of our Savior, we remember the Holy Innocents—all the baby boys who were murdered by Herod in his attempt to kill the child Jesus. Remember too all those innocents who die today at the hands of their governments and who are victims of institutional and structural violence. About the Holy Innocents, Matthew quotes Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children . . ." Console today's mourning mothers by fighting for children's rights and protections.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 1:5—2:2; Matthew 2:13-18 (698). "My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin."

## Tuesday, Dec 29, 2020

FIFTH DAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD; MEMORIAL OF THOMAS BECKET, BISHOP, MARTYR

### Choosing right vs. might

Thomas Becket found himself having to choose between an earthly king and Christ the King. The cleric Thomas befriended England's Henry II—leading Henry to appoint him chancellor. Later, when Henry spotted a chance to wield power over church affairs, he named his friend the archbishop of Canterbury. But Thomas would not go along with Henry's plans. Repercussions followed, and in 1170 Thomas was brutally murdered—in Canterbury Cathedral—by the king's men. Though perhaps with less dramatic outcomes, standing up for your convictions may cost you, too. Are you willing to pay the price?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 2:3-11; Luke 2:22-35 (202). "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many."

## Wednesday, Dec 30, 2020

SIXTH DAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

### The party never ends

On this sixth day of the Octave, the Christmas celebration continues. Or it can—even if the culture around us has moved on. Especially in pandemic days, you may feel challenged to find hope and joy in the promise that God is with us. So celebrate by sharing that Divine Love, however you feel able to. Bake and share cookies, make a call to someone you may have overlooked this busy season, write a note of gratitude to someone who

challenges you, or contribute to an organization that cares for mothers and children in this season of the Holy Family. Take time in prayer to recollect and give thanks for any awareness of God's presence in recent days. *Loving God, help me remember that Christmas is not a day but rather a season that invites me to see you at work in my life every day.*

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 2:12-17; Luke 2:36-40 (203). "And coming forward at that very time, [Anna] gave thanks to God and spoke about the child."

## Thursday, Dec 31, 2020

SEVENTH DAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

### The light still shines

We might well ring out a difficult year with the words of today's psalmist: "Let the heavens be glad and the Earth rejoice!" Rejoicing implies an expectation of better things to come, placing us firmly within the Christian virtue of hope. Christians are hopeful for many reasons, starting with the fact that Jesus's death led to resurrection. The church teaches, too, that hope lies in building the kingdom of God on Earth, "as it is in heaven." Lift up your hopes for 2021 to God, and be ready to work for them with God's grace.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 2:18-21; John 1:1-18 (204). "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

## Friday, Jan 01, 2021

WORLD DAY OF PEACE; OCTAVE DAY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD; SOLEMNITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD

### Renew the face of the Earth

We have longed for the year 2020 to be over, to move away from the pandemics that have wounded us collectively and individually. With 2021 on the calendar now, it feels like maybe, just maybe we can start anew at some point. Given the chance, we, along with all of creation, have the capacity to renew, that is, to be "new again"—not only each year but each moment. An essential ingredient to renewal is peace. The church calls us to follow Christ the Way of Peace, as Pope Benedict said on this day in 2007, "with hearts full of hope, notwithstanding the dangers and difficulties that surround us." Let us pray for *and choose* peace for ourselves and for the world in all that we renew this year.

TODAY'S READINGS: Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21 (18). "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart."

## Saturday, Jan 02, 2021

MEMORIAL OF BASIL THE GREAT AND GREGORY NAZIANZEN, BISHOPS, DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

### Spiritual friendship lasts for ages

Spiritual friendship is one of the greatest gifts of life in a faith community. Basil and Gregory, fourth-century patriarchs of the Eastern Church, had such a friendship and spurred each other on to great accomplishments and service in their spiritual lives. We all need community and spiritual support as we work through the mysteries of our own personal lives and the challenges presented by a suffering world. Who can you count on for support and encouragement in these hard times? Do your resolutions for this new year include cultivation of spiritual community and friendships?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 2:22-28; John 1:19-28 (205). "All the ends of the Earth have seen the salvation by our God."

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



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