

Sunday, Dec 16, 2018

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The forgotten wrong

In an affluent society, the sin rarely referred to is avarice. We redefine it as ambition, upward mobility, or simply “doing well.” But the clutch of personal possessions is still the spiritual stranglehold it always was. The needle’s eye isn’t getting any bigger, and our modern camels still won’t pass through. John the Baptist offers several key remedies. First, share what you have with those who don’t have. Second, don’t cheat, ever. Third, don’t keep striving for more. Finally, be humble. These remedies for avarice are countercultural. They also prepare the way of the One who is coming.

TODAY’S READINGS: Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18 (9). *“The crowds asked John the Baptist: ‘What should we do?’”*

Monday, Dec 17, 2018

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Trace your holy family tree

The internet has given a boost to the 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 now classic *A History of Christianity* (1976).

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.”*

Tuesday, Dec 18, 2018

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Give measure for measure

Joseph, Mary’s betrothed, is called a *righteous* man. That is an antique word best explained in terms of weights. A righteous weight is truthful in its measure. Joseph weighed the situation—pregnant fiancée, not his child—and originally determined the most generous measure of his response: to get out of the deal and protect Mary without causing scandal. God, however, asked for more from this good man: to marry the woman and raise the child as his own. This baker’s-dozen measure of what justice requires is still in force today. Pray that the Lord of justice will help you imitate Joseph’s brand of benevolent giving.

TODAY’S READINGS: Jeremiah 23:5-8; Matthew 1:18-25 (194). *“This is the name they give him: ‘The Lord our justice.’”*

Wednesday, Dec 19, 2018

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Turn your heart toward children

After hearing of a newborn king in Bethlehem, King Herod ordered the slaughter of all young male children in the village. Truth be told, it has never been easy to be a child. Historian John Boswell reveals in *The Kindness of Strangers* that child

abandonment was a common and often accepted practice from antiquity until the Renaissance. Although strides have been made in child welfare, abuse, neglect, and exploitation are still alarmingly widespread. A society that puts children first has a great future to look forward to. Be a voice for those who are still learning to speak.

TODAY’S READINGS: Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Luke 1:5-25 (195). *“He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children.”*

Thursday, Dec 20, 2018

ADVENT WEEKDAY

The key to the mystery

With all the Advent talk of expectant waiting for new life, the reality for many families is that some of their sick and elderly are choosing this time of year to let go and go home to God. We hold these mysteries of birth and death together. If you are around death and the dying at this time of year—or any time—remember that a God who can bring life from Mary, a virgin, and Elizabeth, an elderly woman, can draw eternal life out of the bounds of death.

TODAY’S READINGS: Isaiah 7:10-14; Luke 1:26-38 (196). *“She was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.”*

Friday, Dec 21, 2018

MEMORIAL OF PETER CANISIUS, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH OR
ADVENT WEEKDAY

How to get things done

Have you noticed there are only four more shopping days left till Christmas? Better get moving or there won’t be enough time to put up the decorations, finish sending Christmas greetings, get the food prepared, and clean up the house for the guests. Maybe you need to beg the intercession of today’s saint, Peter Canisius (1521-97), who is known as the patron saint of getting things done. He said, “If you have too much to do, with God’s help you will find time to do it all.” Hey, it’s worth a try. Otherwise, you might need to call on Saint Jude, patron of hopeless causes!

TODAY’S READINGS: Song of Songs 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Luke 1:39-45 (197). *“Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”*

Saturday, Dec 22, 2018

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Generous Christmas to you

The constant jingle-jangle of ads this time of year reminds us that it is not too late to get into the “spirit of giving.” Most of the time those words are followed by encouragement to run to the local mall for last-minute shopping, but there are many other ways to give as well. We can give of our time, lend an ear, share our table, make a donation, deliver a gift to those who are less fortunate. There are many ways to experience the special feeling that comes from an act of generosity. If there is magic to the season, that is surely it.

TODAY’S READINGS: 1 Samuel 1:24-28; Luke 1:46-56 (198). *“He has filled the hungry with good things.”*

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



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