

## Sunday, Dec 23, 2018

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### Cherish the future

The future is a land to which we're all headed, and sooner than we imagine. You'd think we'd treat the future a little better, considering how much time we hope to spend there. One way to be kinder to our future is to invest very, very heavily in our children. Certainly our actual, literal offspring deserve every benefit we can provide, including especially our love and protection. The world's children could use the same advantages: homes that are stable and secure, proper nutrition, health care and education, safety from violence. What are you investing in the future?

TODAY'S READINGS: Micah 5:1-4a; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45 (12). *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."*

## Monday, Dec 24, 2018

ADVENT WEEKDAY

### Peace is within our reach

The promise of peace is surely the greatest of all God's rewards. For a human race caught up in the throes of fear and competition year in and year out, the idea that there is a path toward peace is good news indeed. As Christians we believe Jesus was sent to us by God for the specific purpose of showing us the way of peace. Jesus is not only the Prince of Peace, he is peace itself. Embrace Jesus and you embrace peace. Then, as promised, you will be filled with a sense of wholeness, harmony, healing, and hope. What more is there to proclaim but hallelujah!

TODAY'S READINGS: Morning: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67-79 (200). *"The dawn from on high shall break upon us, . . . to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

## Tuesday, Dec 25, 2018

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

### Rejoice, I say, rejoice!

Saint Augustine said that "God became human so that humans might become God." It's an amazing statement, when you think about it—and today's a pretty good day to do so! Both sides of the equation are astonishing, actually. First, the idea that the immortal, eternal, boundless God would willingly take on the limits, sorrows, and vulnerability of a human infant. And then, that by doing so, God invites limited and vulnerable humans like us to share in God's immortal and eternal nature. Could there be a greater Christmas gift? A better reason to rejoice? Merry Christmas!

TODAY'S READINGS: Vigil: Isaiah 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Matthew 1:1-25 (13); Night: Isaiah 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (14); Dawn: Isaiah 62:11-12; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:15-20 (15); Day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18 (16). *"To those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God."*

## Wednesday, Dec 26, 2018

FEAST OF STEPHEN, FIRST MARTYR

### The good with the bad

It's the day after Christmas, and we're still cleaning up, wearing our new sweaters, and working on the leftovers. Why remember the first martyr—someone stoned to death? But for more than 1,500 years the church has celebrated this feast at this time. Before his death, Stephen, as Acts of the Apostles tells us, was a

deacon (the first in that category, too) and was responsible for feeding the poor. He also worked a few miracles and debated with opponents of the early Christian community—one particularly nasty dispute got him killed. As the day-after-Christmas saint, Stephen reminds you that, in the midst of celebrating the birth of Jesus, service and sacrifice continue to be part of calling yourself a Christian.

TODAY'S READINGS: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Matthew 10:17-22 (696). *"Brother will betray brother to death, and you will be hated by all because of my name."*

## Thursday, Dec 27, 2018

FEAST OF JOHN, APOSTLE, EVANGELIST

### The disciple Jesus loves

While it's usually assumed that the author of the Gospel of John is also the "beloved disciple" referred to in that gospel, nowhere is this identification explicitly made. Some scholars think this ambiguity means we are intended to see ourselves as the beloved disciple. Each one of us is the "disciple whom Jesus loved." In our faith lives, so much works itself out if we can really feel God's love for us, if we can feel our absolute value in the eyes of God and know in our hearts we are forgiven. Only then can we love and forgive others.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 1:1-4; John 20:1a, 2-8 (697). *"The other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed."*

## Friday, Dec 28, 2018

FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS

### Kids don't ride free

Each day a great number of innocent people—many of them children—suffer and die because of war, disease, and poverty. In our own country, school and gang violence, child predators, and other lethal forces threaten the lives of our young ones. The "holy innocents"—those King Herod ordered murdered in his vain hunt for the infant Jesus—are also all those who suffer from the violence humans inflict on one another and the planet. All destructiveness begins in the human heart when people do harm out of fear or selfishness. This year, this Christmas season, tell yourself that hate and neglect will stop with you.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 1:5—2:2; Matthew 2:13-18 (698). *"Herod . . . was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were 2 years old or under."*

## Saturday, Dec 29, 2018

MEMORIAL OF THOMAS BECKET, BISHOP, MARTYR

### Walk the walk

Thomas Becket began his career by serving in the household of Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury. He performed his duties so well that he was soon named archdeacon. King Henry II appointed him chancellor of England and later, after Theobald's death, archbishop. Thomas was not ordained at the time. After his ordination, he resigned as chancellor and worked to uphold the separation of church and crown, much to the surprise and anger of the king, who eventually encouraged Becket's murder. Thomas Becket excelled at everything he did, especially discipleship. He lived and died a true servant of God. Follow in his footsteps.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 John 2:3-11; Luke 2:22-35 (202). *"Whoever says, 'I abide in him,' ought to walk just as he walked."*

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



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