

Sunday, Dec 17, 2017

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Silver and gold

If the seasons had a beauty contest, Advent would take most of the prizes. In the darkest hours of the year, we adorn every corner with silver and gold, tinsel and lights. Merry music flows into the streets, and plates are heaped with sweetness. It's as if misery is officially banished from view for the final month of the year. Truth tellers pick up the cheery beat: Isaiah brings glad tidings, Paul shouts "Rejoice!" and John the Baptist testifies to the light. Share the beauty and the joy of Advent with someone who may still be in the dark.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28 (8). *"For [God] has clothed me . . . like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels."*

Monday, Dec 18, 2017

ADVENT WEEKDAY

The Lord be with you

Life can seem chaotic. This is true in the mad rush to Christmas, but also in the everyday challenges that make us wonder if life makes sense. In response to this human need for order and meaning we pray that the Lord, the one who holds all things together, will be with us: "O sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain: Come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free." Be mindful throughout your day that the Lord is with you in all that you do.

TODAY'S READINGS: Jeremiah 23:5-8; Matthew 1:18-25 (194). *"They shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us.'"*

Tuesday, Dec 19, 2017

ADVENT WEEKDAY

God is full of surprises

Any child will tell you that part of the magic as Christmas approaches is anticipating the surprise that will come from opening a wrapped gift or digging into a stocking and finding what is hidden inside. Mary's cousin Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, must have felt an enormous wave of surprise when she discovered "what was hidden inside"—that she was pregnant at an advanced age. Surprise was followed by gratitude for the gift that had been given to her. We might pause for a moment today to unwrap the many surprising gifts with which God already has graced our lives.

TODAY'S READINGS: Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Luke 1:5-25 (195). *"This is what the Lord has done for me."*

Wednesday, Dec 20, 2017

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Find your calling joyfully

Many people believe God has a special plan just for them—if only they could figure out what it is! From this point of view, discovering what God wants for a person is like a search for a missing key: Find it, and you can get in; don't, and you're locked out. Discerning what God may be calling you to, though, may be as simple as seeing where—in the words of campus minister Sally Willitzer in the 2011 issue of *VISION Vocation Guide*—you "can best be an instrument of love in the world," and that means not only discovering where you can most effectively help others but

also what makes you happy.

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 7:10-14; Luke 1:26-38 (196). *"Do not be afraid . . . for you have found favor with God."*

Thursday, Dec 21, 2017

MEMORIAL OF PETER CANISIUS, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Light that candle

Here's a quote suitable to toast the winter solstice, the waning year's longest night: "Let the world indulge its madness. Let it wear itself out, for it cannot endure and passes like a shadow. But we, buried deep in the wounds of Christ, why should we be dismayed?" This comes to us courtesy of Peter Canisius (1521-97), Jesuit theologian and defender of the church during the Protestant Reformation. Often we cannot ignore the world's madness and must vigorously oppose it. But sometimes our candle lit against the darkness is all the opposition that's required.

TODAY'S READINGS: Song of Songs 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Luke 1:39-45 (197). *"The Lord, your God, is in your midst."*

Friday, Dec 22, 2017

ADVENT WEEKDAY

Try a little kindness

If we focus only on our own well-being and interests, we are likely to end up with a head full of confused and scattered thoughts. There is a remedy, however, to the trap of becoming self-absorbed. This is the time of year to get outside of our own circular thoughts and extend a hand to another. An act of charity or kindness, no matter how minor it may appear to be, is likely to warm our hearts and melt away our troubled thoughts.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 1:24-28; Luke 1:46-56 (198). *"He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts."*

Saturday, Dec 23, 2017

MEMORIAL OF JOHN OF KANTY, PRIEST

Greater love would be hard to find

If John of Kanty in 15th-century Poland could have known he would one day be venerated as a saint, he would have been astonished. Although he was a brilliant scripture scholar, he was also a humble parish priest. Even when treated unfairly for years, he could accept unjust blame and criticism without flinching because he believed that he could protect his parishioners and defeat the power of evil by absorbing it into himself. In a culture of blame like our own, the ability to defuse violence and anger is a rare gift but one we should cultivate instead of seeking revenge or proving ourselves right when wronged.

TODAY'S READINGS: Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Luke 1:57-66 (199). *"See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me."*

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



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