



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

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2011**

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**Coming to a manger near you**

After somewhat of a rocky start with the Philistine giant Goliath, David reached the pinnacle of his career, ensconced in a palace, king of Israel. With power, wealth, and leisure now at his disposal, David noticed that the Ark of God was housed not in palatial splendor like himself but rather in a mere tent. David magnanimously pledged to build a temple for the Ark, but God gently rebuffed him, reminding him that it was God, not David, who brought him from the brink of disaster to be king of God's people. With David we recall that God is the source of all that is good in our life. As we await the arrival of God, not in a palace but in a stable, let us pray for a spirit of gratitude for all that God has done.

TODAY'S READINGS: *2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38 (11)*

*"I have been with you wherever you went."*

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 19** 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."*

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20** ADVENT WEEKDAY

**Find your bliss**

Many people believe God has a special plan just for them—if only they can 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* magazine, 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."*

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21**

**FEAST OF PETER CANISIUS, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH**

**Give it your all**

Saint Peter Canisius might have been what today we call a Type A personality. He lived at a pace that illustrated his saying, "If you have too much to do, with God's help you will find time to do it all." Sometimes it seems that he *did* do it all. He had a master's degree by 19, became a popular preacher, a founder of

the Catholic press, and a diplomat who used his gifts to bring the challenge of Christian values into the marketplace. Whether or not we have as much energy as Peter Canisius, the important thing is to give what we have and do what we can.

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, a mighty savior."*

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22** 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."*

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23** ADVENT WEEKDAY

**Say yes to the mess**

Every birth is an unequivocal "yes" to life. We enter the complexities on earth without any assurance that our lives will be smooth and we won't have difficulties. We don't know whether we will have a disability, experience the trauma of an earthquake or a fire, or struggle with addiction, or feel deep loneliness. Yet in spite of the insecurities, the unknowns, all the possible things that could go wrong, we are somehow willing to risk for life, we are willing to risk for love. Today, in the midst of the busyness of Christmas preparations, take a moment to appreciate the courage it takes to say yes.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Luke 1:57-66 (199)*

*"What, then, will this child be?"*

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24** 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: *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."*

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