

Sunday, Dec 04, 2022

Peace to all who enter here

The holiday season can be full of exciting plans and activities. It can also be stressful, as social demands increase. Shopping and seasonal food preparation take time—a thing always in limited supply. And as families and communities gather, opportunities for harmony or conflict arise. Francis de Sales offers advice for the harried: "Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset." Commit to Isaiah's peaceable kingdom, where calf and lion share the field and childhood innocence leads the way.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12 (4). *"The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to lead them."*

Monday, Dec 05, 2022

Feed my flock

"Mandela Day" is an annual international day in honor of South African anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela celebrated on his birthday in July as a call to action to every individual to change the world with acts of service. Today is the anniversary of Mandela's death and also International Volunteer Day, another reminder for each person to make a positive difference in the lives of others. In 2022, the Nelson Mandela Foundation focused on the intersection of food security and climate change—also themes of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*. How can you and your parish help provide nutritious food to all in your community in ways that are sustainable? For suggestions, visit mandeladay.com.

ADVENT WEEKDAY

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 5:17-26 (181). *"We have seen incredible things today."*

Tuesday, Dec 06, 2022

Secret Santa

The anonymous generosity of Saint Nicholas, bishop of Myra in the 300s, is legendary. So as not to attract praise from others, Nicholas performed charitable deeds on the sly—like the time he saved three poor maidens from destitution because they had no dowry for marriage. Under cover of night, Saint Nick secretly dropped three bags of gold down their chimney to ease their plight. The size, shape, and color of these bags of gold gave rise to the "Christmas orange" traditionally placed in Christmas stockings. Consider an anonymous act of charity today—and maybe treat yourself to an orange, too!

MEMORIAL OF NICHOLAS, BISHOP

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 40:1-11; Matthew 18:12-14 (182). *"It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost."*

Wednesday, Dec 07, 2022

Firm stance, gentle hand

Saint Ambrose of Milan, the esteemed early church theologian and pastor, was consecrated bishop of Milan on this day in 374, during a trip to the city to quell a succession crisis for the contentious church post. Known for his conciliatory demeanor, Ambrose was a staunch defender of orthodox beliefs about the divinity of Jesus, but he was also respected by those who believed Jesus not to be God, because of his willingness to listen to them. Among his countless contributions to the church, he converted Saint

Augustine of Hippo with his preaching and baptized the wayward son before his own journey to theological greatness. In this season of charity, may we all emulate Ambrose's devotion to peace and unity on his holy feast.

MEMORIAL OF AMBROSE, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH
TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 40:25-31; Matthew 11:28-30 (183). *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves."*

Thursday, Dec 08, 2022

Holiness is about more than clean living

Older Catholics might smile as they recall the imagery for sin that they learned in the mid-20th century. Sin-free meant a clean soul. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception refers to Mary as free from "all stain of original sin." Rather than emphasize Mary's clean soul, today many contemporary theologians choose to emphasize Mary's active faithfulness over a lifetime. That's something each one of us can aspire to.

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (PATRONAL FEAST DAY OF THE U.S.A.)

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38 (689). *"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."*

Friday, Dec 09, 2022

Don't lose sight of Mary

After providing a mantle of roses with the image of Mary miraculously impressed upon it as proof to the archbishop of Mexico City of her appearance to him, Juan Diego spent his days living as a hermit and guide to pilgrims near a shrine built in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a title Mary reportedly chose for herself. The Mexican bishops define the "Guadalupe Event" as the "beginning of evangelization with a vitality that surpassed all expectations." The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe now holds the honor of being the most visited Catholic shrine in the world. As with any Marian apparition, spiritual transformation is Mary's primary purpose—all in the hope of leading a new generation to Christ. Draw on the presence of Mary today, as Saint Juan Diego did centuries ago, to help orient you toward God's boundless love.

MEMORIAL OF JUAN DIEGO CUAUHTLATZIN

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 48:17-19; Matthew 11:16-19 (185). *"Wisdom is vindicated by her works."*

Saturday, Dec 10, 2022

Let your spirit soar!

The title of Our Lady of Loreto is owed more to a building and a statue than to a person. The building is the Basilica of the Holy House (Basilica della Santa Casa) in Loreto, Italy. A tradition arose that the Holy House was the actual house where the Virgin Mary lived in Nazareth, which had later miraculously been transported by angels to Loreto. (Crusaders returning from the Holy Land may have more plausibly transported it with them, stone by stone.) The statue is a Madonna and Child image, called Our Lady of Loreto, carved in Cedar of Lebanon and enshrined in the basilica. Whatever you might make of the miraculous story about Our Lady of Loreto, the next time you embark on a long journey or relocation, it might not hurt to ask for her protection.

MEMORIAL OF OUR LADY OF LORETO

TODAY'S READINGS: Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11; Matthew 17:9a, 10-13 (186). *"Elijah has already come."*

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



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