

DECEMBER

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20 21 22 23 24

25 VIGIL

25 MIDNIGHT

25 DAY

26 27 28 29 30

31

Thursday, December 1, 2016
(Lec. 178)

- 1) Isaiah 26:1-6
- 2) Matthew 7:21, 24-27

THURSDAY
- FIRST WEEK

FOCUS: True discipleship requires action.

Accomplishing a goal requires motivation, knowledge and action. It is not enough simply to think or talk about it; you have to act. Discipleship is no different. Today, Jesus tells us that not all those who say, *Lord, Lord*, will enter the kingdom of heaven – only those who do the Father's will.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Today's reading from Isaiah contains words proclaimed by the people of Judah. They sing of trusting in the Lord, who will strengthen them and give them a lasting foundation. In the Gospel, Jesus describes true discipleship – doing the will of the Father. He speaks of building a strong foundation in the Lord in order to withstand the trials and tribulations of life, and helping to build the kingdom of God on earth.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Understanding that the Lord is our rock and salvation, we join in offering him our prayers for our needs and the needs of the world.

- 1) That all members of the Church will use this Advent season as an opportunity to renew our relationship with Christ, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That leaders of nations may respect the lives and dignity of all people when they enact laws and regulations, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That those whose homes have been damaged or destroyed by natural disasters may be blessed to find places of safe haven and shelter, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That we in this parish community may seek to build our foundations of discipleship on Christ, the eternal rock, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That those who died may come to perpetual peace and joy in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Faithful and loving God, in your goodness and love please hear and answer our prayers. We ask this through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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Friday, December 2, 2016
(Lec. 179)

FRIDAY

- 1) Isaiah 29:17-24
- 2) Matthew 9:27-31

- FIRST WEEK

FOCUS: Christ came to save us and heal us of our spiritual blindness – that we might walk in the light of his love forever.

Christ is the Light of the world. He is able to heal us of our spiritual blindness, similar to the way he healed the two blind men in today's Gospel, but we must have faith. Let us place our trust in Jesus so we might gain greater clarity of spiritual sight and walk more fully in the light of his love.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading from Isaiah prophesies that the Lord will raise up the deaf, the blind and the lowly. The Lord says that Jacob shall no longer be ashamed. In the Gospel, Jesus gives sight to two blind men who believe. Although Jesus warns them not to, they spread word of him throughout the land.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: With humble hearts, let us present our needs to our Father in heaven.

- 1) That those who serve the Church as missionaries may continue to share the light of Christ with those who have not heard his Gospel message, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That government leaders may always be guided by integrity and fairness in their decision-making, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That those who have recently suffered the loss of a loved one may find strength and consolation in the promise and hope of eternal life in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That those from our parish community who serve in the military may be kept safe from harm and return home to their families, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That those who have died may experience the fullness of life and love in God's heavenly kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Father, hear our prayers and grant us the grace needed to lead lives that are holy and pleasing to you. We ask this through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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Saturday, December 3, 2016

(Lec. 180)

- 1) Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26
- 2) Matthew 9:35–10:1, 5a, 6-8

SATURDAY

- FIRST WEEK
(OBL MEM
Saint Francis Xavier,
Priest)

FOCUS: Each of us is called to give witness to the Gospel, and share God's love with others.

Similar to the way that Jesus commissioned the Twelve Apostles to preach the Gospel and to bring God's healing and saving love to others, we are called to do the same. We do this by leading lives consistent with the faith we profess, and giving of ourselves generously in service to others.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading from Isaiah speaks of the joy and delight to be found in serving the Lord, and the abundant blessings God bestows upon those who are faithful to him. In the Gospel, Jesus calls and sends out the Twelve Apostles, and gives them authority to heal in his name.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Knowing that God provides for our every need, we present our prayers and petitions to him with confidence.

- 1) That Pope Francis, and all bishops and priests, will continue to shepherd the faithful to walk in the ways of the Lord, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That all faithful members of the Church may be moved and strengthened by the prayers and example of Saint Francis Xavier to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That those who suffer with addiction or mental illness may find strength and comfort through God's healing touch, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That during these days of Advent preparation, we in this faith community will seek to share the light of Christ with all whom we encounter, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That those who have died may come to share fully in eternal life, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Father of mercy, hear our prayers and grant us those things which we most truly need to sustain us on our earthly pilgrimage of faith. Through Christ our Lord.

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2016

(Lec. 4)

- 1) Isaiah 11:1-10
- 2) Romans 15:4-9
- 3) Matthew 3:1-12

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

FOCUS: We are called to prepare the way for Jesus.

John the Baptist was called by God to prepare the way for Jesus. He did this by proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Similarly, each one of us is called by God to prepare the way for Jesus. We do this whenever we assist someone in need, visit someone who is sick or lend a listening ear.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading prophesies that the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon the promised Messiah, who shall come forth from the line of King David. The second reading from Romans reminds us that by living in love and unity with one another, we glorify God. In the Gospel, John the Baptist preaches in the desert, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Confident of our heavenly Father's loving mercy, we offer him our prayers and petitions.

- 1) For all members of the Church, that we may open ourselves more fully to the grace and workings of the Holy Spirit so as to go forth and give witness to the Gospel in our everyday lives, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For world leaders, that they reflect the love, joy and peace of the Lord to their people by acting justly and with compassion, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who are sick, may their faith in Christ Jesus bring them healing, hope and strength, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For families in this parish community who are torn by conflict, may this Advent season give them the opportunity to work toward forgiveness and reconciliation, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they come to enjoy perfect happiness with all the angels and saints in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Loving Father, answer our prayers according to your holy will. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

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Monday, December 5, 2016
(Lec. 181)

MONDAY

- 1) Isaiah 35:1-10
- 2) Luke 5:17-26

- SECOND WEEK

FOCUS: Faith enables us to navigate life's twists and turns and keep our feet planted on the path to life.

Unexpected twists and turns are part and parcel of life. If we try to handle them all on our own, we will surely fail. But if we trust in God and rely upon him for guidance and support, we will find the strength to persevere and stay on the path of discipleship and life.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Today's first reading from Isaiah describes the joyful return of God's people to the Holy Land from exile in Babylon. The Gospel tells of Jesus healing a paralytic lowered to him through a hole made in the roof of a house.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Let us come before our almighty God with our prayers, confident that he provides for our needs.

- 1) For all members of the Church, that the Holy Spirit might guide us as we share the light of Christ in our world, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For civic leaders, that Christ might strengthen their will to seek nonviolent solutions to the problems that plague us, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who have suffered the recent loss of a loved one in this Advent season, may they find strength and solace through the coming of the Christ child, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For members of our parish, that we might be open to the workings of the Holy Spirit to inspire us to reach out to those in need, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, that they may live in the light of God's love for all eternity in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, we are grateful for the many blessings you bestow upon us, and we ask that you answer our prayers according to your will, through Christ our Lord.

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Tuesday, December 6, 2016
(Lec. 182)

- 1) Isaiah 40:1-11
- 2) Matthew 18:12-14

TUESDAY

- SECOND WEEK
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Nicholas, Bishop)

FOCUS: God's power is found in love and consolation.

It is easy to think of power as something that injures or takes advantage of another. But God's power is one of love; it is a love that consoles, rescues from death and seeks us out when we go astray

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The passage from Isaiah provides us with some of the most optimistic and consoling words in Scripture. God's power is shown in his love toward us, and he uses it for our rescue and our safety. The parable of the lost sheep in Matthew's Gospel demonstrates the love God has for his people, and all that he will do to keep us safe and bring us home.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: With confidence in his love and mercy, we offer our petitions to our ever-faithful God.

- 1) For all members of the Church, may we be bearers of God's saving and healing love to a world broken and divided by violence and indifference, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For all leaders of communities and nations, may they carry out their duties with integrity, and always work to safeguard the dignity and sanctity of all human life, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all who struggle under a cross of chronic illness, may they find strength and hope in Jesus which helps them carry their load, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For the members of this faith community, may we love, support and encourage one another to keep our feet planted on the path of life, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all who have died, may they one day come to dwell in the new and heavenly Jerusalem, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: God of love and consolation, we offer these prayers to you in confidence that you will hear and answer them. We ask this through your son, Jesus Christ.

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Wednesday, December 7, 2016
(Lec. 183)

- 1) Isaiah 40:25-31
- 2) Matthew 11:28-30

WEDNESDAY

- SECOND WEEK
(OBL MEM
Saint Ambrose,
Bishop and Doctor
of the Church)

FOCUS: Jesus offers us a blessed invitation to rest in him when we are weary.

The Lord's great strength lifts us when we are tired and feel we cannot go on. The demands of daily life can seem daunting, but if we seek out Jesus for strength and guidance, he will help us carry our cross. Jesus is our respite when the world seems to go on "non-stop."

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading from Isaiah reminds us that God gives us strength at all times and renews us so that we may *run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint*. In the Gospel, we learn that Jesus gives us rest from our busy lives, cares and burdens.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: The Lord saves his people. With love, hope and faith, we now bring our needs to our gracious God.

- 1) For the Church, that she may continue to succeed in her mission of bringing the Good News of God's love and mercy to all people, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For leaders throughout the world, may they always seek ways to bring about peace and tolerance in their societies, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who suffer from isolation during this Advent season, may they be comforted and lifted up by the compassion of Jesus and the kindness of others, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For catechists in this faith community, may they continue to be guided by the Holy Spirit as they pass along the faith to our young people, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they find rest from their labors in the kingdom of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: God our Father, we come before you trusting that you will answer our prayers according to your will. For we offer them to you through Christ, our Lord.

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Thursday, December 8, 2016
(Lec. 689)

- 1) Genesis 3:9-15, 20
- 2) Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12
- 3) Luke 1:26-38

THE IMMACULATE

BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
(Patronal Feast Day
of the
United States of America)
- SOLEMNITY
(Holy Day of Obligation)

FOCUS: We celebrate the unique place of Mary in God's plan of salvation.

With the coming of Christ into our world, God enters into humanity in a new and dynamic way. Mary's role in this great drama as mother is essential, and yet another example of how God has chosen and blessed the people who belong to him. With this Christ-filled blessing comes God's peace, and our adoption as his sons and daughters.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The reading from Genesis recalls that moment when humanity, having defied its Creator, is expelled from Eden and separated from the Lord. Saint Paul reminds the Ephesians that, like all believers in Christ, they have been chosen, blessed and called to be holy before the Lord. The Gospel recalls the Annunciation and Mary's yes to the Lord.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: We place our hopes and prayers in the hands of our merciful Father, who sent his Son that we might be adopted as God's sons and daughters.

- 1) For all members of the Church, that we, like Mary, may grow ever more faithful in our discipleship and ever stronger in our faith, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For government leaders, that the Gospel message of peace and blessing may inform and direct their decisions and actions, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For peace in our homes and communities, may we turn away from death and division and choose to respect the human dignity of each person, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For the sick and dying, that Mary's example of faith and trust in God's holy will might give them hope and courage, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died marked with the sign of faith, may they, like our Blessed Mother, come to share in the fullness of Christ's glory, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Almighty and living God, hear our prayers and open our hearts so that, like Mary, we may ponder your many blessings in our lives and praise you for your eternal mercy. We make our prayer through Christ, our Lord.

Friday, December 9, 2016
(Lec. 185)

- 1) Isaiah 48:17-19
- 2) Matthew 11:16-19

FRIDAY

- SECOND WEEK
(Opt. Mem.)

Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin)

FOCUS: Every Christian is called to be in dialogue with the message of sacred Scripture.

The great Scripture scholar Saint Jerome once said, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." Scripture is addressed to us, and we must try to understand what the Lord wants to tell us. We need to remember that the word of God has been given to us to build communion with others on our journey toward the heavenly kingdom.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading from Isaiah is focused on faithfulness to the Lord's commandments. If the people of Israel would have remained steadfast, they would have prospered and flourished. In the Gospel, Jesus scolds the people for not listening to either John the Baptist or him. Jesus' own deeds are evidence that he is revealing the wisdom of God.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Humbly trusting in the compassion of God, we place our petitions before him.

- 1) That missionaries throughout the world will bring Pope Francis' message of mercy to those in need as they spread the Good News, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That world leaders will always respect the sanctity and dignity of human life from conception through natural death, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That those who serve our country in the military will be kept out of harm's way and be supported by our prayers, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That our parish community will listen intently to the words of sacred Scripture, and have it pressed upon our heart so we may give a more faithful witness to the Gospel, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That those who have died may experience the embrace of our loving God in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Gracious Lord, we place our petitions before you in the name of Jesus Christ, your son.

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Saturday, December 10, 2016
(Lec. 186)

SATURDAY

- 1) Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11
- 2) Matthew 17:9a, 10-13

- SECOND WEEK

FOCUS: At this midpoint of Advent, let us refocus our hearts on reflection and prayer.

Advent invites time for quiet, time for prayer and time to allow our God to come near to us. Yet the world distracts us with many things to do as we prepare for Christmas. Let's refocus on those special Advent invitations that allow for spiritual renewal, and enhance the fire of our devotion to God.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading from the Book of Sirach remembers the fiery zeal of the prophet Elijah for God. In the Gospel, Jesus teaches that Elijah has already come in the person of John the Baptist.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: With hope in our ever merciful God this Advent season, let us bring our prayers and petitions to him.

- 1) That the Church may be on fire with the Gospel message of love for all God's people, challenging others to support the sanctity of each human life, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That government leaders will design policies and establish programs that uplift the lives of the poorest of the poor, and give them opportunities for advancement, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That our neighbors and friends who feel burdened by life's circumstances may be comforted by the love of Jesus and our care and support, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That each of us in this faith community will set aside special times for prayer during this season of Advent so we may draw closer to God, and grow in holiness of life, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That all who have completed their earthly journey may be clothed in eternal glory and see God face to face, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: O God, look kindly upon our prayers and help us to seek you with the fire of renewed devotion during this season of Advent. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2016

(Lec. 7)

- 1) Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10
- 2) James 5:7-10
- 3) Matthew 11:2-11

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

FOCUS: Rejoice in the Lord always; for indeed, the Lord is near.

As we wait for the coming of the Lord, we prepare our hearts and homes to receive him. As Saint Paul instructs, we prepare with patience and a firm heart. We will know he has come into our hearts and homes when we model true discipleship and work to bring the Good News to those around us.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, the prophet proclaims the joyful news that God saves his people and gives them great reason for rejoicing. Saint Paul, in the second reading, exhorts the faithful to prepare for the coming of the Lord with patience and a firm heart. In the Gospel, John the Baptist asks if Jesus is really the Messiah, or should they seek another?

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: With open hearts and confidence in our merciful Father, we offer our petitions to him.

- 1) For Pope Francis, bishops and all clergy, may they continue to model, through their words and actions, joyful devotion to Jesus Christ, inspiring all the faithful, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For world leaders, may they work to foster respect among their people for the languages, religions, ethnicities and customs of neighboring nations, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all those who are estranged from their families, may they embrace the healing comfort of God's grace and experience a reconciliation that mends broken hearts, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For the members of this faith community, may we be joyful heralds of the Good News this Advent season, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all those who have died, may they come to join the company of angels and saints in God's heavenly kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Loving God, we rejoice in the blessings you bestow. Please continue to offer your blessings by granting these petitions according to your will. Through Christ our Lord.

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Monday, December 12, 2016
(Lec. 690A)

**OUR LADY
OF GUADALUPE
- FEAST**

1) Zechariah 2:14-17 or
Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab

2) Luke 1:26-38 or Luke 1:39-47

NOTE: Or any readings from the *Lectionary for Ritual Masses* (vol. IV), the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nos. 707-712.

FOCUS: Mary's yes to God's call is a model for us as we discern the Lord's will in our life.

The Lord foretold early of the coming of the Messiah, and when the time came, an angel announces his birth. We can always have faith that God's promises will be fulfilled in his time.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, Zechariah foretells the Lord's coming to dwell among his people about five hundred years before it comes to pass. Today's Gospel is the story of the announcement to Mary by the angel Gabriel that she will become the mother of Jesus – the promised Messiah and Savior of the world.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Trusting in God's loving care for us, let us present our petitions to him.

- 1) That all members of the Church may follow Mary's example of saying yes to God's call, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That all nations will make a concerted effort to create laws that respect human life from conception to natural death, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That those who have lost loved ones during this Advent season will be comforted by the hope and promise of the resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That our parish community may strive to welcome the stranger, and treat one another with kindness and respect, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That our beloved dead, and all who have died, may come to enjoy perpetual joy and peace in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petitions)

PRIEST: Almighty Father, we thank you for hearing our every prayer and answering our petitions according to your will. Through Christ our Lord.

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Tuesday, December 13, 2016
(Lec. 188)

- 1) Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13
- 2) Matthew 21:28-32

TUESDAY

- THIRD WEEK
(OBL MEM
Saint Lucy, Virgin and Martyr)

FOCUS: Regardless of how far we stray from God's truth, we will be welcomed back if we repent and turn to him.

It is all too easy in today's fast-paced world to get thrown off track spiritually. The good news is that no matter how far we have gone astray, God's loves us unconditionally and is ever-willing to forgive us. And to receive God's forgiveness, all we need to do is have a sincere desire to repent of our sins, and humbly ask God to forgive us, and we will be forgiven.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The Prophet Zephaniah warns that God will judge the nation of Israel with justice, removing those who fail to repent, but will leave in place a faithful remnant who are humble and lowly and who find their strength and refuge in the Lord. In the Gospel, Jesus explains in a parable that what is important is not what we say, but how we act.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Ever mindful of the Lord's mercy, and grateful for his forgiveness, let us offer him our prayers today.

- 1) For lay leaders in the Church, that their example of faithful commitment to the Lord will show others the path of discipleship, let us pray to the Lord
- 2) For world leaders, that they work diligently to allow everyone under their jurisdiction the religious freedom to worship God, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who have experienced or witnessed violence in their lives, may they find solace in the healing peace of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For members of this faith community, may we, like Saint Lucy whom we honor today, stand up for our faith in spite of opposition, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For the deceased members of our parish and families, may they come to enjoy the reward of eternal life in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petitions)

PRIEST: Most merciful Father, grateful for the many abundant blessings you bestow upon us each day, we ask that you hear and answer our prayers. We offer them to you through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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Wednesday, December 14, 2016
(Lec. 189)

- 1) Isaiah 45:6b-8, 18, 21b-25
- 2) Luke 7:18b-23

WEDNESDAY

- THIRD WEEK
(OBL MEM

Saint John of the Cross,
Priest and Doctor of the Church)

FOCUS: God continues to reveal himself in many and varied ways – that we might believe and be saved.

God continues to reveal himself to us. He reveals himself to us through the beauty and splendor of creation and through the teaching of the prophets. And ultimately, he reveals himself through his son, Jesus, who became one of us to win our salvation. Let us nurture the gift of faith that we might share eternal life.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading from the prophet Isaiah, God reveals that he is Lord through his creation, his just deeds and his power. In the Gospel, two disciples of John the Baptist ask Jesus whether he is the Messiah. Jesus lets his deeds of healing give testimony to his identity.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: God of all creation, we offer you our cares and concerns of this day.

- 1) For the Church, that our good works may give witness to the healing mercy of God, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For all nations of the world, that they will enact laws for the care and stewardship of God's creation, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For the sick and homebound, that faith in Jesus will ease their suffering and isolation, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For an outpouring of the gift of awe and wonder at God's works in our world, especially during this season of Advent, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, that they may look upon the face of God, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, hear our prayers as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of your kingdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

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Thursday, December 15, 2016
(Lec. 190)

- 1) Isaiah 54:1-10
- 2) Luke 7:24-30

THURSDAY

- THIRD WEEK

FOCUS: We are to strive to live simply so we may be faithful to God's call for our lives.

Some of the ways John the Baptist was faithful to his calling to prepare the way for Jesus was by living simply in the desert, and by proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Similarly, each of us should strive to live modestly so we can keep our eyes focused on Jesus and staying true to God's call for our lives.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading from Isaiah, we hear that God will never leave his people or break his covenant with them. In the Gospel, Jesus tells a crowd that John the Baptist was the prophet spoken of in Scripture who was to herald and prepare the way for the coming of the promised Messiah.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Confident in his mercy and love, we ask God to answer our prayers and petitions.

- 1) For our Holy Father and the leaders of the Church throughout the world, that they be filled with God's grace to follow John the Baptist's example and prepare the way for Jesus, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For leaders throughout the world, that they gain strength from God and allow his hand to guide them in all they do, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who are unemployed, may they be blessed to find work that allows them to provide for their needs and those who depend on them, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For the sick, and for their caregivers and their families, that God will shower them with his loving mercy, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they behold the face of Christ in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Gracious God, we ask that you grant these prayers as well as those we hold silently in our hearts, through Christ our Lord.

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Friday, December 16, 2016
(Lec. 191)

- 1) Isaiah 56:1-3a, 6-8
- 2) John 5:33-36

FRIDAY

- THIRD WEEK

FOCUS: We are called to welcome all who come to our house of prayer.

God seeks to gather all his people to himself, so that many will love the name of the Lord and become his servants, as we heard in Isaiah. As those who have been already gathered by God to himself, we are called to reach out to other people of good will and invite them to join us.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, Isaiah reminds the people of Israel of the importance of doing what is right, and of not excluding others who seek to please God. Jesus, in the Gospel, notes the shining witness of John the Baptist – but Jesus' works themselves bear stronger testimony to his identity as the son of God.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: God accepts all people who come to him with sincerity of heart. In turn, let us go before God, sincerely asking for the good of all people.

- 1) For all missionaries in the Church, that they might be burning and shining lamps, bringing people to faith in Jesus, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For all who work in law enforcement and as first responders, may they be protected as they work to keep others safe, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all immigrants and refugees, that they will be treated with dignity as they seek to find a new life in a new country, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For all who are sick in our parish community, that they might receive the physical care they need and take comfort in Jesus' healing power, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all who have died, may they find a ready welcome in God's heavenly kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Loving God, hear the prayers we present to you this day. We ask this in the name of Jesus, your son, and our brother and Lord.

* * *

Saturday, December 17, 2016
(Lec. 193)

- 1) Genesis 49:2, 8-10
- 2) Matthew 1:1-17

SATURDAY

- THIRD WEEK

FOCUS: Jesus is the Messiah foretold by the prophets.

Today's readings, while interesting from a genealogical standpoint, might seem rather dry. However, a deeper understanding of how Jesus' ancestry relates to his divine nature is essential. Jesus' human heritage is one of many proofs that he is the Messiah foretold by the prophets.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In Genesis, Jacob describes his expectations for each of his sons. Highlighted in this selection is his son, Judah, whose tribe found its fulfillment in the dynasty of David, and ultimately in Jesus. Today's reading from the Gospel of Matthew describes the genealogy of Jesus beginning with Abraham.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Let us now turn to our loving Father, who gives us everything that is good, with our prayers and petitions.

- 1) For the Church and her leaders, may their ministry continue to proclaim to the world the good news of salvation, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For countries torn apart by ethnic violence, may their leaders embrace attitudes of tolerance and respect for differences, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who suffer religious persecution, that God's grace will change the hearts of their oppressors to allow them to worship in freedom and joy, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For our parish community, that we may be conduits of the love and mercy of God for others, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For our faithful departed, that they may enjoy the promised reward of eternal life in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Father in heaven, please look with mercy on us and hear our prayers, both spoken and those held in the silence of our hearts. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

* * *

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2016

(Lec. 10)

- 1) Isaiah 7:10-14
- 2) Romans 1:1-7
- 3) Matthew 1:18-24

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

FOCUS: God is with us, and we are called to live in his presence and take that joy out into the world.

God promised to send a Savior to the world, and Jesus came among us. In return, we are called to serve Christ and proclaim him to all. This is easily overlooked as we get caught up in our own pride, or focus on worldly matters. As we look to the Nativity of the Lord, let us shake off distractions and strive to serve Jesus and share him with others.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading reminds us that the promised Messiah was to be born of a virgin, and was to be named Emmanuel. The second reading exhorts us, as followers of Jesus, to lead lives which are holy and pleasing to God. Today's Gospel tells of Joseph being faithful to the command he received from the angel of the Lord to take Mary into his home as his wife.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: With confidence that our loving God cares for us, we offer him our needs and the needs of the world.

- 1) That all members of the Church may continue to grow in our love for the Lord and in our commitment to sharing the Gospel message with others, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That warring nations throughout the world will allow Christ to lead them to peace and reconciliation, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That those who suffer from isolation will feel the presence of Jesus through the helping hands and companionship of those who care for them, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That, as members of this faith community, we may have the courage to listen and respond as the Holy Spirit guides us in our daily lives, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That those who have died, especially those who have no one to pray for them, will spend eternity in the joy of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Merciful God, we thank you for sending your Son to save us, and we ask that you hear our prayers. Through Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Monday, December 19, 2016
(Lec. 195)

MONDAY

- 1) Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a
- 2) Luke 1:5-25

- FOURTH WEEK

FOCUS: May we, like the angels, be ready and joyous in bringing God and his Good News to those we meet.

Angels are special beings not only because of their purely spiritual nature, but even more so because of the divine tasks assigned them by God. We are called to follow their example, as best we can, in bringing God's message to others and to loving and worshiping him with all of our heart and strength.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Both of today's readings feature an angel appearing to announce a coming birth. In the reading from Judges, an angel visited Samson's mother and told Manoah she would bear him. In the Gospel, an angel visits Zechariah in the Temple sanctuary to announce that Elizabeth would bear John the Baptist.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Let us place our needs and petitions before God our heavenly Father, the source of all goodness and glory.

- 1) For bishops, priests and deacons, may they be blessed with the grace and strength needed to continue preaching the Gospel message so many may hear and be saved, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For expectant mothers, that they and their unborn children remain under God's constant love and protection both throughout pregnancy and after birth, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those on a journey, whether it be refugees or those on a missionary trip, may they be kept safe and be blessed with God's grace and strength to persevere, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For our parish and diocese, that communally and individually we may be instruments of God's love to those we meet, especially those in special need of his love and mercy, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all the faithful departed, may they, through God's grace and mercy, enter fully into eternal life in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, grateful for the angels you send to watch over and guide us, we ask that you hear and answer our prayers. For we offer them to you through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Tuesday, December 20, 2016
(Lec. 196)

TUESDAY

- 1) Isaiah 7:10-14
- 2) Luke 1:26-38

- FOURTH WEEK

FOCUS: Mary is the pinnacle example of what it means to lead one's life in perfect fidelity to the will of God.

Throughout the whole of her life, Mary was perfectly faithful and true to God – doing whatever God asked of her. This included saying yes to God to be the mother of Jesus, to raising Jesus, and to becoming his first disciple. Similarly, as disciples of Jesus we are to strive to be faithful to God and say “yes” to whatever he asks us to do.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading from Isaiah, the Lord, in response to King Ahaz, promises that a child shall be born of a virgin, who shall be named Emmanuel. In Luke's Gospel, we learn of the fulfillment of that promise as the angel Gabriel tells Mary that she, a virgin, shall bear that child who will be “God with us.”

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Let us offer our prayers to God the Father, the source of blessings in our lives.

- 1) For all members of the Church, that we might be strengthened in this time of Advent to continue to spread the Good News, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For judges and officers of the court, that they will turn to God for wisdom to render decisions that are ethical and just, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For the families of service men and women, may they be blessed with the grace and courage needed to endure their separation from one another, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For our parish community, that we always welcome the stranger who seeks shelter, and model for them the love of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For the faithful departed, may they come to receive a place at the eternal banquet in heaven, we pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, we bring you these petitions with confidence in your loving mercy. We bring them to you through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Wednesday, December 21, 2016
(Lec. 197)

- 1) Song of Songs 2:8-14
or Zephaniah 3:14-18a
- 2) Luke 1:39-45

WEDNESDAY

- FOURTH WEEK
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Peter Canisius,
Priest and Doctor
of the Church)

FOCUS: We are called to say yes to all God asks us to do.

The Blessed Virgin Mary lived her life in perfect obedience to the will of God. By saying yes to all that God asked of her, she became the mother of Jesus and our spiritual mother. Similarly, may we strive to say “yes” to all God asks us to do so that we may be bearers of Christ’s love to others, and one day share eternal life in heaven.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading tells of God’s promise to bring salvation and restoration to the people of Israel. The Gospel account is that of Mary’s arrival at the house of Elizabeth. In response to Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth proclaims that both Mary and the child she carries in her womb are blessed.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Trusting that God hears and answers our prayers, let us offer our petitions for our needs and those of the world to our loving Father in heaven.

- 1) For Church leaders and its members throughout the world, that all of us may give a joyful and faithful witness to the Gospel by our words and actions, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For world leaders, that during this season of Advent they may reach out to support the neediest of their people and bring them hope, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For Christians everywhere whose celebration of Christmas is muted due to religious persecution, may God give them strength to endure, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For the young people in our parish who are discerning a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, may they feel the prayerful support of our community, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For the faithful departed, that they may come to enjoy perfect happiness and peace in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Merciful, generous, and all-loving God, we ask you to hear our prayers and grant them according to your most holy will. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Thursday, December 22, 2016
(Lec. 198)

- 1) 1 Samuel 1:24-28
- 2) Luke 1:46-56

THURSDAY

- FOURTH WEEK

FOCUS: God has done great things for us in and through Christ Jesus.

The Blessed Virgin Mary responded to the grace and favor God bestowed upon her by being perfectly faithful to God, and by proclaiming the great things God had done for her. Similarly, we can show our gratitude for the gifts of new life and salvation God offers through faith by obeying Jesus' teachings and going where God leads us.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, God answered Hannah's prayers and she bore a son she named Samuel. She thanked God by dedicating him to God's service. In the Gospel, Mary sings a hymn of praise to God for choosing her to be the mother of his Son. Her humble yes to God's plan is one of the main reasons all ages call her blessed.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Trusting in God's plan for us, we place our needs before our loving God, who hears our prayers.

- 1) That during this Advent season of hope, all members of the Church will be mindful of God's presence and prepare for the coming of the Christ child through prayer and reflection on Scripture, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That world leaders will come together to work for justice and peace, providing aid and safe refuge to those who live in war-torn countries, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That the unemployed and underemployed may be successful in finding work that allows them to provide for themselves and their families, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That members of our parish during this Advent season may take the time to praise and thank God for the mighty deeds he has done for us, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That those who have died may enjoy eternal rest and peace in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, we bring these prayers to you in confidence. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lord.

* * *

Friday, December 23, 2016
(Lec.199)

- 1) Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24
- 2) Luke 1:57-66

FRIDAY
OF ADVENT
- FOURTH WEEK
(Opt. Mem.
Saint John of Kanty,
Priest)

FOCUS: Each day, God is working to accomplish wonders in our lives.

Each and every day, God is working to accomplish wonders in our lives. But they do not happen by magic. We must open our hearts to God's love and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The more we do this, the more we will lead lives that shine as a light before others while bringing us the blessing of peace.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In today's reading, the prophet Malachi prophesies of a messenger who will come to prepare the way for the Messiah. In the Gospel, we hear about the fulfillment of this prophecy – the birth of John the Baptist.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Let us now present our petitions to our loving God, trusting in his plan for us.

- 1) For our priests and religious, may their lives of dedicated service to God and the Church move many to dedicate themselves more fully to living as intentional disciples of Jesus, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For all those in positions of leadership, may they serve with integrity and strive to work toward the common good, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those in our community who are struggling with depression, may their faith in Christ bring them healing, strength and peace, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For those in our parish who serve in the military, may they be kept free from harm and return home safely to their families, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all those who have died, may they come to enter eternal life in heaven through the mercy of God, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: God of mercy and love, hear our prayers and give us the strength to endure the trials of this life as we await your promise of eternal joy. We ask this through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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Saturday, December 24, 2016

(Lec. 200)

Mass in the Morning:

- 1) 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
- 2) Luke 1:67-79

SATURDAY
OF ADVENT
- FOURTH WEEK

FOCUS: Humankind prepares for the great feast of this holy night, and its wondrous gift of God's love.

We are hours from celebrating anew the birth of God's great gift to humanity – his son, Jesus Christ. This gift was promised to David, and passed from generation to generation through his house. With it, the light of holiness and righteousness dispels the darkness of sin and evil. Through Christ we are redeemed; in him, we find peace.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, God rejects the house that David wants to build to shelter the Ark of the Covenant. Instead, God promises David a *house* that will last forever. This morning's Gospel is the beautiful *Canticle of Zechariah*, which gives an overview of salvation history beginning with the covenant God made with Abraham.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Let us offer our prayers to God our Father, who loves us so much he sent his Son to save us.

- 1) That members of the Church may bring light and peace to others by doing her work of evangelization, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That the *dawn from on high* may shine in the darkness of the world and black out the shadows of war, prejudice, judgment and fear, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That those who are suffering from loneliness or anxiety this holy season may find comfort and calm in a compassionate Church community, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That those of our parish who are awaiting the birth of a child may know the peace and joy of a safe delivery, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That all the faithful departed may have the joy and peace of everlasting life in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: God our Father, as we wait to celebrate the coming of your Son, we ask that you hear and answer our prayers. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Three Commentaries are given for the Solemnity of Christmas: Vigil, Night, and Day ~ Holy Day of Obligation.

CHRISTMAS, 2016 - VIGIL

(Lec. 13)

- 1) Isaiah 62:1-5
- 2) Acts 13:16-17, 22-25
- 3) Matthew 1:1-25 or 1:18-25

**THE NATIVITY
OF THE LORD
- SOLEMNITY
(Vigil Mass)**

FOCUS: *God is with us.*

In Celtic tradition, “thin places” are places of magnificence and wonder where the veil that separates heaven and earth is lifted; we are able to receive a glimpse of the glory of God. Tonight we celebrate one such moment. Emmanuel is born. God is with us. Through Jesus Christ, God reveals himself. Tonight is indeed filled with magnificence and wonder. We pause, and with heightened awareness, bow our heads in reverence.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading proclaims that God will bestow many blessings on the people of Israel. In a synagogue in Antioch, Saint Paul proclaims that God’s promise of a savior from the House of David has been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. The Gospel demonstrates Jesus’ Davidic lineage and recounts the details of his birth.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: On this night, we are profoundly aware of God’s love and mercy. Our Savior is born. God is with us. Confident in God’s grace and blessing, let us offer our prayers for the Church and our world.

- 1) For the Church, the bride of Christ, may she continue to shine forth as a royal diadem, inspiring faith, hope and love in all those who hear her proclamation that God is indeed with us, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For citizens of all nations, may they, inspired by Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, work together to foster peace and goodwill that transforms hearts and minds and transcends geographic boundaries, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all those who feel desolate and forsaken, may they be reminded, through the hope, joy and love of faithful Christians, that they are precious in the sight of God, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For all of us here, gathered as a community of believers, may we extend the joy we experience today to our families, our coworkers and neighbors, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all those in our families who have died, may they be welcomed into the loving embrace of Jesus in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: God Almighty, the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ, reveals your abundant generosity and mercy. Please hear the prayers we offer today and grant them according to your will. Through Christ, our Lord.

CHRISTMAS, 2016 - NIGHT

(Lec. 14)

- 1) Isaiah 9:1-6
- 2) Titus 2:11-14
- 3) Luke 2:1-14

**THE NATIVITY
OF THE LORD
- SOLEMNITY
(Mass at Night)**

FOCUS: The event of Jesus' birth continues to unfold in our hearing.

The humble event of the birth of an infant outside the city of Bethlehem goes almost totally unnoticed. This newborn child would go on, however, to change the course of history by shedding the light of the Father's endless love on all of creation.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, Isaiah tells of a birth of the Wonderful Counselor, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. The second reading exhorts us to live temperately, justly and devoutly. In the Gospel, curious shepherds rattled by God's messenger and serenaded by a chorus of angels check out the birth of an unknown child in a stable outside an obscure city.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Drawn together like the shepherds on that first Christmas night, we lift up our hopes and needs to our loving Father.

- 1) That the Church may be a faithful light dispersing the darkness of the world torn by strife, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That nations torn by ethnic, religious or political violence may embrace the peace the Christ Child brings and seek reconciliation and healing, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That those hostile to our faith may relent in their persecution on this holiest of nights and in the days and weeks to come, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That the joy of this season may linger on in the thoughts, words and actions of this faith community throughout the year ahead, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That our beloved dead and all who have died may come to enjoy perfect peace and happiness in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Faithful Father of our Savior, may the light of your Son's life shine in us for all to see. Heed our prayers and grant what we need to remain faithful to you. Through your son, Jesus Christ, we pray.

* * *

CHRISTMAS, 2016 - DAY

(Lec. 16)

- 1) Isaiah 52:7-10
- 2) Hebrews 1:1-6
- 3) John 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14

**THE NATIVITY
OF THE LORD
- SOLEMNITY
(Mass During the Day)**

FOCUS: Today, we celebrate the good news of our salvation: the birth of Jesus Christ as one of us, a human being.

God has always shown his love for us in numerous ways: through the beauty of creation and the love of our families and friends. Today, he shows that love in a very special way: in the birth of his beloved Son into our world – God’s gift to all of us!

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Isaiah speaks to us today of the beauty of the one who brings us glad tidings: Jesus coming to tell of God’s love. Hebrews goes further, describing Jesus as the one who fully reveals the depths of God’s love for humanity. Finally, the Gospel reminds us that Jesus is the very Word of God, the one from the beginning – God born into human history.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: God revealed the depths of his love for us by sending his Son to save and redeem us. With confidence, we present our petitions to him today.

- 1) For bishops, priests and deacons, may their proclamation of the birth of our savior, Jesus, Lord of Lords and King of Kings, move many to place their faith in him, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For legislative bodies, that they might take seriously their duty to protect their most vulnerable citizens, especially the elderly and the unborn, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For expectant mothers, that they might receive the care and support they need for a safe delivery, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For refugees and people who are homeless, that they might find “room in the inn” for temporary shelter, and resources and help for a permanent home, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all who have died, that they might one day rejoice with the Lord forever in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Loving God, through your son, Jesus, you offer us new life, healing, salvation and peace. In your goodness hear our cries for the needs of all of your children here on earth. We ask this in Jesus’ name.

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Monday, December 26, 2016
(Lec. 696)

- 1) Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59
- 2) Matthew 10:17-22

**SAINT STEPHEN,
THE FIRST MARTYR
- FEAST**

FOCUS: Living as a follower of Jesus requires being prepared to suffer for the sake of the Gospel.

God has never promised that a life of faithfulness will be easy. As followers of Jesus, we must do our part to further the work and mission of the Church and be prepared to suffer for the sake of the Gospel. We must also strive to give a faithful witness to the Gospel each day in all areas of our lives, regardless of the cost.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the Acts of the Apostles, we learn about Saint Stephen, the first martyr. Stephen was stoned to death by those who opposed his work in Christ, and despised him for speaking the truth. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks a word of warning about the hardships that will be endured by those who follow him.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: As sojourners on a mission, we draw strength from the martyrs, especially Saint Stephen. Let us join our voices in prayer as we ask God to hear our petitions.

- 1) For missionaries throughout the world, that God will give them the strength and grace to continue to witness to the Gospel, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For elected officials, may they act with integrity as they answer the call to serve others through their office, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who suffer persecution for the Gospel, may they find comfort in the saints and turn to the Holy Spirit for strength to persevere in faith, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For the quiet saints among us in this parish, who work diligently to meet the needs of neighbors, may they be blessed with the resources they need and the help of our community, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they, through the assistance of our prayers and God's grace and mercy, enter eternal life in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Almighty God and Father, hear our prayers and grant us the grace needed to bear our daily burdens and lead lives holy and pleasing to you. We ask this through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Tuesday, December 27, 2016
(Lec. 697)

- 1) 1 John 1:1-4
- 2) John 20:1a, 2-8

**SAINT JOHN,
APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST
- FEAST**

FOCUS: The birth of Jesus leads each of us to witness at the empty tomb.

In stark contrast to the Feast of the Nativity celebrated just two days ago, today's feast reminds us that the birth of Christ is intimately connected to his passion, death and resurrection. We cannot divide into separate parts God's plan of redemption brought about through the paschal mystery of Jesus.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The First Letter of John begins with the proclamation of the eternal Son of God made visible so that we may have life and fellowship with the Father. Today's reading from the Gospel of John recounts the discovery of the empty tomb of Jesus by Mary Magdalene, and the witness of Simon Peter and the other disciple *whom Jesus loved*.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: In faith and with hopeful hearts, we offer our prayers to our merciful God.

- 1) That our Holy Father, bishops, priests and deacons will remain strong in their faith as they continue to proclaim the Gospel, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That people throughout the world will strive to live in peace with their neighbor, in spite of ethnic or religious differences, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That victims of human trafficking will be freed from their bondage through the efforts of churches and people of goodwill, and be comforted by God's healing message, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That those seeking employment in our parish will be assisted by our prayers and outreach, and be given the strength and encouragement to persevere in their efforts in finding work, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That those who have died may have eternal rest and see God face-to-face in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Compassionate God, in your mercy hear and answer our prayers. For we offer them to you through Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Wednesday, December 28, 2016
(Lec. 698)

- 1) 1 John 1:5–2:2
- 2) Matthew 2:13-18

**THE HOLY
INNOCENTS, MARTYRS
- FEAST**

FOCUS: *If we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another.*

Fear can be a powerful force. Given over to it, it can cast us into a darkness in which we can harm others through our words and deeds. Not having fellowship with one another is a clear indicator that there is darkness present. Darkness is banished by the light of Christ. Let us walk in the light of Christ.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading today encourages us to walk in the light so as not to give in to sinful ways. However, if we do sin, we are to remember that we have an *Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one*. The Gospel recounts Herod ordering the killing of the Holy Innocents because of his rage at being deceived by the magi.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Trusting that Christ is our light and salvation, let us offer our petitions to the Father.

- 1) For leaders of the Church, clergy and lay, may their partnership continue to demonstrate to the faithful a fellowship with one another that inspires goodwill and fosters actions of loving service, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For those in war-torn countries, may they take courage in the assured hope that Christ has won the victory over sin and death, and that his light casts out all darkness, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who are contemplating terminating a pregnancy, may they open their hearts to God's grace and come to recognize the child within as a gift from God, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For all members of this faith community, may we foster fellowship with those in our families by performing loving acts of service and seeking forgiveness where necessary, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all those who have died marked with the sign of faith, may God grant them eternal rest and may perpetual light shine upon them, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Gracious God, our prayers are an expression of our desire for fellowship with one another and with you. May they be granted according to your divine will through Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Thursday, December 29, 2016
(Lec. 202)
1) 1 John 2:3-11
2) Luke 2:22-35

THE FIFTH DAY
WITHIN THE OCTAVE
OF THE NATIVITY
OF THE LORD
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Thomas Becket,
Bishop and Martyr)

FOCUS: *My eyes have seen your salvation.*

The words of Simeon *amazed* Joseph and Mary, but they both knew from the angel Gabriel earlier in Luke's Gospel that Mary would bear a son who would be *great and called the Son of the Most High* (1:32). The angel's words troubled Mary then. Now she hears about her child's role in *the fall and rise of many in Israel*. Although Mary may have felt fear and uncertainty, her trust in the Lord is a model for us all.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In today's first reading, the message is clear: Keep the commandments and love one another: *Whoever loves his brother remains in the light, and there is nothing in him to cause a fall*. Today's Gospel gives an account of Jesus being presented to the Lord in the Temple in Jerusalem.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: As children of light, and with confidence in our loving Father, let us pray for the needs of our Church and the world.

- 1) That the Church may grow in discovering new ways to share its rich message and treasures, and attract and hold the hearts of young people, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That those who work to protect the unborn, as well as children who are abused or neglected, may be blessed with the grace and strength needed to continue doing their good work, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That parents who struggle to provide for their children and protect them from harm may seek guidance from the model of the Holy Family, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That our faith community may offer kind words, gentle guidance and prayers to young people discerning their vocation, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That all who have died may be at peace as they behold the face of God the Father in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Almighty God and Father, we offer these prayers of petition to you through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, the light of the world who dispels all darkness and brings peace.

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Friday, December 30, 2016
(Lec. 17)

**THE HOLY FAMILY
OF JESUS, MARY
AND JOSEPH
- FEAST**

- 1) Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14
or Colossians 3:12-21
or Colossians 3:12-17
- 2) Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

FOCUS: Embodying Christian virtues is the path to individual and familial holiness.

Family is one of our most basic and valued experiences of life. It is a gift from God for the well-being of body, mind and soul. It is God who calls and guides us onto the path of Christian virtues, which strengthens individuals and families in holiness. He has blessed us with examples of holy families – in particular, Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Sirach gives guidance in the care and respect of parents, and proclaims blessings bestowed by these virtues. In the Gospel, Joseph is warned in a dream to flee to protect Jesus from Herod, showing how he provided protection and support to the Holy Family.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Confident in God's loving mercy, we gather as members of God's family in worship, and bring our needs and concerns in prayer to God.

- 1) That the Church may be zealous in proclaiming Gospel virtues and continue to be faithful in living them out, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That the efforts of those throughout the world who work and labor for peace may be blessed and fruitful, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That estranged families may be reunited and reconciled through the healing presence of Jesus and the loving resolve of family members, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That caregivers for the sick and elderly may be renewed and strengthened by God's grace in order to continue carrying out their duties with gentleness and understanding, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That faithful servants of the Lord who have died may experience the fullness of life and love in God's heavenly kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Loving Father, you bless us with the gift of family life. Pour out upon us the blessings and virtues we need so as to build up the holiness of your family. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

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Saturday, December 31, 2016
(Lec. 204)

- 1) 1 John 2:18-21
- 2) John 1:1-18

THE SEVENTH DAY
WITHIN THE OCTAVE
OF THE NATIVITY
OF THE LORD
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Sylvester I,
Pope)

FOCUS: Worldly concerns – such as ambition and material things – can cause us to put faith on the back burner and distract us from the truth of Jesus Christ, the savior of the world.

This world is full of good things – and it is right that we should appreciate and be grateful for them; they are gifts in our lives. But no good or gift is greater than the one we celebrated this week in the birth of our Savior. The Son of God became flesh to save and redeem us.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Today's first reading from the First Letter of John reminds us that there are those who speak against the Lord, or who claim to be speaking for the Lord and do not. We are reminded to hold fast to the truth, given by God, that Jesus is the Christ. John's Gospel spells out that truth: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Word become flesh dwelling among us.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Trusting in the mercy and faithfulness of the Father, let us offer our petitions to him.

- 1) For all who minister and teach in the Church, may they be guided by the light of the Holy Spirit as they strive to share God's love and mercy generously with others, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For all who lead and govern, may their decisions be prudent and just, and may they seek guidance and wisdom from God, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those suffering in mind or body, and all who care for them, may they find consolation and peace through Christ's healing presence, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For this parish community, may we embrace our call to serve one another with compassion and love, and seek out those among us who are in need, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they enjoy eternal rest and peace in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: God of truth, you gave us a gift above all other gifts in your Son as Savior. We ask that you hear and answer our prayers, which we offer you through Christ, our Lord.

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