

DECEMBER

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9 10 11 12 13 14

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20 21 22 23 24

25 VIGIL

25 NIGHT

25 DAY 26 27 28

29 30 31

Friday, December 1, 2017
(Lec. 507)

- 1) Daniel 7:2-14
- 2) Luke 21:29-33

FRIDAY OF
34TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME

FOCUS: God's dominion is eternal, all-powerful, merciful and just.

We live in a fallen and broken world. As Christians, we know that ultimately we can look forward to the justice and goodness of the kingdom of God in heaven. Jesus' words today assure us of this certainty. But we must be attentive to looking for the signs of God's kingdom here on earth each day, and help to build it up.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In his visions in the first reading, Daniel sees terrifying beasts of all types that have dominion over the world – and yet he also sees the overthrow of these beasts by *one like a son of man*, who receives everlasting dominion from God. In the Gospel, Jesus uses a parable to counsel us to look around and read nature, and the “signs of the times,” for the coming of God's reign.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Confident that God cares about all of his creation, let us approach him with assurance, knowing that he hears our prayers.

- 1) For Pope Francis and all who shepherd our Church, may they be blessed with fortitude as they continue to work toward fostering greater unity among all Christians, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For world leaders, may they embrace their role as stewards of God's people, and tend to the needs of the most vulnerable among us, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those oppressed by sorrow or doubt, may their burdens be lightened by our prayers and by God's grace, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For the young people in this faith community, may God increase their love of the faith through the guidance of catechists, parents and mentors, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they enter joyfully and peacefully into the kingdom of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: God, our Creator, you alone know what we need. Hear our prayers and answer them in the way that is best. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

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Saturday, December 2, 2017
(Lec. 508)

- 1) Daniel 7:15-27
- 2) Luke 21:34-36

SATURDAY OF
34TH WEEK
IN ORDINARY TIME
(Saturday in honor
of BVM)

FOCUS: Take time to reflect on the Second Coming of Christ, and prepare our hearts to receive him.

The final day of the liturgical year has arrived and with it, two important discourses on the end of the age. Daniel's vision, as well as Jesus' words in the Gospel, remind us to be vigilant each day so we are not caught off guard when Jesus returns in glory. How do we prepare our hearts? By being attentive to our prayer life, and keeping our focus on being a disciple of Jesus.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Daniel and Luke both contemplate the apocalypse and what it means for the people of God. Daniel tells us that the final Kingdom — that of the Most High — will be everlasting: all dominions shall serve and obey him. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus advises the disciples, and us, to refrain from becoming complacent in our daily lives so we may be strong enough to stand before God at the final judgment.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, we turn to you in gratitude for the many ways you have protected us, and ask for your mercy and grace as we offer our prayers to you.

- 1) For the Church, Pope Francis, and all who serve the people of God throughout the world, may God continue to fill their hearts and minds with his mercy and love, let us pray to the Lord
- 2) For the people of God, may they continue to hold fast to the love and mercy of Christ Jesus in their lives and let the power of God inform all their words, thoughts and actions, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those affected by war or civil unrest, may they find solace in the love of God and in the actions of those who help them to heal and recover, let us pray to the Lord
- 4) For those who serve as liturgical ministers in our parish, may their response to God's invitation to use their gifts assist the parish in joyfully praising God and proclaiming his word, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they be seated with all the saints and feast at the banquet in heaven, let us pray to the Lord
- 6) (Special Petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the blessings of life and the beauty of our world. Hear our prayers through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns forever and ever.

YEAR B - WEEKDAYS II

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2017

**FIRST SUNDAY
OF ADVENT**

(Lec. 2)

- 1) Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7
- 2) 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
- 3) Mark 13:33-37

FOCUS: Stay awake and watch for the Lord.

The ancient spiritual tradition of *memento mori* is one of calling to mind our own eventual death in order to focus on eternity and live a better life. How easy it is to be lulled into the sleep of the world and to forget that there is a limit to our earthly time. Advent is a time to prepare ourselves for Christ's return in glory. When the Lord comes, will he find us awake?

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading is Isaiah's poetic plea to God to remain with his people and continue to bless them despite their worldliness and their propensity toward sin. In the second reading, Saint Paul reminds the Corinthians that God is faithful, and will continue to sustain them until the day of salvation. The Gospel rouses us from worldly sleep with the exhortation to *Watch*, for we do not know the day or the hour when the Lord will call upon us.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, you rouse us from our worldly sleep. Knowing that you hear our voice, we turn to you with our needs and longings.

- 1) For all ministers of the Church, may their words and actions reflect the generous love of Christ and lead all to eternal life with him, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For those in positions of authority throughout the world, may they help to lift up the poor and the lowly by creating just economic systems, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those bearing the burden of guilt for past actions, may they know the forgiveness of God through the sacrament of reconciliation, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For each of us, may we, through corporal and spiritual works of mercy, demonstrate our love and care for those in need within our parish and community, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all who have died, may they enjoy the embrace of the loving Father in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Merciful God, we humbly ask you to hear our prayers and prepare our hearts for the day of our salvation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

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Monday, December 4, 2017
(Lec. 175)

- 1) Isaiah 2:1-5
- 2) Matthew 8:5-11

MONDAY
OF ADVENT
- FIRST WEEK
(Opt. Mem.
Saint John Damascene,
Priest and Doctor
of the Church)

FOCUS: God wants us to love and trust him during good times as well as challenging times.

Often, we find ourselves in situations that may cause us to feel despair or loneliness. If we trust in God at these times, he will offer consolation and give us strength. As we prepare for holy Communion today, let us humbly ask him to increase our faith, realizing we can come to him with joy and thanksgiving.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading from the prophet Isaiah, we hear that all nations will be united with God someday, which will bring peace to the world. The Gospel focuses on the faith of a Roman centurion who asked Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant. The centurion understood that Jesus' word alone was all that was needed to heal the servant.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Let us turn to our heavenly Father with confidence, knowing he hears our prayers.

- 1) For all members of the Church, may we model the faith of the centurion and trust that Jesus' words are words of healing and life, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For elected officials, may their hearts be softened by God's grace to be mindful of the needs of the poorest among us and respond to them with compassion, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who are suffering with chronic illness, may they be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and come to experience healing in Christ, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For members of our parish as we journey through Advent, may we stay attentive to the voice of God calling us to repentance, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have gone before us, may God grant them an eternity of peace, joy and love in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, we ask that you hear the prayers of your faithful people through your son, Jesus Christ.

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Tuesday, December 5, 2017
(Lec. 176)

- 1) Isaiah 11:1-10
- 2) Luke 10:21-24

TUESDAY
OF ADVENT
- FIRST WEEK

FOCUS: Advent is a time for opening more fully the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit.

During this time of Advent, let us recall that the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit, including wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and fear of the Lord, were marks of the Messiah, and are also characteristics of those who have received the sacrament of confirmation in the faith. When we put these gifts to work in our lives, we become more like Jesus.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Today's first reading is a prophecy about the Messiah. It proclaims the gifts of the Spirit will rest on him, and he will bring about wonderful things, including peace on earth. In the Gospel, Jesus says only the Father knows the Son, and only the Son – and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him – can know the Father.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Let us together offer our petitions to God, confident of his immeasurable love for us.

- 1) For the Church, may the gifts of the Holy Spirit help her members deepen their faith and live more fully as followers of Jesus, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For fathers and sons throughout the world, may they look to the relationship between Jesus and his Father for guidance and strength, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who suffer with depression or other mental illnesses, may they receive the treatment they need to live full and joy-filled lives, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For this faith community, may we strive to know Jesus more fully through prayer and Eucharist so we may know the Father and his love for us more deeply, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they know the Father and bask in the light of his face for all eternity, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Hear our prayers, Lord, and grant what is in your divine plan for us. We ask these, and all things, through Christ our Lord.

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Wednesday, December 6, 2017
(Lec. 177)

- 1) Isaiah 25:6-10a
- 2) Matthew 15:29-37

WEDNESDAY
OF ADVENT
- FIRST WEEK
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Nicholas,
Bishop)

FOCUS: Christ heals and feeds his people.

We are all hungry. Some of us are in need of physical nourishment, while others starve from an inner hunger that can only be satisfied by a relationship with God. In our first reading, Isaiah reveals how the Lord will feed his people. This prophecy is fulfilled through the miracles Jesus performs in the Gospel, and continues to work today.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, Isaiah reveals the Lord's generous plan for all people. On the mountain, he prepares a great feast, destroys death, wipes away tears and defeats enemies. The miracles Jesus performs in the Gospel also take place on a mountain. He heals many people, and then feeds a crowd of four thousand with seven loaves of bread and a few fish.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Our Lord responds to the needs of his people. Let us now offer him the following prayers for our assembly, our Church and our world.

- 1) For the Church, may this season of Advent prepare us to welcome the presence of Christ dwelling in each of us, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For those who influence public policy, may the Spirit guide them to make decisions that protect the dignity of life in all its stages, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who are sick or hungry, may the Lord provide for them abundantly through the loving hands of his disciples, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For our parish family, may we use the gifts God has given to us to serve those in need, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have gone to rest believing Christ's promise, may they take their seats at the table of our Lord's great feast, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Merciful Father, hear the prayers of your people. Heal and nourish us so we may carry out our mission in this world. We ask this through your son, Jesus Christ.

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Thursday, December 7, 2017
(Lec. 178)

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

THURSDAY
OF ADVENT
- FIRST WEEK
(OBL MEM
Saint Ambrose,
Bishop and Doctor
of the Church)

FOCUS: We always have a choice regarding the foundation of our lives.

Every day brings opportunities to choose: this versus that; good versus bad; yes versus no; to move closer to God, or to move further away from God. Each choice contributes to the overall foundation of our lives. That foundation is found either in the solid, unyielding, supportive rock of God and his love, or in the shifting and unpredictable sands of worldly concerns.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Today's first reading from Isaiah is a joyous song of promise about the God who is, who was, and is to come – the rock and foundation of our existence. In the Gospel, Jesus explains that not everyone will enter the kingdom of God, but only those who do the will of the Father.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: With confidence in the God who always hears us, let us offer our prayers to the Father, who loves justice and right.

- 1) For the Church throughout this Advent season, may we grow in grace as we prepare to greet the Lord Jesus when he returns, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For world leaders, may all nations of every language work to end wars and strive for peace, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who are unemployed, may doors to new opportunities open for them and provide them with work, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For each of us, may our relationship with God strengthen and deepen through daily prayer, reflecting upon Sacred Scripture and the graces of the sacraments, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For our beloved dead and all who have died, may they come to enjoy perpetual light, refreshment and peace in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Lord God, hear our prayers and grant us the grace needed to lead lives which are holy and pleasing to you. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

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Friday, December 8, 2017
(Lec. 689)

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

**THE IMMACULATE
CONCEPTION OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**
(Patronal Feastday
of the
United States of America
- SOLEMNITY
(Holyday of Obligation))

FOCUS: We give thanks for Mary's role in God's plan of salvation for each of us.

God's plan for us from before creation was to love us and to have us love him in return. Mary's trust in God provides the path to restoring the relationship with God broken by Adam and Eve. The birth of Jesus Christ delivers humankind from sin and death and renews our calling to be God's chosen sons and daughters.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the reading from Genesis, God confronts Adam and Eve about their disobedience. In the letter to the Ephesians, we hear that God chose us, before the foundation of the world, to be his sons and daughters. In Luke's Gospel, we hear how even though Mary is troubled and doubtful of the angel's message, she trusts God and accepts his plan for her.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Loving Father, you ask us to trust in your care for us; please listen to the prayers we now offer.

- 1) That Pope Francis may continue to encourage members of the Church to joyfully share the hope and promise of the Gospel, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That leaders of nations around the world may always support the dignity and sanctity of human life, from conception through natural death, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That young people seeking direction and purpose in their lives may discover their unique God-given talents, and the joy of using them to serve him and others, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That all members of our parish may heed the call to share our talents, and practice works of service and mercy for others, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That all who have died may realize the fullness of joy as God's beloved sons and daughters with him in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, you sent your Holy Spirit upon Mary, who cooperated through obedience in human salvation. Hear our prayers today and help us to trust in your plan for us. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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Saturday, December 9, 2017
(Lec. 180)
1) Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26
2) Matthew 9:35–10:1, 5a, 6-8

SATURDAY
OF ADVENT
- FIRST WEEK
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin)

FOCUS: The love of the Father is revealed in the work of his son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus loves us! That is the great news that comes out of our Gospel reading today. He sees our pain, our illnesses and all of our trials, and has pity on us. He cures and heals, and attends to our every need. In God's great love for us, he has ensured that Christ's mission has continued, through the work of the Church and the Holy Spirit.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

We are reminded in the first reading from Isaiah that we may be confident in a loving Father who hears our prayers and provides for all our needs. In the Gospel from Matthew, we learn about the great compassion Jesus has for his people as he cures every disease and illness, and instructs the Twelve to do the same.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: As we prepare our hearts during this Advent season for the coming of Christ, let us in confidence bring our needs to our loving Father.

- 1) That all members of the Church may hear and respond to the proclamation of the Gospel, and joyfully serve others with love and humility, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That elected leaders, through honest and open collaboration, may make real progress toward bringing about a more peaceful world, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That those experiencing anxiety or depression may find comfort and peace in the joyful anticipation of this Advent season, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That the homebound in our parish may be comforted by the support and prayers of this congregation, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That those who grieve the loss of a loved one may find peace and consolation in the hope of the Resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Father, you have created us for goodness and happiness. We ask you to hear our prayers and answer them according to your divine will. Through Christ our Lord.

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2017

(Lec. 5)

- 1) Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11
- 2) 2 Peter 3:8-14
- 3) Mark 1:1-8

**SECOND SUNDAY
OF ADVENT**

FOCUS: As John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord, so we, too, must prepare for his coming by being Jesus' disciples – his witnesses in the world.

Our readings today give us hope that Jesus is coming, but also offer a challenge to prepare the way before him. John the Baptist's words in today's Gospel point us to Jesus while challenging us to repent. In order to prepare the way and *make straight his paths*, we must be willing to sometimes go out on a limb and be that voice crying in the wilderness, proclaiming the mightiness of our Savior.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading from Isaiah, we hear a voice that cries out: *In the desert prepare the way of the Lord*. In the second reading, we are reminded that we will not know the day or the hour of Jesus' return, so we must be ready. Today's Gospel talks of John the Baptist proclaiming *a baptism of repentance*.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Confident in the Father's love, mercy and compassion, let us now bring our prayers and petitions before him.

- 1) For all members of the Church, may God work in us for a greater conversion of mind and heart in order to be better instruments of his love in the world, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For all those throughout the world who do not know Jesus, may they encounter him through our words and actions, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who are homeless, may they find shelter through the outreach of others, and comfort in God's love for them, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For our parish family, may each of us prepare the way of the Lord in our hearts, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all of those who have died, especially our family members and friends, may they rest in the eternal peace of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: God of mercy and compassion, we offer our prayers to you in faith. We ask that you grant them according to your holy will, through Christ our Lord.

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Monday, December 11, 2017
(Lec. 181)

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

MONDAY
OF ADVENT
- SECOND WEEK
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Damasus I,
Pope)

FOCUS: God is with us. We have only to look with the eyes of our heart in order to experience God's presence.

At this time of year, we may feel pressure to "go, go, go" – do this and buy that. The beautiful season of Advent calls us to do just the opposite. Advent can help us prepare *room* in our hearts for the God who wants so much to *dwell* in our hearts.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah describes how God will come to save all of creation. The dry, barren desert will be restored, our broken humanity will be healed and we will be led back to God along the holy way. In today's Gospel, Jesus heals a paralyzed man.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Seeking to have hearts that are open and receptive to God's healing and saving grace, let us offer him our prayers.

- 1) For Church leaders, may they inspire all Christians to use the gifts God has given them for the well-being of the world and to build the kingdom of God, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For world leaders, may they work diligently to defend the dignity and human rights of all people, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those suffering from serious illness, may compassionate caregivers reflect the healing power of Jesus to them, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For our parish family, may we help to spread the Gospel message by our gifts of time, talent and treasure, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they be filled with joy and thanksgiving in the presence of the Lord in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Loving God, we acknowledge you as the source of all that we need. We ask that you answer our prayers according to your will, through Christ our Lord.

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Tuesday, December 12, 2017
(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
Pss Prop

FOCUS: Today we celebrate the unique place of Mary in God's plan of salvation for all nations.

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 is yet another example of how God has chosen and blessed the people who belong to him. Today, we celebrate that blessing bestowed upon the nations of the Americas in the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In our reading from Revelation, we hear a vision of a woman in labor. In the Gospel from Luke, Mary travels to visit her cousin Elizabeth, and when Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, the child she carries leaps in her womb.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: New life and salvation came into the world through Mary's fidelity to God's will. Seeking to live as his faithful disciples, we offer our prayers to the Lord.

- 1) For all Christians, that we, like Mary, may grow ever more faithful in our discipleship and ever more hopeful in our faith, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For governments and world 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 the sick and the 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.
- 4) For all of us here, may we find in the Blessed Virgin a mother who we turn to for intercession, help and protection, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died marked with the sign of faith, may they 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, we seek, like Mary, to ponder your many blessings in our lives and praise you for your steadfast and eternal mercy. We make our prayer through Christ, our Lord.

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Wednesday, December 13, 2017
(Lec. 183)

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

WEDNESDAY
OF ADVENT
- SECOND WEEK
(OBL MEM
Saint Lucy,
Virgin and Martyr)

FOCUS: God invites us to rely on him for strength.

Our all-powerful God will never abandon his covenant with us. As with the Israelites, God has provided for us and will continue to provide, giving *strength to the fainting*, and endurance to those who hope in him. Advent is the time for us to remind ourselves of this, and to prepare for the return of the Lord.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In today's first reading, the prophet Isaiah speaks to the Judean exiles in Babylon, and reminds them that their Lord is the eternal God and they should not lose hope. In the Gospel, Jesus invites all who are burdened to come to him for rest, and to follow his example of being meek and humble of heart.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Thankful for God's mercy and love, we now present the needs of our Church and our world to God, who is all-gracious and powerful.

- 1) For all members of the Church, may we boldly proclaim the coming of Christ this Advent season, and set our hearts on preparing for his return in glory, let us pray to the Lord
- 2) For those throughout the world who work to bring peace to troubled areas, may their efforts be fruitful and bring adversaries to reconcile their differences, let us pray to the Lord
- 3) For those who suffer due to drought or famine, may they be nourished and restored to hope through the generosity of many helping hands, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For each of us, may we nurture the gift of life which God has given to us and to others, especially by our care for the voiceless and the most vulnerable, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all our deceased friends and relatives, and all who have died, may they enjoy the presence of Jesus and all his saints in Paradise, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Almighty Father, we ask that you hear these prayers we bring before you in the name of your son, Jesus, our Lord.

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Thursday, December 14, 2017
(Lec. 184)

- 1) Isaiah 41:13-20
- 2) Matthew 11:11-15

THURSDAY
OF ADVENT
- SECOND WEEK
(OBL MEM
Saint John of the Cross,
Priest and Doctor
of the Church)

FOCUS: God abounds in faithfulness and love for us.

Advent is a time of waiting, and promise. Throughout the Old Testament, God promised a close relationship to his people, Israel. Now is the time to stay focused on God's promise, and prepare ourselves to be ready to receive Jesus, the fulfillment of that promise.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the reading from the prophet Isaiah, God promises to restore Israel, and provide for their every need with great generosity. In the Gospel from Matthew, Jesus speaks of the greatness of John the Baptist, which *all the prophets and the law prophesied*.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Brothers and sisters, let us turn in prayer to our merciful Father and offer our petitions for this day.

- 1) That we as the Church, on this memorial of Saint John of the Cross, may be blessed with his dedication to a life of prayer and be drawn ever more to the presence of God, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That elected officials may strive to uphold the dignity and sanctity of human life from conception through natural death, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That the sick and the homebound may experience peace from Jesus, the Divine Physician, and comfort from our ministry to them, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That the youth of our parish may grow in the joy and fulfillment which comes from living faith-filled Christian lives of service, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That the faithful departed may rest in eternal joy in the kingdom of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, the source of all goodness, we ask that you hear and answer our prayers through your son, Jesus Christ.

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Friday, December 15, 2017
(Lec. 185)

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

FRIDAY
OF ADVENT
- SECOND WEEK

FOCUS: Trust in God and remain faithful to his commands.

We are called to trust in God and his promises, and also to follow his commands and teachings. If we are faithful people, we will recognize Christ in those around us. Although worldly distractions can get us off-track temporarily, we know as Jesus' disciples that his is the one and only way.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading from Isaiah, the Israelites are told that God teaches them what is for their good, and that faithfulness to his commandments will be rewarded. In the Gospel, Jesus asks the crowd what he should compare their generation to, and offers disagreeable children as the answer.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Trusting in God our Father, we now present our needs and those of our brothers and sisters.

- 1) For Pope Francis, bishops and priests, may they be courageous in showing us the way to the Father as we walk the path of discipleship, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For all those in positions of leadership, may they be strengthened with the help of God's grace to govern their people in truth and integrity, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For Christians around the world who are persecuted for their faith, may they find God's blessings in their persistence and sacrifice, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For all catechists in our parish community, may they be blessed with the grace to continue educating our young people in the beauty of our faith, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all those who have died, may they enter eternal life with the communion of saints in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Father of all creation, look with love upon your people. We ask that you hear our prayers and grant us these petitions. Through your son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Saturday, December 16, 2017
(Lec. 186)

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

SATURDAY
OF ADVENT
- SECOND WEEK

FOCUS: As we move through Advent, let us prepare our hearts and our homes to receive the Messiah.

People too often place undue burdens on themselves this time of year. Between all the busyness of the season and trying to choreograph the perfect family Christmas, we can lose sight of why we have the season of Advent. We would be well-advised to take a deep breath and a step back, and work to prepare our hearts and minds for Jesus' coming.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The author of the Book of Sirach unfolds some of the great drama and glory surrounding the great prophet Elijah. Elijah is also a key figure in today's Gospel from Matthew, as Jesus reflects on the connection between this great prophet and the last of the prophets, John the Baptist.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Anticipating the coming of the Lord, let us place our needs before the Father this day.

- 1) For Pope Francis and all shepherds of the Church, may they guide us in our preparation for the Lord's return, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For those who govern, may they lead with wisdom, compassion and integrity, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For families estranged from one another, may this Advent bring them to open their hearts and minds to the possibility for reconciliation, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For those among us who are alone or depressed during this Advent season, may they find in us compassionate and understanding companions, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For the faithful departed, may they be received by God into paradise, and join the saints and angels in singing God's praises, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Almighty God, hear our prayers as we prepare ourselves for your Son's return. May we be found ever watchful. This we pray through Christ our Lord.

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2017

(Lec. 8)

- 1) Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11
- 2) 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
- 3) John 1:6-8, 19-28

**THIRD SUNDAY
OF ADVENT**

FOCUS: Rejoice in your God, the God of hope and light.

The world literally grows darker each day this time of the year. But as dark as the world grows, the darkness will not overcome the light. Jesus is the light of the world. He illumines our darkness with his love and truth. We are able to sit in the darkness with confidence that the Lord is with us.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Today's readings are readings of hope for a future that is bright with promise. Isaiah announces a year of favor from the Lord in which all manner of suffering is soothed. Saint Paul reminds us to rejoice, to pray always and to give thanks in all circumstances. In John's Gospel, we hear that the Light has come into the world, and it cannot be extinguished.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: We bring our needs before you, our loving Father, confident that you hear our prayers.

- 1) For all members of the Church, the people of God, may we strive always to be a reflection of Christ's light to all people who seek the Lord, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For all civic leaders, may there be a greater willingness to resolve disputes nonviolently so that peace may reign on earth, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all who are alienated from God and his Church, may they open their hearts and respond to Christ's message of love and healing, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For this faith community, may our children experience God's presence and grow in their love and commitment to God, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For our beloved dead, may they be welcomed into God's heavenly presence with the saints and angels, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: O God of Light and love, you sent your Son to enlighten our world and keep us out of darkness. Hear our prayers, which we ask through Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Monday, December 18, 2017
(Lec. 194)

- 1) Jeremiah 23:5-8
- 2) Matthew 1:18-25

MONDAY
OF ADVENT
- THIRD WEEK

FOCUS: God always has a better plan.

Though Joseph had planned to follow the law, he must have been unhappy about divorcing Mary, even quietly. Was Joseph wrestling with this when the angel delivered God's message? How could he imagine this solution? Joseph listened and obeyed. Let us, like Joseph, listen and obey, trusting that God's plan is better than any we can imagine.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In today's reading from Jeremiah, God promises to send a righteous ruler to bring peace and salvation; he will gather his people and provide a homeland. In the Gospel from Matthew, an angel reveals to Joseph that it is through the Holy Spirit that Mary has conceived Jesus, who *will save his people from their sins*.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: We join together, as God's family, in presenting our needs to our heavenly Father.

- 1) For the Church, the body of Christ, may she always be a steadfast voice challenging the faithful to live the Gospel message with courage and conviction, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For Catholic families throughout the world, may they reflect the love of the Holy Family, and be a source of healing and hope for others, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those facing unexpected or difficult pregnancies, may people of faith embrace them and strive to meet their physical and spiritual needs, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For members of this faith community, may we have the courage to be Christ's presence in the world around us, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For our loved ones who have died, may they experience the fullness of life in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, in your love and mercy, please hear the prayers we offer this day. Through your son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

* * *

Tuesday, December 19, 2017
(Lec. 195)

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

TUESDAY
OF ADVENT
- THIRD WEEK

FOCUS: God has chosen us, just as he chose Samson and John the Baptist.

The announcements of the birth of Samson and John the Baptist are important events in salvation history. In a similar way, we are not accidents. God had us in mind from the beginning of time. He chose and created us, and will guide us through our lives. Let us keep him first in our hearts.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, Samson's mother had a visit from an angel who announced that she was going to have a son. In the Gospel from Luke, Zechariah experienced a similar visit, with the announcement that his wife Elizabeth would have a son, whom they would name John, and who would *prepare a people fit for the Lord*.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Striving to walk humbly with God, let us turn our hearts to our heavenly Father and present our petitions to him.

- 1) For those who shepherd our Church, may they continue to listen closely to the voice of the Holy Spirit as they guide the faithful on the path of life, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For our government leaders, may they work to protect the religious freedom of all people, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all who are persecuted for their faith in Christ, may they find comfort from the prayers and support of their Christian brothers and sisters, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For all members of our parish, may we continue to observe Advent with a spirit of joy and anticipation, in preparation for celebrating the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they dwell with joy in God's presence, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, we thank you for your enduring love and care. We ask that you hear our humble petitions through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Wednesday, December 20, 2017
(Lec. 196)

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

WEDNESDAY
OF ADVENT
- THIRD WEEK

FOCUS: Let us strive, like Mary, to always say yes to God.

When Mary gave her assent to be the mother of Jesus, it is unlikely she fully understood the heartache she was inviting into her life. She likely did not know the joy and honor she would experience, either. Still, her yes was not naive. It was a reasoned response based on her love for and trust in God. In this and so many things, let us follow her example.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Today's first reading reminds us of the ancient prophecy that *the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel*. The Gospel tells of Gabriel's visit to Mary of Nazareth, telling her she would be the mother of the *Son of the Most High*, who would rule over the house of Jacob forever. Mary gave her assent to God's plan.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: As one voice, let us offer our petitions to God, with the blessed assurance that he can and will provide for our needs and the needs of the world.

- 1) That the Church may be strengthened by women and men who continue to give from the heart, as Mary did, for the sake of God's kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That parents all over the world may be blessed as they work to nurture the love of God in their children, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That pregnant women facing difficult circumstances may look to Mary for strength and comfort, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That we here today, when faced with challenging decisions, may act with trust and confidence in God, following the example of Mary, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That those who have died may rejoice forever at the banquet of the Lord, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Almighty God, we bring our prayers to you and ask that you hear and answer them. Through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

* * *

Thursday, December 21, 2017
(Lec. 197)

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

THURSDAY
OF ADVENT
- THIRD WEEK
(Opt. Mem.
Saint Peter Canisius,
Priest and Doctor
of the Church)

FOCUS: Let us rejoice and prepare anew to welcome our Lord and Savior.

God lovingly promised to come to his people, save them from their sins and renew them with his love. Mary and Elizabeth rejoiced together as they looked forward to the fulfillment of that promise in the birth of Jesus. Like them, let us look forward to celebrating our Lord's birth with the joy of preparing for a loved one's arrival.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The first reading from the Song of Songs, representing the love between God and his people, describes the eagerness of two people in love looking forward to being together. The Gospel reading tells the story of Mary, as she hurried to visit Elizabeth, who was also with child. Together they rejoiced as they anticipated the coming of the promised Savior.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: As we joyfully prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, our Savior, we lay before our loving Father the needs of our Church and our world.

- 1) That those who serve our Church, including Francis, our pope, and all bishops, clergy, religious and lay leaders, may be renewed by the joy of God's presence, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That those in positions of authority may be guided by God's justice in their work to protect those who can't protect themselves, especially the unborn, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That those suffering due to external circumstances or inner turmoil may experience God's presence through the loving outreach of his people, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That those of us gathered here who have brokenness in our families and communities may have the grace necessary to restore relationships and bring reconciliation and forgiveness to all, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That those who have gone before us may enjoy the peace of resting in God's loving presence, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Loving Father, we ask you to look with favor on these petitions and all the concerns we hold in our hearts, as we entrust them to you. We ask this through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Friday, December 22, 2017
(Lec. 198)

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

FRIDAY
OF ADVENT
- THIRD WEEK

FOCUS: God looks with favor on his lowly servants.

The answered prayers of Hannah, and the hymn of praise proclaimed by Mary, reveal God's love for his faithful, humble servants. He does great things for us; nothing is impossible for God. Like Hannah and Mary, we are called to surrender to the Lord's will and trust the plan he has for our lives.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In today's reading, Hannah offers her son, Samuel, to the Lord. She leaves him in the Temple to thank God for answering her prayers. The Gospel recalls Mary's hymn of praise, known as the *Magnificat*. These words express her joy, recall the Lord's intervention in humankind and anticipate fulfillment of his promise.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Our souls proclaim the greatness of the Lord. As we rejoice, let us offer these prayers for the needs of the Church, the assembly and the world.

- 1) For the Church, may her teachings stir joy and thanksgiving for the gift of life into the hearts of all people, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For our world, may its leaders work to end terror and hostility by promoting messages of nonviolence and love, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those struggling to conceive, may they trust in the Lord as his will is revealed to them, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For our parish community, may we imitate Mary's model of faith in the way we say "yes" to God with our lives, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all the faithful departed, may they find peace and rejoice in the Father's unending love, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, you do great things for us. Remember your promise of mercy as you look favorably on our prayers. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

* * *

Saturday, December 23, 2017
(Lec. 199)

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

SATURDAY
OF ADVENT
- THIRD WEEK
(Opt. Mem.
Saint John of Kanty,
Priest)

FOCUS: The way has been prepared for us. Let us pay close attention.

Do we have ears to hear and eyes to see all that God has done for us? Scripture promises us, and Jesus personifies for us, the Lord whom we seek. The way to eternal life has been prepared for us, and is freely offered. If we listen to the messengers, and embrace God's enduring mercy, we will find the way.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Today's first reading from the book of Malachi foretells not only the coming of the Lord, but of his messenger who will prepare the way – refining and purifying God's people. In Luke's Gospel, we are told the story of the birth and naming of John the Baptist, born to Elizabeth and Zechariah.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Confident in God's mercy and love, let us place our requests before him.

- 1) For the Church, as we long for the coming of Christ, may the Lord truly prepare each and every one of our hearts for that day, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For all who serve in public office, and in public capacities, may they turn to God for guidance to enact laws and policies that promote the good of all, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who suffer from physical ailments, that God will grace their caregivers to help bring them comfort and relief, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For each of us, in these last days of Advent, may our hearts become a more welcome home for Jesus, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they receive a place at the eternal banquet in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: O God, in your goodness and love hear and answer our prayers according to your will. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2017

(Lec. 11)

- 1) 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
- 2) Romans 16:25-27
- 3) Luke 1:26-38

**FOURTH SUNDAY
OF ADVENT**

FOCUS: Have faith in God's promises.

Sometimes, as children, we think that a special day, such as Christmas or a birthday, will never arrive, but it always does, eventually. The people of the Old Testament were waiting for centuries for the coming of the Messiah to free them. Jesus did come, but it took a long time before he was accepted.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In today's first reading, David wants to build a temple for the Lord, but hears from the Lord that he will build a family dynasty for him that will last forever. The passage from the Letter to the Romans is a hymn of praise giving glory to God. The Gospel tells of the angel Gabriel's message to Mary that she would conceive and bear the son of God, Jesus.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Trusting in God's faithfulness, let us offer our prayers to him.

- 1) That all members of the Church may work to help bring about the kingdom of peace God promised through Jesus, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) That legislators may be inspired by the birth of the Prince of Peace, and always vote to uphold and preserve the sanctity of all human life, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) That those who lack permanent housing may find shelter through those who share God's love in service to others, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) That we in this faith community may keep our hearts open to hear and answer God's call to share his love and mercy with those most in need, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That our deceased friends and relatives may experience the fullness of peace and joy in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Lord, God, we join Mary and the angels in rejoicing in your love for us. We thank you for hearing the prayers we present to you in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

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CHRISTMAS, 2017- 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 has sought out his people; Jesus comes into the world as the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies.

The celebration of Jesus' coming at Christmas reveals something fundamental. It is not humankind who seeks God; rather, it is God who seeks humankind. The recounting of the genealogy of Jesus shows that he is truly the one who has been prophesied about for thousands of years. This child, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, would forever be with his people; he is Emmanuel – *God is with us*.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The prophet Isaiah speaks of what will happen when the Messiah comes; God will rejoice in them. Paul reminds us of the royal ancestry of Jesus — that he belongs to the kingly line of David. This kingly line is recounted, in detail, in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus is born to Joseph and Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: In faith and trust, let us turn to our heavenly Father, grateful for the good things he has already bestowed upon us.

- 1) For the holy Catholic Church, may her proclamation of the Good News that Jesus Christ has come into the world for our salvation be an instrument of hope for all who need it, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For the world, may leaders of nations never cease to work for peace, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who are struggling to feel the love of Christ, may they be consoled by the God who is with them in all things, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For all our service men and women who are not able to be with their families on this, the occasion of Christ's birth, may they be granted every heavenly grace and spiritual blessing, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have gone before us in this life, especially all our deceased family members and friends, may they experience Christmas joy on this feast with Jesus and the saints in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, grant these petitions, which we make with gratitude in our hearts, for your gift of our Savior. We ask this through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

* * *

CHRISTMAS, 2017 - 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: Today we celebrate the birth of Christ. In the darkness of this night, God's purest light appears in human history, offering us a share in God's eternal life and mercy.

The Christmas story is known to all through word, song and tradition. But it is more than an account of a baby born in difficult circumstances. For this is no ordinary child, but one sent to us from the very heart of God – a child who is innocent and powerless, yet has within him the awesome capacity to reconcile and heal.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The prophet Isaiah foretells the coming of the Messiah. He will sit upon the throne of David, and upon him will rest dominion and authority. Paul tells Titus that in Christ, the very grace of God has appeared in our world and through him, we have all been offered salvation. Luke recalls the birth of Jesus in human history.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Vast is the dominion of Christ, the newborn king. May he bless us now with his gift of peace, as we make our prayers and petitions to God our Father.

- 1) For the Church, as the body of Christ in the world, may we always preach and witness to God's abundant love and mercy for all, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For the world, may all families find true peace and hope this Christmas season, and come to know Jesus as Lord, let us pray to the Lord
- 3) For all who are alienated or disconnected from the Church, may the Holy Spirit touch their hearts this Christmas and restore us to unity in Christ, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For all of us gathered here to worship God, may our hearts be filled with overwhelming gratitude as we contemplate the mystery of Jesus' birth, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all who have died, may they rest in peace in the kingdom of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Eternal Father, we ask that you hear our prayers and the silent prayers of our hearts on this holy day. We ask this through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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CHRISTMAS, 2017 - 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: The Light of the World disperses the worst nights of darkness.

A full moon lighting up a darkened sky can serve as a great reminder to us that Jesus is the Light that disperses the darkest moments in our lives and in our world. Accepting and sharing the true light brings hope where there is despair.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Isaiah tells of the glad tidings that will take place once the Messiah arrives. The author of Hebrews states that the Son is the most profound and complete way that God speaks to us. Saint John proclaims Jesus as the pre-existent Word of God, now present to us in the flesh, who reveals God to us.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Celebrating the glad tidings of this day, we now reach out to God with our prayers.

- 1) For Pope Francis, may he continue to be the Light of Christ to a world too often found to be in darkness, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For civil servants, that their work may be blessed and bring benefit to the people they are called to serve, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all who live in poverty, may our Savior and King, born in a stable, raise them up through faith to share in the riches of the kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For those in our faith community who mourn or suffer loneliness, may they find the joy of Christmas through the generosity extended by others, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For all who have died in the light of Christ, may they rest in his eternal peace, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Father, you sent your son, Jesus, to a world in need of salvation. We ask that you hear our prayers, through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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Tuesday, December 26, 2017
(Lec. 696)

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

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

FOCUS: God remains with us – will we remain with him?

Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Stephen who, filled with the Holy Spirit, willingly accepted persecution and martyrdom. Stephen knew that God was with him, by the wisdom, grace and power that poured forth in his words.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading from Acts, we hear Luke's account of the accusation of Stephen followed by his martyrdom. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus sends the disciples out, warning them of the persecution of believers. Jesus assures them, however, that *whoever endures to the end will be saved*.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: In gratitude for the courage of the martyrs and with faith in God's promise to save those who endure, we bring our petitions to our Father in heaven.

- 1) For all members of the Church, may we speak boldly of our faith, so as to share Christ's hope and love, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For our civic leaders, may they have the courage of Saint Stephen to withstand any criticism or difficulty arising from their decision to choose what is right and good, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For the sick, the suffering and for those who suffer persecution because of their faith, may they be rewarded for their courage and faith, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For our local community, may we overcome any divisions and reach out to each other in love, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For our beloved dead, may they be welcomed into their eternal reward, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Loving Father, we trust that you will hear and answer these and all our prayers, which we bring to you through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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Wednesday, December, 27, 2017
(Lec. 697)

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

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

FOCUS: Jesus is real, and he has come to give us the fullness of life and joy.

We have just celebrated Christmas, remembering that Jesus became man and entered human history to abide with us and to give us life. Saint John reminds us of the reality of Jesus: Jesus is not distant and abstract, but intimately present and very real.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading from the Letter of Saint John, John speaks of what he has *seen, looked upon, and touched*, because Jesus is very real. John tells us this not so that we will adhere to a strict set of rules, but so that *our joy may be complete*. Today's Gospel recounts the story of Mary Magdalene running to find, and then tell, Simon Peter and the beloved disciple that *they have taken the Lord from the tomb*. Those two run to the tomb, see and believe.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: With the full assurance of God's love, let us now turn to him and offer our prayers and petitions.

- 1) For our Church leaders, may their proclamation and teaching on the reality and proximity of Jesus be an instrument of God's grace to the whole world, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For all who live in poverty, may they know God's love in the way we help care for their needs, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all those who do not know Jesus as their loving Savior, may they encounter him today, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For our faith community, may we deepen our relationship with the Lord and faithfully spread the Gospel through our words and actions, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) That all those who have died may experience the fullness of life, joy, and truth today in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, you are the giver of peace and the healer of souls. Please hear and answer our petitions, for we ask them through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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Thursday, December, 28, 2017
(Lec. 698)

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

**THE HOLY INNOCENTS,
MARTYRS
- FEAST**

FOCUS: *God is light and in him there is no darkness.*

Jesus touched our lives by becoming human so that we could share in the joy that is God. God is light, there is no darkness in him. Even in death we have assurance that God will care for us for eternity.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, we see that Jesus became a visible sign of God's light to be shared and proclaimed – that there is no darkness from God. In the Gospel, we learn about Herod ordering the massacre of innocent children and the dream that protected the Christ Child.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Confident that God always listens to the pleadings of his Church, let us turn to him with our petitions.

- 1) For Pope Francis and all Church leaders, may they be blessed with the courage to speak the words of Christ and to be his presence in the world, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For our government and world leaders, may they always strive to find peaceful ways to lead their countries, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all of us who have anxious moments in our lives, may we have the strength to give them over to the quietness of God's love, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For those who are ill, lonely or infirm, may they feel the warmth of Christ's light in any darkness they experience, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they be welcomed into the loving arms of God in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Heavenly Father, you sent your Son to earth and placed him in the loving care of Mary and Joseph. He dwells among us still and intercedes for our needs. We offer these prayers through that same son, Jesus Christ.

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Friday, December, 29, 2017
(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: Now is the time to resolve to follow Jesus' example more closely.

As the year ends, let us take a look at ourselves and see where we have and have not followed Jesus, or lived by his teachings. We cannot become more like him unless we look honestly at our own shortcomings and resolve to make changes that will bring our lives more in line with his.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Today's first reading explains that if we know Jesus, we will do as he teaches and live according to his example. The Gospel tells of the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, as prescribed by Jewish law. Jesus is recognized by the holy man Simeon as the promised Messiah, who will be instrumental in the rise and fall of many in Israel.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Relying on the providence of the Father, let us present our petitions to him, praying for our own needs and those of the world.

- 1) For all members of the Church, may God give us the courage and faith to continue Christ's redeeming work in our world today, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For children throughout the world, may they be protected from war and want as the adults around them strive to make this a better world, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For all those who find life burdensome, may they be granted peace of mind as they learn to trust God's love for them, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For members of this parish, may the presence of Christ within us inspire us to follow Jesus' example and reach out to those who are sick, hungry or otherwise in need, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they be seated at the banquet table of the Lord in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Hear us, O God, and grant what is in your divine will for us. We ask this and all things in the name of Jesus, the Lord.

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Saturday, December, 30, 2017
(Lec. 203)

- 1) 1 John 2:12-17
- 2) Luke 2:36-40

THE SIXTH DAY
WITHIN THE OCTAVE
OF THE NATIVITY
OF THE LORD

FOCUS: In Christ we experience forgiveness and the strength to overcome evil.

John's letter encourages the members of the community to follow closely the will of God. Everyone is reminded repeatedly, *you know him*. John reminds them that they know of the forgiveness of Christ, they know the Father, and in God, they have the strength to overcome evil. We have that same knowledge, and thus that same strength.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the passage from the First Letter of John in today's readings, members of the community are being exhorted to do the will of God so they may remain forever one with the Father. In the Gospel of Luke, the prophetess Anna recognizes Jesus as the one for whom everyone was waiting to redeem Jerusalem.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: In this Christmas Octave, confident of God's love and mercy, let us place all our petitions before our heavenly Father.

- 1) For the Church, may the power of the Gospel bring unity and mercy to the body of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For our government leaders, may the Holy Spirit grace them with the wisdom to make responsible decisions for the benefit of all people, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For those who find their daily struggle for food and shelter overwhelming, may they find relief in the efforts of those who work to assist them, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For those of us gathered here today, may we grow in a deeper appreciation of Jesus in the Eucharist, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they, through the mercy of God, rest in peace, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petitions)

PRIEST: Almighty Father, all powerful in overcoming evil, we ask you to grant these petitions, in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER, 31, 2017

(Lec. 17)

- 1) Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14
or Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3
- 2) Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17
or Hebrews 11:18, 11-12, 17-19
- 3) Luke 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40

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

FOCUS: Families are the domestic church, cultivating a family life centered on Christ.

Most people first experience faith within their family, where it is planted and nurtured. Mary and Joseph nurtured Jesus in the ways of faith, and helped him to grow in wisdom through their love and commitment to him and to each other, and through their obedience to Scripture and Tradition. It is through our trust in God and our love for one another that we bring Christ to life in our own families and communities.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In the first reading, Sirach echoes God's mandate to honor our father and mother, for in doing so we honor God. In the second reading, Saint Paul instructs the Colossians to live in the spirit of Christ, loving one another and seeking peace. In the Gospel, Joseph and Mary present Jesus at the Temple for the ritual Jewish purification. There they encounter the prophet Simeon and prophetess, Anna, who offer thanks to God for this long-awaited Savior and foretell of his coming reign of power.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER

PRIEST: Loving God, you are the giver of all that is good. We offer our prayers and petitions, trusting in your loving response to our call.

- 1) For Pope Francis and all bishops and priests, may they continue to offer encouragement to all families within their care, especially those who are struggling in some way, let us pray to the Lord.
- 2) For leaders of nations, may they seek to provide guidance and resources to help lift the marginalized out of poverty, let us pray to the Lord.
- 3) For husbands and wives divided by strife, may they seek paths to peace, forgiveness, healing and unity, let us pray to the Lord.
- 4) For all families, may we look to the Holy Family as our model for serving one another with a spirit of love and peace, let us pray to the Lord.
- 5) For those who have died, may they be welcomed to the banquet table of God's family in heaven, let us pray to the Lord.
- 6) (Special petition/s)

PRIEST: Father, in your goodness, hear the prayers your family offers you this day and help us to serve one another. We ask this through your son, Jesus Christ.