



# Ministry of Praise

## 13~19 December

### Weekly Intentions:

~For the success of the Giving Wreath and Cookie Sale.

~For a successful Church Blessing of our new church and school buildings

~That the students have a safe and fun Christmas break.

~That the Kingdom of God ushered into our world by the coming of Christ may turn away the destructive power of evil.

~That couples may experience the joy that comes with every new life, and in that joy find strength to overcome the difficulties they may face.

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2009

#### THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

##### We can't wait!

Today is "Gaudete" Sunday, from the first word of the entrance prayer at Mass, which means *rejoice!* That is what the pink candle on the Advent wreath that we light today signifies: "Be glad! Christmas is almost here. It's not too late to prepare." The placement of the pink candle in the third week instead of the fourth betrays an almost childlike exuberance: I can't wait! Let the candle we light today remind you that children are a big part of this season. Allow yourself to get caught up in the anticipation the way a child does: with open hearts, wonder, delight, and a firm belief that all things are possible.

**TODAY'S READINGS:** *Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18*

### MONDAY, DECEMBER 14

#### FEAST OF JOHN OF THE CROSS, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

##### Darkness can light your way

Prayer, faith, serving others—these are all part of our lives as Christians. But sometimes these holy tasks don't come easily. There may be days or months when despite everything we do we feel lost in our relationship with God. We might even feel as if God has abandoned us. It is here we find a friend in Saint John of the Cross, a mystic, writer, and Carmelite priest of the 16th century. John wrote a poem and treatise on what he called the "dark night of the soul." The dark night is not the absence of God but an invitation to grow in relationship with God. When you find yourself in a

dark night, be open to the ways in which the darkness itself can enlighten your relationship with God.

**TODAY'S READINGS:** *Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a; Matthew 21:23-27*

### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15

#### ADVENT WEEKDAY

##### Your integrity is at stake

"Do as I say, not as I do" is probably the single worst line a parent or other adult can use when trying to give moral guidance to a child. Children see right through hypocrisy. So does God, which is the point Jesus makes in the parable about two sons who were asked by their father to work in a vineyard. The first son shows up to work after having initially resisted the idea. The second promises to work but does not deliver. Actions do indeed speak louder than words, and when the two are in synch we call that *integrity*. Examine your own behavior—actions as well as words—and look for ways to develop greater integrity.

**TODAY'S READINGS:** *Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Matthew 21:28-32*

### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16

#### ADVENT WEEKDAY;

#### LAS POSADAS BEGINS

##### Let outsiders in

*Las Posadas* (Spanish for "the inns") is the annual observance between now and Christmas Eve of the difficulties Mary and Joseph ran into finding a place to stay in Bethlehem where their child would be born. It is of special significance for many Mexicans and Latinos who sometimes encounter the sinful hostility of racism, prejudice, and xenopho-



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*“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.”*

*“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near.”*

*“He answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go.”*

*“Blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”*

*“An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”*

*“And they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, ‘God is with us.’ ”*

*“Zechariah was troubled by what he saw, and fear came upon him.”*

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bia as they come among us, their American brothers and sisters, seeking a better life for their families. What a gift of God we could be if we would recognize the Christ in those who arrive in our communities from other lands seeking a place to stay.

**TODAY’S READINGS:** *Isaiah 45:6b-8, 18, 21b-25; Luke 7:18b-23*

### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17

#### ADVENT WEEKDAY

#### God writes straight with crooked lines

Many people caught the genealogy bug after the appearance of Alex Haley’s book *Roots* in the 1970s. Gathering information on their ancestors gave them a sense of who their people were and where they came from. The writer of the Gospel of Matthew had a similar interest: He began this gospel with a long list of Jesus’ earthly forebears. Prominent on the list are two of the great patriarchs of Israel: Abraham and David. But you also find some folks you might not expect: brothers who cheated brothers, foreigners, a prostitute, women in strange marriages, bad kings, and just plain everyday folks. God’s family includes both the noble and less-than-noble: outsiders, sinners, the unknown. Lucky for us.

**TODAY’S READINGS:** *Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17*

### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18

#### ADVENT WEEKDAY

#### Stop searching and you shall find

A lot of people are on a God quest. They experiment with spiritual paths, sit at the feet of wisdom figures, pace their way through labyrinths, take pilgrim-

ages, join churches; you name it, they’ve tried it. All of these ways of seeking the holy are good and may be useful. But once you actually “find God,” you learn that God was right here, all along. God is Emmanuel, *with us*. We may not always be sure where God is, but it seems God is always clear on where we are. Stand still. Let yourself be found!

**TODAY’S READINGS:** *Jeremiah 23:5-8; Matthew 1:18-25*

### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19

#### ADVENT WEEKDAY

#### Seeing can be unnerving

People often have premonitions before a child is born in which they see its life neatly laid out: The baby will be a boy, have brown eyes, and grow up to be president. But foresight is not always a blessing, as many a seer and prophet will tell you. Forewarned may be forearmed for some, but for others it may forestall living life to the fullest. Our faith provides very clear instructions for those who worry about things to come: Do not be afraid—God is with you and all will be well. Each generation prays for protection from anxiety, and in return God, through Jesus, offers us the gift of peace. Accept this gift whenever you fear what the future holds.

**TODAY’S READINGS:** *Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Luke 1:5-25*