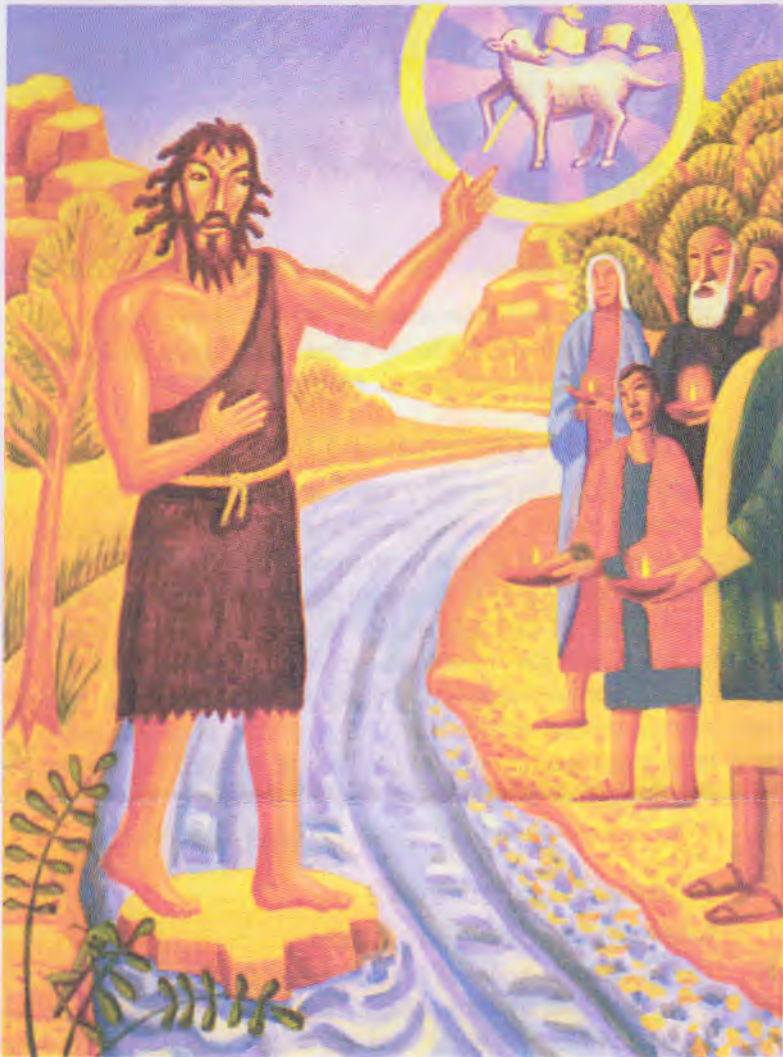


SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Source of Everlasting Hope

Father, you are the source of everlasting hope. In this holy season, help us to heed the cry of John the Baptist to prepare a way for the Lord. As we await him, may peace and harmony abide in your holy Church and in your holy creation. Direct our lives in good works. With strengthened hearts and lamps bright with expectation, may we be a sign of your love and be made ready for the Lord who is to come, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, December 8, 2013

Live in Harmony with One Another

Today's Readings: Isaiah 11:1–10; Psalm 72:1–2, 7–8, 12–13, 17; Romans 15:4–9; Matthew 3:1–12. During this holy time of Advent, God's Word gives us encouragement so that, as Saint Paul writes, "we might have hope." For our God, Paul tells us, is the source of "steadfastness and encouragement." The prophet Isaiah announces the coming of a wise ruler ("a shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse") who will judge with righteousness and bring peace—a peace so profound that even natural enemies will live in harmony. Is this the "kingdom of heaven" John the Baptist says is so near? The only way to welcome the kingdom, he says, is to repent of all our unjust behavior. Through repentance and conversion, we "prepare the way of the Lord," and we must demonstrate our conversion in our deeds.

John the Baptist describes the Lord's judgment with the chilling but instructive image of a farmer separating the chaff from the wheat and burning the chaff. Until the time of judgment, he teaches, good and bad will coexist all around us. We must recognize the difference and reform our lives through penance and just actions. In today's Psalm, we continue to sing about justice and the fullness of peace.

Through our Baptism we have already committed ourselves wholly to Christ. The repentance that John calls us to is a continuous work, which we practice daily. What will this work look like in each of our very different lives? How will the Spirit lead us?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 9

Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Today we celebrate the patronal feastday of the United States of America. Mary's Immaculate Conception reminds us of Christ's redemptive mission. God preserved Mary from original sin at the outset so that she could be the mother of Christ, who would save us. Washed of our sins and joined to Christ at our Baptism, we are invited into his saving work. Do you have an image of Mary in your home? Place flowers or light a candle in front of it. Today's Readings: Genesis 3:9–15, 20; Psalm 98:1, 2–3ab, 3cd–4; Ephesians 1:3–6, 11–12; Luke 1:26–38.

Tuesday, December 10

Shepherd and Lamb

Jesus, our gentle shepherd, is also the Lamb of God who feeds us, gathers us, and leads us to our heavenly Father. In the celebration of the Eucharist, we receive the Lamb of God. The simple gifts of bread and wine become the very Body and Blood of Christ. As we prepare for the birth of Christ at Bethlehem and also the Second Coming of Christ, we can take heart in Jesus the Good Shepherd, who calls us when we stray and rejoices each time we approach the banquet table of heaven and earth. Today's Readings: Isaiah 40:1–11; Psalm 96:1–2, 3 and 10ac, 11–12, 13; Matthew 18:12–14.

Wednesday, December 11

Saint Damasus I

Pope Damasus (c304–384), whose memorial may be celebrated today, lived in very turbulent times in the early Church, yet survived to see the edict in 380 that declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman state. Damasus calls to mind two qualities of good leadership: alertness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and service. During Advent, pray for all those who minister in the Church, that

they "shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with eagles" (Isaiah 40:31). Today's Readings: Isaiah 40:25–31; Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 8 and 10; Matthew 11:28–30.

Thursday, December 12

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

A young Native American maiden dressed like an Aztec princess appeared at Tepeyac to a poor Indian, St. Juan Diego, on December 12, 1531. Consider attending an early morning celebration of *Las Mañanitas* in a parish nearby where Latino Catholics come together to celebrate in word and song. Place an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe near your Advent wreath on this day, and pray that people of every race, language, and way of life will be afforded the dignity due them as a child of God. Today's Readings: Zechariah 2:14–17; Psalm: Judith 13:8bcde, 19; Luke 1:26–38.

Friday, December 13

Memorial of Saint Lucy

The Church has honored the example of St. Lucy, martyred in the year 304, by adding her name to the First Eucharistic Prayer. Lucy means "light" and in Swedish homes today, the oldest daughter wears a crown of lit candles and serves breakfast to her family. Today's feast gives us a glimpse of the light that is breaking through the darkness of winter. Light candles in your home today to dispel the darkness. How will you let your light shine? Today's Readings: Isaiah 48:17–19; Psalm 1:1–2, 3, 4 and 6; Matthew 11:16–19.

Saturday, December 14

Memorial of Saint John of the Cross

John's life and writings, so full of light and darkness, express his experience of prison, the Cross, and the ecstasy of mystical union with God. He was ordained as a Carmelite priest in 1567 and was a contemporary of Theresa of Jesus (Avila). Where do you find light in the midst of darkness? How might you bring light to someone trapped in the darkness of winter depression? Today's Readings: Sirach 48:1–4, 9–11; Psalm 80:2ac and 3b, 15–16, 18–19; Matthew 17:9a, 10–13.



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Keeping the Seasons

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