

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Open Our Hearts

God of boundless love,
you are the source of all blessings.
Be our companion through these Advent days.
Bless our nativity scene.
Draw us into the circle of love
that surrounds the newborn Christ child.

Help us prepare our hearts
to welcome him home
with a deep abiding love
and with gratitude for his friendship.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sunday, December 10, 2023 Prepare a Home for the Lord



Today's readings: Isaiah 40:1–5, 9–11; Psalm 85: 9–10, 11–12, 13–14; 2 Peter 3:8–14; Mark 1:1–8. The Lord is always coming toward us, seeking a home in our lives. Advent mindfully prepares our hearts as a permanent dwelling place for the Lord. The letter of St. Peter urges us to “conduct ourselves with holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the day of God” (2 Peter 3:11–12). Time is precious during this year’s short Advent as it competes with the secular frenzy of the season. Stay attuned to the spirit of Advent as you prepare for the coming of our Lord.

Adorn your surroundings with reminders to keep your focus on spiritual preparation. Religious imagery forms us in powerful ways. The practice of setting up a nativity scene

at home begins in Advent and continues through the celebration of the Epiphany. St. Francis of Assisi began this custom in 1223 when he celebrated Christmas with his brothers at Greccio with a staging of the stable in Bethlehem that included live animals. This tradition quickly spread, and people began to construct nativity scenes in their homes, churches, and public spaces. You might set up your entire scene all at once, leaving the crib empty for the Christ child to arrive on Christmas Eve. Or set up the scene slowly, placing the figures far from the scene and moving them closer day by day with the Magi arriving on Epiphany with gifts for the child Jesus.



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This Week at Home

Monday, December 11

Christ will come again

Today's readings paint a hope-filled picture of the way Christ comes to us at the end of time, often referred to as the *parousia*. At this time, illness, disability, drought, hunger, sin, conflict, and every source of discord will be wiped away and the full glory of the Lord will be fulfilled/revealed. Prayerfully, reflect on today's readings, resplendent with the promise that our God comes to save us. *Today's readings: Isaiah 35:1–10; Psalm 85: 9–14; Luke 5:17–26.*

Tuesday, December 12

Mary of Guadalupe day

Latino/Latina Christians invite us to wonder at Mary's appearance to Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill, Mexico, in 1531. Mary, whose features were those of a Mesoamerican Indian, offered hope to the oppressed native peoples, who in turn, named her Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. The observance of Mary of Guadalupe is widely celebrated around the world. Look up the meaning of this traditional image of Mary in the Americas. *Today's readings: Isaiah 11:1–10; Psalm 72:1–2, 7–8, 12–13, 17; Luke 10:21–24; Zechariah 2:14–17; Revelation 11:19; Revelation 12:1–6; Luke 1:26–47.*

Wednesday, December 13

Santa Lucia / St. Lucy, martyr, died 304

The Church remembers Lucy, a fourth-century martyr whose name means "light," as the patron saint for those with eye disease. Many cultures celebrate Santa Lucia day with festive customs. In Sweden, this day is called *Luciadagen*. The eldest daughter of the family dresses up as Lucy/Lucia and greets the family with special breads. Legends tell of Lucy's handing out bread in the time of famine. Make or purchase two loaves of braided bread and adorn them with candles. Enjoy one and surprise a neighbor with the other. *Today's readings: Isaiah 40:25–31; Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 8, 10; Matthew 11:28–30.*

Thursday, December 14

John of the Cross, renewer of the church, died 1591

Today the Church commemorates this exemplar from sixteenth-century Spain: John of the Cross, whose spiritual writings continue to offer inspiration. Severe persecution and suffering in prison unlocked his poetic gifts. His memorial is placed in Advent because his writings so often highlight Christ as light penetrating the darkness. Light a candle to remember John of the Cross as a reminder that Christ, our light, illuminates our hearts especially in times of suffering. *Today's readings: Isaiah 41:13–20; Psalm 145:1, 9–13; Matthew 11:11–15.*

Friday, December 15

Follow the Lord

Today's psalm proclaims, "Those who follow the Lord will have the light of life." Advent (like Lent) contains, as an essential element, reconciliation or repentance (*metanoia* means to turn around) as spiritual preparation for the Christmas (or Easter) celebration to come. Through these spiritual practices we seek to grow in holiness. Do not delay! Turn around! Seek reconciliation in the rough places of your life this Advent and make room in your heart to welcome Jesus. *Today's readings: Isaiah 48:17–19; Psalm 1:1–6; Matt. 11:16–19.*

Saturday, December 16

Las Posadas

Las Posadas (from Spanish meaning "the inns") is a widely observed Advent tradition celebrating Christian hospitality beginning December 16 and continuing for nine days until December 24. The posadas symbolize Mary and Joseph's difficult search for a place to stay. There are many creative ways to observe Las Posadas. Through the celebration we are reminded that by welcoming the poor and needy, we also welcome Jesus. *Today's readings: Psalm 80: 2–3, 15–19; Matthew 17:9–13.*