

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD



Welcome God's Love into the World

God the Father,
Creator of all that lives and loves,
this day you give of yourself.
Your Son, the Word made flesh,
has come into the world;
this day your Son is welcomed with great joy.
May we who have awaited his coming,
who have prepared our hearts with
anticipation,
grow in love and service,
as we share that joy, that welcome,
and that presence
with our families, our communities,
and the world.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Incarnate Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, December 25, 2016

Boundless Joy



Today's Readings (Mass during the Night): Isaiah 9:1–6; Psalm 96:1–2, 2–3, 11–12, 13; Titus 2:11–14; Luke 2:1–14.

The news of our Savior's birth cannot be contained. Every reading is bursting with joy at this ultimate Good News: Rejoice! Exult! Make merry! Announce to the world and proclaim to all people! We have been preparing for this day. Even as we prepared in joy, there was something holding us back, but no longer. The darkness no longer appears dark, for the light has come, and it is a light brighter than any other.

The readings for today tell us that there was “no room in the inn,” but the news of a wondrous birth is spread by angels and shepherds. The Savior has come into the world,

heaven and earth rejoice. It is as if the entire world lets loose unbounded joy.

How can we both celebrate and spread this joy today? The shepherds did not just hear the announcement of the angels, they gathered their flocks and traipsed together to find this simple new family and welcome the infant, with both silent awe and joyful sharing of the news. May this Christmas find us eager to celebrate and spread the news with exaltation, silent awe, sharing good news and kindness, and looking for Christ in all families and situations of the day. Our abundant joy cannot be contained.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 26

St. Stephen, the First Martyr

It seems unusual that the day after Christmas we commemorate St. Stephen, the first martyr of the Church. However, his witness in the Acts of the Apostles is also a testament to the Communion of Saints into which we are all called by virtue of our Baptism. One of the first seven deacons, Stephen works among the people, speaks with wisdom, and cries out, while dying, “receive my spirit.” *Today’s Readings: Acts 6:8–10; 7:54–59; Psalm 31:3cd–4, 6, 8ab, 16bc, 17; Matthew 10:17–22.*

Tuesday, December 27

St. John, Apostle and Evangelist

At the heart of the Christmas season lies a theology rooted in St. John. This theology is not just about the Word made flesh, from the readings of Christmas Day. John is the author of both of today’s readings, and it seems that he cannot remind us enough that we know Jesus Christ. His writing shows that we have seen him and have touched him. God is now made visible through us, our fellowship, and our belief at the side of the empty tomb. In the First Reading, we hear, “We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.” Our joy is also complete! *Today’s Readings: 1 John 1:1–4; Psalm 97:1–2, 5–6, 11–12; John 20:1a, 2–8.*

Wednesday, December 28

Feast of the Holy Innocents, Martyrs

In this wonderful season of Christmas, we are reminded of so many innocent lives cut short. Take time today to marvel at the beauty and wonder children bring, at any age. Celebrate God’s loving presence in the innocence of one another. Last of all, pause in prayer for those who suffer at the violent hands of others. May they forever be gathered around Jesus. *Today’s Readings: 1 John 1:5–2:2; Psalm 124:2–3, 4–5, 7cd–8; Matthew 2:13–18.*

Thursday, December 29

St. Thomas Becket, Bishop and Martyr

Thomas Becket (1119–1170) spent much of his years as archbishop of Canterbury battling King Henry II. His martyrdom, killed by four knights during vespers in the cathedral, sparked a political and religious backlash on the English monarchy. Buried in Canterbury Cathedral, the site became the primary English pilgrimage destination. Today’s Gospel sums up what so many pilgrims still seek: “those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” *Today’s Readings: 2 Timothy 2:8–13; 3:10–12; Psalm 34:2–3, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9; Matthew 16:24–27.*

Friday, December 30

Feast of the Holy Family

We know very few individual stories about the Holy Family, but today is a perfect time for activities connecting with those stories. Tell stories of birth (Bethlehem) and singing lullabies for the journey of youth (Flight into Egypt). Share meals together as the Holy Family did in Nazareth. Make time to pass on insights and skills. During this week between Christmas and New Year’s, visit relatives, taking time to listen to family stories seldom heard. Always let each other know where you are! *Today’s Readings: Sirach 3:2–6, 12–14 or Colossians 3:12–21 or 3:12–17; Psalm 128:1–2, 3, 4–5; Matthew 2:13–15, 19–23.*

Saturday, December 31

Testify to the True Light

The readings today call us to witness and stay true to our faith. John the Baptist is our model, for he forged a way for others to recognize Christ. Both readings remind us that all peoples are enlightened by the truth. In addition, this light is found only through God’s Only Begotten Son, who has now become the Way, the Truth, and the Light in which we are grounded by Baptism. *Today’s Readings: 1 John 2:18–21; Psalm 96:1–2, 11–12, 13; John 1:1–18.*

