

# THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 7, 2025





#### WELCOME TO HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Served by the Mercedarian Friars USA (www.orderofmercy.org)



#### PARISH OFFICE, 588 W. Gay Street, Columbus, OH 43215

Open ......Monday – Thursday: 8:00 am – 3:00 pm Main No.....614-221-4323 Fax No: 614-221-9818 Web:....www.holyfamilycolumbus.org Email.....office@holyfamilycolumbus.org Facebook.....Holy Family Catholic Church Flocknote.....holyfamilycolumbus@flocknote.com

#### PERSONNEL STAFF

Father Michael J. Donovan, O. de M...Pastor Father Daniel Bowen, O. de M......Vocation Director Brother Kevin Cush, O. de M.....Seminarian Secretary......Mary Gamble Maintenance......Tim Kearns Music Director / Organist......Shawn Kenney OCIA (RCIA) Coordinator.....Linda Hamilton Religious Education.......Sr. Bozena Tyborowska LSIC

#### PARISH ORGANIZATIONS

Altar Servers – Br. Kevin Cush, O. de M., Director Confraternity of Christian Mothers – Rita Martinez, President Diocesan Center for the Guard of Honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – Rebecca Rector, Zelatrix Eucharistic Adoration — Sarah Hill, Coordinator

Hospitality – Kathy McKinniss & Linda Hamilton, Coordinators Knights of Columbus – Br. Kevin Cush, O. de M., Grand Knight

Liturgical Ministry – Linda Hamilton, Coordinator

Holy Family Young Adults – Bear Bates, Coordinator

Mercedarian Lay Third Order – Fr. Michael J. Donovan, O. de M., Spiritual Director

Respect Life – Aurelio & Rosalinda Morales, Coordinators Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary — Sr. Bozena Tyborowska, Dir.

#### **SOUP KITCHEN** – (backyard of Parish Center building)

**Donations...**Monday – Friday

8:00am —12noon, preferred (back of building) 12noon – 3:00pm, optional (please call in advance)

Main No.....614-221-4323 Web.....www.hfsk.org

Email......Dennis Shope, Director

soupkitchen@holyfamilycolumbus.org maintenance@holyfamilycolumbus.org

#### **BAPTISM**

Call the Parish office to schedule a Baptism. Children over the age of 6 will require some special instruction.

#### **MARRIAGE**

Please call the Parish Office at least six months before the wedding. Diocesan Pre-Cana and Natural Family Planning classes are required and six meetings with the priest.

#### THE SACRAMENT OF THE SICK

Call the Parish Office during general office hours. Otherwise, call Parish Office and select "Sacramental Emergency" option.

#### RECEPTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Those who desire Holy Communion at home should call the Parish Office.

#### **MASS SCHEDULE**

Weekdays: 12:15pm Saturday: 9:00 a.m.

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m. 5:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m. Convent of St. Birgitta – 40 N. Grubb St., Columbus

Weekly: 7:00 a.m. Mon., Tues., Thurs. Friday

4:00 p.m. Wednesday

(Each day is open to the public)

#### THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Weekdays: 11:30 a.m. - 12 Noon

Sunday: 8:30 a.m. 10:30 a.m. 4:30 p.m. 7:30 p.m.

#### **EUCHARISTIC ADORATION SCHEDULE**

**Holy Family Church** 

1:00 p.m. Thursday – 12 Noon Friday

First Friday Adoration in Reparation to the

Sacred Heart -8:00 p.m. -8:45 a.m. First Saturday

Please contact Sarah Hill at 740-418-0517 or thehills1936@gmail.com if you have interest in being

scheduled weekly or monthly in either location

Convent of St. Birgitta (CSB) 40 N. Grubb St., Columbus

**Weekly:** 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Tuesday

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Mass Wednesday 4:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. following 4pm Mass

9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. Friday

#### MOST HOLY ROSARY

**Weekdays:** 11:30 am (Tuesday is Respect Life Rosary) Chaplet of Divine Mercy follows Rosary

Saturday: 8:30 a.m. before 9:00 a.m. Marian Mass

8:15 a.m. before 9:00 a.m. First Saturday Mass

8:30 a.m. 10:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m. (before Mass) Sunday:

Please contact the Parish Office if you wish to be scheduled to lead before 9am Saturday or 9am; 5pm

Sunday Mass.

#### **REGULAR DEVOTIONS**



Each Tuesday following the 12:15 p.m. Mass there are Devotions to St. Anthony of Padua.



Each Saturday Novena Prayers to Our Lady of Mercy following 9:00 a.m. Mass.



On First Wednesday of each month a 7:00 p.m. Mass is offered in honor of Good Saint Joseph.



On First Friday of each month following the 12:15 & 7:00 p.m. Masses there is Act of Consecration of the Human Race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

# THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT December 7, 2025



#### MASS INTENTIONS DECEMBER 7-14 2025

MMSS	INTENTIONS DECEMBER 7- 14 2025
Sun Dec 7	SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
9:00 AM *	Brother Cody Evaristo O. de M.
	by Kathy McKinniss
11:00 AM	For the Unborn and All Priests and Religious
	by Knights of Columbus #13428
5:00 PM *	Repose of the Soul of Joselyn Standly
	by Paige Cashin
8:00 PM	People of the Parish
Mon Dec 8	THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
	OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
7:00 AM	CSB – Kaylee Moore
12:15 PM	Livia Dyke, by Nathan & Sheree Dyke
7:00 PM	Repose of the Soul of Michael McCall
Tues Dec 9	Advent Weekday
	Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin
7:00 AM	CSB – Joshua Dyke
	by Nathan & Sheree Dyke
12:15 PM	Repose of the Soul of Angela McMillan
	by Her Family
Wed Dec 10	9
	Our Lady of Loreto
7:00 AM	Rorate Mass
12:15 PM	Repose of the Souls of
	The DelMonte and Bevilacqua Families
Thurs Dog 1:	by Maria DelMonte and Family
Thuis Dec 1	1 Advent Weekday Saint Damasus I, Pope
7:00 AM	<b>CSB</b> – Ben Dyke, by Nathan & Sheree Dyke
12:15 PM	Repose of the Souls
12.10 1 1	of Martin and Betty Peterson
	by The Bucher Family
Fri Dec 12	Our Lady of Guadalupe
7:00 AM	CSB-Maria Dyke, by Nathan & Sheree Dyke
12:15 PM	Mary Wilson
	by Jane Trumbull & Jean Herald
Sat Dec 13	Saint Lucy, Virgin and Martyr
9:00 AM	Repose of the Soul of Dominic Linh Nguyen
	by The Nguyen Family
Sun Dec 14	THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
	Gaudete Sunday
9:00 AM *	People of the Parish
11:00 AM	Deceased Members of Holy Family Alumni
5:00 PM *	Father Daniel Bowen, O. de M.
0.00 PR 5	by Holy Family Church
8:00 PM	Repose of the Soul of Loretta Ankron
	by Henry Wilson

#### HOMEBOUND AND/OR ILL IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Mary Albright
Melody Christ
Sarah Conway
JoAnn Cormack
Mary Jo Fetch
Jack Gookin
John Keller
Larry Lorms
Charles McKinniss

Debbie Newell
Theresa Piatt
Maura Renouf
Bob & Jane Sowers
Michelle Stewart
Josh Stroud
Celeste Trautman
Bill Warren
Mary Ann Wirsching

#### LECTOR SCHEDULE

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December 7	9:00 am	Mary Gamble
N Balling B	11:00 am	Knights of Columbus
	5:00 pm	Rebecca Rector
December 8	7:00 pm	Rebecca Rector
December 14	9:00 am	Susan Lau
	11:00 am	Brett Ballantyne
	5:00 pm	Dan Hueckel

#### SERMON ON THE AMOUNT

Giving for November 17 to November 23, 2025

4	Offertory		4
AN ex	Collection	\$ 3,605	AT ch
4	On-Line	3,186	4
校院	Mail	+ 495	校院
	Total	\$ 7,286	THE P
	Less: Assessment (10%)	- <u>729</u>	
A.A.	Net	\$ 6,557	A.C.
THE STATE OF THE S	Soup Kitchen	\$ 7,719	THE STATE OF
M	The Appeal Pledges	\$52,956	M
4 4	The Appeal Goal	\$82,347	4 .

Giving for November 24 to November 30, 2025

<b>大学</b>	Offertory Collection On-Line Mail Total Less: Assessment (10%) Net Soup Kitchen	\$ 3,810 4,150 +0 \$ 7,960 796 \$ 7,164 \$ 928	和原教
T	Soup Kitchen The Appeal Pledges The Appeal Goal	\$ 928 \$62,620 \$82,347	The state of the s

God Reward your Generosity

## THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT Peace Peace December 7, 2025 A Note from Fr. Michael Praised be Jesus Christ! Dear Parish Family, As we make our way through the Advent Season and the excitement and preparations for Christmas begin to build, it is easy to lose sight of what Advent is challenging us to do. Advent, although such a short season, is rather complex. During Advent the task before us is to prepare ourselves for the various visitations of Our Lord. During the first two weeks of Advent, we are looking ahead to Our Lord's glorious return at the end of the world. During the last two weeks of Advent the focus changes to preparation for the celebration of Our Lord's first coming at His Nativity on Christmas Day. The entire season of Advent is a preparation for Our Lord's daily 🔀 personal coming to us in His Word, His Sacraments, in our needy brothers and sisters, and in prayer. The Catechism of the Catholic Church beautifully describes the interior spirit we should be trying to cultivate during Advent. The Catechism states: "When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for the second Karamannananananananananan Karamananananan Karamannananananan Karamanananananananan Karamanananananan Karamanananananan Karamananananan Karamananananan Karamananananan Karamanananan Karamananan Karamananan Karamanan Karaman Karam longing for their promised Savior. That longing for Christ is precisely what the Church is challenging us to cultivate in our hearts. With that in mind, let us ask the Holy Spirit to increase our desire to encounter Jesus in Holy Communion, in Confession, in the Word of God, in prayer, reflection and silence, and, in our needy neighbor. Before things get too busy, I would like to share with you the Christmas Mass schedule so that you can prepare accordingly. December 23rd Extended Confession Times: December 31st Vigil of Solemnity of Mary, lack2:00pm - 4:00pmMother of God: 6:00pm - 8:00pm 5:00pm Mass December 24th Christmas Eve: January 1st Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God:

4:00pm Vigil Mass (No Confessions) 7:00pm Vigil Mass (No Confessions)

#### December 25th Christmas Day:

12:00am (Midnight) Mass (No Confessions) 9:00am Mass (No Confessions) 11:00am Mass (No Confessions) No Adoration on Christmas Day

Have a blessed Advent and a peaceful Sunday! In the Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, Fr. Michael

# (Holy Day of Obligation)

9:00am Mass No Adoration on New Years Day





# THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT December 7, 2025



# Matching Gift to the Capital Improvement Campaign

We are pleased to announce that a parishioner has generously pledged up to \$40,000 in matching contributions for all donations received between December 1 and January 15. All matched funds will be allocated exclusively to the building fund designed for repairs. Let's do our best to be able to receive the entire pledge!

Remember, you can give multiple ways to the campaign:

On-line Giving – You may use our on-line giving system, Pushpay, to contribute to the campaign either on a one-time or a recurring gift. Your gift can be charged to a credit card, or can be taken directly from your checking or savings account. To access the online giving system, you may use the QR code at the bottom of this letter, or go to our website at holyfamilycolumbus.org and click on Parish Life, then Giving, then the Online Giving button. This will take you to Pushpay: select how you want to give; the Frequency; when to start; and under Fund, select Capital Improvement Needs.

**Check** – You may give by writing a check to Holy Family Church and dropping it in the offertory basket, or mail it to the office. In the memo field, please note Capital improvement Needs.

Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) – For those who are required to take a Required Minimum Distribution from their IRA, you have the ability to send that RMD to a charitable organization and the distribution will be non-taxable. To do this, please talk to your financial advisor or investment company and direct them to send your contribution directly to Holy Family Church with a designation that the donation go to the Capital Improvement Needs Campaign.

**Donor Advised Funds** – Some of our families contribute to our parish through their Donor Advised Fund, often held at the Catholic Foundation. To donate to our Campaign through this method, please contact the Catholic Foundation directly.

Steeple Fund – Several years ago, the Parish began collecting funds for the replacement of the church steeple. Fr Michael and Parish leadership has determined that this project is not a need for the parish. Therefore, we would like to redesignate these funds to repairing the church roof. We would like to make this redesignation in January 2026. If you contributed to the Steeple Fund and object to this redesignation, please contact Bill Davis, Accountant, at accountant@holyfamilycolumbus.org to arrange for time to discuss your gift and objection.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and generosity.

## THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

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#### **HOLY FAMILY KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS #13428**

We continue to collect aluminum cans for the Seminarians. All proceeds will go to these young men of Christ. Please drop the cans off at the Parish Center.

#### **Upcoming Events**

**Sunday, December 7, 2025**—Knights of Columbus Corporal Mass at the 11:00am Mass.

**Sunday, December 14, 2025**—Knights of Columbus monthly Council meeting after the 11am Mass.

**Sunday, December 28, 2025**—Consecration to the Holy Family at each Mass.

If you are interested in becoming a Knight of Columbus, please contact **Jack Gookin at (614) 309-2519**.

#### HOLY FAMILY RESPECT LIFE MINISTRY



Our next meeting is Monday January 5 at 7:00pm in the Parish Center.

"I am the Immaculate Conception, the Mother of all graces and the Mother of My Beloved Son, Jesus. I want to be known as Mystical Rose. My wish is that every year on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December at noon an "Hour of Grace" will be installed. Many

spiritual graces, and physical blessings will be received by those who pray—undisturbed—during this Hour".

This Year The Hour of Grace will take place on Monday, December 8<sup>th</sup> 11:30am—1:30pm in the Convent of St. Birgitta, 40 N. Grubb Street, one block short of Holy Family Church.

Please arrive by 11:30am so each of us can prepare before The Hour of Grace begins. Feel free to contact Rosalinda Morales at 614-560-4523 if you have questions. We hope you will join us!

#### HIS INCREDIBLE SENIORS EXERCISE PROGRAM

Our upcoming regular class is 1:30—2:30pm Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup> in the Parish Center. Next class is shortened to 1:30—2:00pm Wednesday, December 10<sup>th</sup> in the Parish Center. Christmas Potluck will follow. Classes to welcome 2026 are scheduled January 13 & 14!! More info to come.

#### HOLY FAMILY YOUNG ADULTS MINISTRY

HFYA (18—35) meets weekly, with a rotation of activities including prayer/spirituality, talk, adoration, and social nights. Use this QR Code to connect with this group.





CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN MOTHERS
& LADIES GUILD

Serving the Women of Holy Family Since 1887

#### **Prayer To The Blessed Virgin and The Saints**

O most gracious Virgin Mary, beloved Mother of Jesus my Redeemer, intercede for me with Him. Obtain for me the full remission of my sins, and perfect amendment of life, unto the salvation of my soul, glory of His name. Amen

I implore the same grace of thee, O my angel guardian; of you, my holy patrons; of you holy Peter and holy Magdalene, and of all the saints of God. Intercede for me a sinner, repenting of my sins, and resolving to confess and amend them. Amen

Christian Mothers will be available in the undercroft today to answer any questions regarding our Confraternity.

Please **RSVP** regarding our **Advent Adoration Hour** on **December 13**<sup>th</sup> starting with the 9:00am Mass if you will be attending, please bring a friend. A light lunch will follow. Volunteers are also needed for this event.

If you have not signed up to help Sister Bozena with the CCD Christmas program on December 14<sup>th</sup> before and after the 11:00am Mass, please do so at **holyfamilyccm@gmail.com**.

Our December Mass and St. Gerard blessing is on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 11:00am.

Reminder of change in Christian Mothers Christmas celebration. Now January 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm in undercroft. Please RSVP.

Many Advent blessings to all.

#### **Holy Family Confraternity of Christian Mothers Officers**

Rita Martinez, President / Sondra Wright, Vice-President Anita Van Order, Treasurer / Kendy Troiano, Secretary Father Michael J. Donovan, O. de M. Director

#### UPCOMING BULLETIN ARTICLE DEADLINES

December 21 ———— By Tuesday December 16

December 28 ———— By Thursday December 18

January 4, 2026 ———— By 12 Noon Monday Dec 22

Please contact the Parish Office if you have any questions. Thank you for your help.



Send Christmas greetings to our Br. Cody Evaristo, O. de M.

Convent de San Ramon Nonato AV Santuari No 28 Lerida Sant Ramon 25215 Spain

# THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT December 7, 2025





Join us for coffee, donuts and fellowship the first Sunday of every month after the 9am & 11am Mass in the undercroft.

The Hospitality Committee also provides tea, hot chocolate, water, orange juice and lemonade. Take a few minutes to grab some refreshments and enjoy a conversation with other parishioners before the drive home. Thank you to the Rudolph family who provides gluten-free donuts each month.

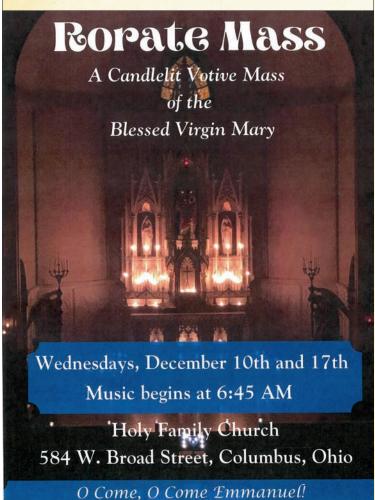
#### St. Gianna Molla Play Group

Please note: Meeting time has changed to 10am.

For moms and young children. Meetups will be held the second and fourth Tuesday of every month at 10am. Contact Rebekah Foley (bekah.krull@gmail.com) or Katie Foley (katie.frego.95@gmail.com) with questions or in case of inclement weather.

12/9—Grange Insurance Audubon Center Kid's Area

12/23—Columbus Metropolitan Library Main Library Kid's Area



#### Chesterton Academy of St. Benedict

You are invited to our annual Festival of Lessons & Carols. Take an evening this Advent to slow down and enjoy our school choir as we prepare our hearts and minds for the birth of our Lord.

When: 7:00 p.m. Friday, December 12 Where: Holy Family Church

Cookie reception in the undercroft to follow.



#### **Christmas Pageant Invitation**

All parishioners attending the 11:00 a.m. Mass on December 14 are warmly invited to remain afterward for a brief and joyful Christmas Pageant presented by our CCD students.

Join us as the children lovingly reenact the **Birth of Jesus**, bringing to life the beauty and wonder of that holy night.

We hope you will stay and share in this special moment of faith, joy, and community.

"For unto us a Child is born..." (Isaiah 9:6)

We look forward to celebrating with you.

Sr. Bozena LSIC

#### 2025 Christmas Flower Donations

December OSV envelopes include one for Christmas Flowers to make our Church beautiful while you can remember someone special in preparation for Day of the Nativity. Plain envelopes marked 'Christmas Flowers' can also be used.

Please make check or money order payable to: Holy Family Church with 'Christmas Flowers' on the notation line. Remember to print a list of who flowers are for: In Honor of or In Memory of.

You can also pay online through OSV. Please notify the Parish Office should you choose this method so names will be received and posted.

Names must be received BY morning of December 16 to be posted in December 21<sup>st</sup> bulletin issue. By December 22<sup>nd</sup> to be included on the poster.

# Lectio Divina

## SCRIPTURE READING + MEDITATION + PRAYER + CONTEMPLATION

"What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life?" +Saint Benedict, from the Rule of Saint Benedict (73:3)

The month of December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception

"If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself. Order your soul; reduce your wants; live in charity; associate in Christian community; obey the laws; trust in Providence."

+SAINT AUGUSTINE

Monday, December 8 ~ Second Week in the Season of Advent Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Patronal Feast Day of the United States if America ~ A Holy Day of Obligation ~

Holy Gospel: Luke 1:26-38 The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

**Meditation:** Do you want to live a grace-filled life? I think we all do. The angel Gabriel salutes Mary as "full of grace." To become the mother of the Savior, Mary was enriched by God with gifts to enable her to assume this awesome role. There is a venerable tradition among many Christians, dating back to the early church, for honoring Mary as the spotless virgin who bore the Son of God in her womb. A number of early Church fathers link Mary's obedience to this singular grace of God. One of them Saint Irenaeus, wrote: "Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race. The knot of Eve's disobedience was united by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith."

**Prayer:** O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son, grant, we pray, that, as you preserved her from every stain by virtue of the Death of your Son, which you foresaw, so, through her intercession, we, too, may be cleansed and admitted to your presence. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they immediately experienced the consequences of their action – separation from the God who loved them. God in his mercy promised them a Redeemer who would pay the price for their sin and the sin of the world. We see the marvelous unfolding of God's plan of redemption in the events leading up to the Incarnation, the birth of the Messiah. Mary's prompt response of "yes" to the divine message is a model of faith for all believers. Mary believed God's promises even when they seemed impossible. She was full of grace because she trusted that what God said was true and would be fulfilled. She was willing and eager to do God's will, even if it seemed difficult or costly. God gives us grace and he expects us to respond with the same willingness, obedience, and heart-felt trust as

Mary did. When God commands he also gives the grace, strength, and means to respond. We can either yield to his grace or resist and go our own way. Do you believe in God's promises and do you yield to his grace?

#### Tuesday, December 9 ~ Second Week in the Season of Advent Optional Memorial: Saint Juan Diego

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 18:12-14** Jesus said to his disciples: "What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost."

**Meditation:** This parable gives us a glimpse of the heart of a true shepherd, and the joy of a community reunited with its lost members. Shepherds not only had to watch over their sheep by day and by night; they also had to protect them from wolves and lions who preyed upon them, and from dangerous terrain and storms. Shepherds often had large flocks, sometimes numbering in the hundreds or thousands. It was common to inspect and count the sheep at the end of the day. You can imagine the surprise and grief of the shepherd who discovers that one of his sheep is missing! Does he wait until the next day to go looking for it? Or does he ask a neighboring shepherd if he might has seen the stray sheep? No, he goes immediately in search of this lost sheep. Delay for even one night could mean disaster leading to death. Sheep by nature are very social creatures. An isolated sheep can quickly become bewildered, disoriented, and even neurotic. Easy prey for wolves and lions!

**Prayer:** O God, who by means of Saint Juan Diego showed the love of the most holy Virgin Mary for your people, grant, through his intercession, that, by following the counsels our Mother gave at Guadalupe, we may be ever constant in fulfilling your will. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**A prayer to our Guardian Angel:** Dear Guardian Angel, protect me in all the temptations and trials of this life. but most especially at the hour of my death, and do not leave me until thou hast conducted me into the presence of my creator in the mansions of everlasting happiness. Amen.

**Contemplation:** What was new in Jesus' teaching was the insistence that sinners must be sought out time and time again. How easy it can be to forget and be distracted with other matters while the lost become prey for devouring wolves of the soul. The Apostle Peter reminds us that the "devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (ref. 1 Peter 5:8). God does not rejoice in the loss of anyone, but desires that we be saved and restored to friendship with him. That is why the whole community of heaven rejoices when one sinner is found and restored to fellowship with God. God is on a rescue mission today to save us from the destructive forces of sin and evil. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, watches over every step we take. Do you listen to his voice and heed his wise counsel? Do you follow the path he has set for you - a path that leads to life rather than death? Getting back on the right path always begins with the Sacrament of Reconciliation – don't let anything hold you back from making a good confession!

#### Wednesday, December 10 ~ Second Week in the Season of Advent Optional Memorial: Our Lady of Loreto

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:28-30** Jesus said to the crowds: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

**Meditation:** The Jewish people used the image of a yoke to express submission to God. They spoke of the yoke of the law, the yoke of the commandments, the yoke of the kingdom, the yoke of God. Jesus says his yoke is "easy." The Greek word for "easy" can also mean "well-fitting." Yokes were tailor-made to fit the oxen well. We are commanded to put on the "sweet yoke of Jesus" and to live the "heavenly way of life and happiness." Oxen were yoked two by two. Jesus invites us to be yoked with him, to unite our lives with him, our wills with his will, our heart with his heart. Jesus also says his "burden is light." There's a familiar story of a man who once met a boy carrying a smaller crippled lad on his back. "That's a heavy load you are carrying there," exclaimed the man. "He ain't heavy; he's my brother!" responded the boy. No burden is too heavy when it's given in love and carried in love. When we yoke our lives with Jesus, he also carries our burdens with us and gives us his strength to follow in his way of love. Do you know the joy of resting in Jesus' presence and walking daily with him along the path he has for you?

**Prayer:** Almighty God, who command us to prepare the way for Christ the Lord, grant in your kindness, we pray, that no infirmity may weary us as we long for the comforting presence of our heavenly physician. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** In the Season of Advent we celebrate the coming of the Messianic King who ushers in the reign of God. The prophets foretold that the Messiah would establish God's kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. Those who put their trust in God and in the coming of his kingdom receive the blessings of that kingdom - peace with God and strength for living his way of love and holiness (ref. Isaiah 40). Jesus fulfills all the Messianic hopes and promises of God's kingdom. That is why he taught his disciples to pray, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (ref. Matthew 6:10). In his kingdom sins are not only forgiven but removed, and eternal life is poured out for all its citizens. This is not a political kingdom, but a spiritual one. The yoke of Christ's kingdom, his kingly rule and way of life, liberates us from the burden of guilt and from the oppression of sin and hurtful desires. Only Jesus can lift the burden of sin and the weight of hopelessness from us. Jesus used the analogy of a yoke to explain how we can exchange the burden of sin and despair for a burden of glory and yoke of freedom from the grip of sin. The yoke which Jesus invites us to embrace is his way of grace and freedom from the power of sin. Do you trust in God's love and submit to his will for your life? If not, why not?

# Thursday, December 11 ~ Second Week in the Season of Advent Optional Memorial: Pope Saint Damasus I

**Holy Gospel: Matthew 11:11-15** Jesus said to the crowds: "Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force. All the prophets and the law prophesied up to the time of John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

Meditation: John the Baptist is the last and greatest of the prophets of the old covenant. He fulfilled the essential task of all the prophets: to be fingers pointing to Christ, God's Anointed Son and Messiah. John proclaimed Jesus' mission at the Jordan River when he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (ref. John 1:29). John saw from a distance what Jesus would accomplish through his death on the cross — our redemption from bondage to sin and death and our adoption as sons and daughters of God and citizens of the kingdom of heaven. John the Baptist bridges the Old and New Testaments. He is the last of the Old Testament prophets who point the way to the Messiah. He is the first of the New Testament witnesses and martyrs. He is the herald who prepares the way for Jesus the Messiah. Jesus confirms that John has fulfilled the promise that Elijah would return to herald the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5). Jesus declares that John is nothing less that the great herald whose privilege it was to announce the coming of the Messiah. Jesus equates the coming of his kingdom with violence. John himself suffered violence for announcing that the kingdom of God was near. He was thrown into prison and then beheaded. Since John's martyrdom to the present times the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and persecution at the hands of violent men. The blood of the martyrs throughout the ages bear witness to this fact. The martyrs witness to the truth — the truth and love of Jesus Christ who shed his blood to redeem us from slavery to sin and Satan and the fear of death. The Lord Jesus gives us the power of his Holy Spirit to overcome fear with faith, despair with hope, and every form of hatred, violence, jealousy, and prejudice with love and charity towards all — even those who seek to destroy and kill.

**Prayer:** Grant, we pray, O Lord, that we may constantly exalt the merits of your Martyrs, whom Pope Saint Damasus so venerated and loved. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** God may call some of us to be martyrs for our faith in Christ. But for most of us our call is to be dry martyrs who bear testimony to the joy and truths of the laws of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ in the midst of daily challenges, contradictions, temptations and adversities which come our way as we faithfully follow the Lord Jesus. What attracts others to those who follow the truth of God and his son, Jesus Christ? When they see Christians loving their enemies, being joyful in suffering, patient in adversity, pardoning injuries, and showing comfort and compassion to the hopeless and the helpless. Jesus tells us that we do not need to fear our adversaries. He will give us sufficient grace, strength, and wisdom to face any trial and to answer any challenge to our faith. Are you eager to witness to the joy and freedom of the gospel today? In the coming year? At all times?



#### Friday, December 12 ~ Second Week in the Season of Advent Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Holy Gospel: Luke 1:26-38 The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

**Meditation:** How does Mary respond to the word of God delivered by the angel Gabriel? She knows she is hearing something beyond human capability. It will surely take a miracle which surpasses all that God has done previously. Her question, "how shall this be, since I have no husband" is not prompted by doubt or skepticism, but by wonderment! She is a true hearer of the Word and she immediately responds with faith and trust. Mary's prompt response of "yes" to the divine message is a model of faith for all believers. Mary believed God's promises even when they seemed impossible. She was full of grace because she trusted that what God said was true and would be fulfilled. She was willing and eager to do God's will, even if it seemed difficult or costly. Mary is the "mother of God" because God becomes incarnate when he takes on flesh in her womb. When we pray the Nicene Creed, we state our confession of faith in this great mystery: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he was born of the Virgin Mary, and was made man". God gives us grace and he expects us to respond with the same willingness, obedience, and heart-felt trust as Mary did. When God commands he also gives the help, strength, grace and means to respond. We can either yield to his grace or resist and go our own way. Do you believe in God's promises? Do you yield to his grace? If not, why not?

**Prayer:** O God, Father of mercies, who placed your people under the singular protection of your Son's most holy Mother, grant that all who invoke the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe, may seek with ever more lively faith the progress of peoples in the ways of justice and of peace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Contemplation:** Do you know the favor of the Lord? God lavishes his grace upon all who believe in him. He shows his favor to the lowly, to those who are humble and receptive to his word. We see the unfolding of God's plan of redemption in the events leading up to the Incarnation, the birth of the Messiah. The new era of salvation begins with the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary. This child to be born is conceived by the gracious action of the Holy Spirit upon Mary, who finds favor with God. As Eve was the mother of all humanity doomed to sin, now Mary becomes the mother of the new Adam who will father a new humanity by his grace (Romans 5:12-21). This child to be conceived in her womb is the fulfillment of all God's promises. He will be "great" and "Son of the Most High" and "King" (Luke 1:32-33), and his name shall be called "Jesus," which means "the Lord saves." "He will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The promise of an everlasting kingdom to the house of David (Isaiah 9:6-7) is fulfilled in the King to be born in Mary's womb. Let us prepare ourselves in these weeks of Advent to come and adore him.

Scripture passages (NAB translation) courtesy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Daily meditations and contemplations adapted from the Irish Jesuits' *Sacred Space* web page and *Biblical Medications for Ordinary Time* by Rev. Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P.; prayers are from *The Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing, 2011; information about saints, solemnities, feasts and memorials courtesy of the Catholic Culture web site.

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