

# LITURGICAL LIVING

Series 18: December 24-30

See AFC Website for Digital Version!

## December 24: Fourth Sunday of Advent- Love and Christmas Eve

### **The Nativity**

God always keeps His promises but he often does it in a way that we don't expect. The Jewish people waiting on the Messiah would have expected the Savior to be a conquering king but instead he arrived as a tiny baby. A vulnerable newborn, born in a stable and placed in a manger!

### **The Symbols of the Nativity**

- Jesus came to suffer and die to save us from our sins and to rise again to give us new life. There are numerous details in the Nativity that point to the events that would happen during Holy Week.
- Bethlehem means "House of Bread"- Jesus is the bread of life
- A manger is a feeding place- Jesus gives himself to eat in the Eucharist
- A donkey carried Mary; Jesus rides a humble donkey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday
- The infant was wrapped in swaddling cloths like the cloths used for binding lambs for sacrifice- Jesus is the Lamb of God and they are similar to the burial cloths as well
- The lantern Joseph carried is like the sanctuary lamp near the tabernacle
- St. Joseph cares and provides a place for Jesus; Joseph of Arimathea provides a new tomb for Jesus' burial
- The gift of myrrh from the wise men is like the burial spices brought by Mary Magdalene to anoint Jesus' body after His death
- The shepherds and the magi came to meet Jesus; Jesus came to save both Jews and Gentiles (non-Jewish people)
- The light of the star that guided people to find Jesus us like the sunrise on Easter morning



Prepare your Nativity Scene after Mass- Add in baby Jesus if you haven't yet!

[Nativity Scene Coloring Pages](#)

### **Nativity Scene Indulgence**

This Christmas season, Catholics can receive a plenary indulgence by praying in front of a nativity scene located in a Franciscan church. The indulgence will be available now through February 2, 2024, the Feast of the Presentation in the Temple of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember a plenary indulgence is a grace granted by the Catholic Church that removes the temporal punishment due to sin. To receive an indulgence, one must have a detachment from all sin, pray for the intentions of the Holy Father, and receive the Holy Eucharist and the sacrament of confession within 20 days of praying in front of a nativity scene. The Church is offering this indulgence to honor the 800th anniversary of the approval of the nativity scenes placed forward by St. Francis of Assisi.

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## **December 25: Christmas Day– Merry Christmas!**

Christmas day is just the beginning! The Christmas season is 12 days (The 12 Days of Christmas) and lasts until we celebrate the magi (wise men) traveling to worship Jesus on Epiphany- January 6th. During the Christmas season, we rejoice! The expectation and waiting is over, our savior is born! God is who He says He is and He does what He says He will do! Additionally, we actually celebrate Christmas for an octave- that is 8 days!

### **A Christmas Prayer**

*Jesus, Our Emmanuel, thank you for coming to be with us. With the angels, may glorify God, praising Him who is so generous and good to us. With the shepherds, may we rush to share the good news that the Messiah has come. With the magi, may we travel a new path, letting our lives be changed by meeting Christ. With John the Baptist, may we prepare the way for the Lord to be known in the world. With Joseph, may we be ready to welcome the Holy Family into our homes. With Mary, may we keep our eyes on the face of Jesus, letting His radiant light shine on us. With all the saints, may we accept the gift of our salvation and rejoice together in heaven one day. Jesus, let the love that we feel this Christmas fill every day of the year, transforming our hearts to be more and more like yours. Amen*

[Symbols of the Christmas Season Coloring Pages](#)

## **December 26: St. Stephen**

St. Stephen was the first martyr of the Church. He was a Deacon of the early Church and was martyred three years after Christ's crucifixion. It may seem odd to celebrate a martyr the day after we celebrate Christ's birth. The Church in her wisdom has done this to remind us that Jesus was born to be our Savior and to die for our sins. St. Stephen was also wrongly accused and forgave his executioners. He is an example of how to imitate Christ.

This is a great day to honor our Deacons! We are blessed with 3 in our AFC! Thank you Deacons Russell, Steve and Tony! Pray for them today and consider sending a card!

[St. Stephen Coloring Page](#)

## **Light of the World**

"This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all."

God uses light to help us come to know him. At the beginning of creation, He spoke light into being and it was good. Then throughout the Old Testament, God made himself present to his people through fire and light in the burning bush and in the pillar of fire in the desert.

God also uses light to announce the birth of His only begotten Son, Jesus. The Christmas star shined brighter than the rest through God's power and guided to him. Angels, shepherds and magi were all led to adore Jesus by the light of this star. Jesus brings light to the darkness of our world through the forgiveness of our sins. He even says, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).



*"Love is the light- and in the end, only light- that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working." -Pope Benedict XVI*