



## SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2015

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### Happy new year

Advent is the beginning of the church year, a time of renewal on this journey of faith. These four weeks provide a spiritual reminder that God is with us in all places, all peoples, and all events. God is present even in writing cards, baking cookies, shopping for gifts, and the many customs that help us honor the day of Christ's birth. Don't fight the busyness; enter it. And in doing so, take time, no matter what is on your mind or on your calendar, to see the presence of God in this day.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-28, 34-36 (3)*. "May the Lord . . . make you overflow with love for one another and for all."

## MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

FEAST OF ANDREW, APOSTLE

### Closer to you

It is the apostle Andrew who is credited with introducing his brother, Simon Peter, to Jesus. We can only imagine how the relationship between these men grew and changed through the three years of Jesus' public ministry. On this day, we give thanks for the life of Andrew who faithfully preached the Good News so that many, starting with his brother Peter, might know the works of the Lord. On this second day of Advent, write a note of thanks to someone who has drawn you closer to our Lord.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 10:9-18; Matthew 4:18-22 (684)*. "And how can they hear unless there is someone to preach?"

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1 ADVENT WEEKDAY

### Heal the sick

World AIDS Day is observed today to raise awareness of the disease, to remember those who have died from it, to help those suffering from it, and to take action in addressing it. Pope Francis urges Catholics to pray on this day that all the sick get access to care. Followers of Christ are called to be compassionate and fight ignorance and discrimination. What's more, there are many organizations that need help in combating the disease, such as Catholic Relief Services, which supports more than 180 HIV programs in 35 countries.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24 (176)*. "Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide."

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2 ADVENT WEEKDAY

### On top of the world

"We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop," Martin Luther King Jr. said in his last public speech. "I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land." In scripture, mountains are sacred places; the mountaintop is the epitome of the experiences that show us the glory of God. From that vantage point, everything fades away and we see like God—with a clarity that gives glory and can change the world.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 25:6-10a; Matthew 15:29-37 (177)*. "On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples."

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3 FEAST OF FRANCIS XAVIER, PRIEST

### Crossing paths

When Francis Xavier began rooming with Ignatius Loyola at the University of Paris in 1530, he couldn't have known that less than a century later they would be canonized together (along with Teresa of Avila, Philip Neri, and Isidore the Farmer). Francis also couldn't have known where the love of Christ would take him. From Paris, Rome, and the founding of the Jesuits, to India, Japan, and beyond, Francis Xavier spent his life spreading the Good News he first heard with Ignatius, crossing paths with people from far and wide and witnessing to the love of God that knows no bounds.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27 (178)*. "Trust in the Lord forever! For the LORD is an eternal Rock."

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

FEAST OF JOHN DAMASCENE, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

### A picture worth a thousand words

*Iconoclasm* is Greek for "breaker of icons." The word has its origins during the Byzantine Empire, when iconoclasts were fiercely trying to ban the use of religious images and icons. Saint John Damascene, a Syrian monk and priest (and later-named Doctor of the church), opposed the iconoclasts. He argued for the veneration, not worship, of sacred images—the distinction being crucial, according to him. The Second Council of Nicaea agreed with him and settled the matter once and for all. Appreciate the rich imagery that helps enliven your faith.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 29:17-24; Matthew 9:27-31 (179)*. "Those who err in spirit shall acquire understanding, and those who find fault shall receive instruction."

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5 ADVENT WEEKDAY

### Can't buy me love

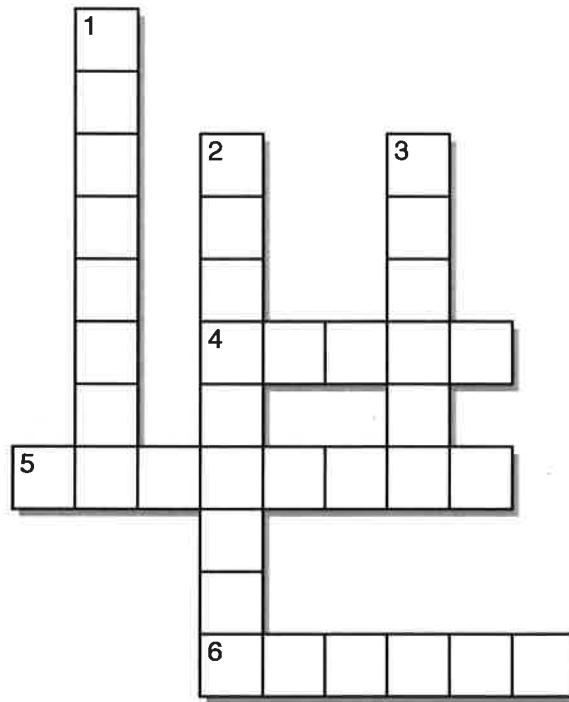
Aside from those who may be able to live off the land, in most modern societies we need money to live. We either have to earn it or have some arrangement that makes it available to us. That's the reality of living in a monetized economy. In Jesus' time there was less reliance on money than now, but it was still an important factor. Jesus wanted his disciples—and that includes us today—to give away freely the gifts that defy monetary value—loving attention, compassion, healing, wisdom. So go about your business, and do it well, but also remember to give away what is truly precious in life. Your reward will be manifold.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5a, 6-8 (180)*. "Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give."



Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time.

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**Across**

- 4. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with \_\_\_\_\_ and great glory.
- 5. Pray that you have the \_\_\_\_\_ to escape the tribulations that are imminent
- 6. Beware that your hearts do not become \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

**Down**

- 1. Be \_\_\_\_\_ at all times
- 2. "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, \_\_\_\_\_ by the roaring of the sea and the waves."
- 3. Today is the first Sunday of \_\_\_\_\_.