



TODAY'S READINGS: *Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Matthew 21:28-32 (188)*. "This son said in reply, No, I will not; but afterward he regretted it and went."

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16 ADVENT WEEKDAY**  
**Wait with joy**

While our Advent anticipation of Christmas lasts only a matter of weeks, a Mexican tradition commemorates the fact that Mary awaited Jesus' birth for nine months. The tradition is called Las Posadas, which means "the lodgings," and it lasts nine days—one day for each month of her pregnancy—ending on Christmas Eve. The nativity is acted out nightly as a procession to homes that serve as "inns," followed by singing, feasting, and breaking piñatas. You have a role in the Advent drama, too—making room for Christ in your heart and celebrating his coming arrival in your life.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Isaiah 45:6c-8, 18, 21c-25; Luke 7:18b-23 (189)*.  
*"Are you the one who is to come . . . ?"*

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17 ADVENT WEEKDAY**  
**Blessed are the merciful**

After settling into a village and serving the needs of the poor people around him, Gandhi was asked if he served others for purely humanitarian reasons. "Not at all," he replied. "I'm here to serve no one else but myself, to find my own self-realization through the service of these village folk." Far from being selfish, Gandhi's answer points to the heart of mercy: We are all called to be merciful. It is fundamental to our humanity. The more merciful we are, the more fully human we become. When we serve others, we serve ourselves. In this Year of Mercy, strive to be beacons of mercy to others. You will in turn feel the light of mercy shining in your own life.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17 (193)*.  
*"Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever."*

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18 ADVENT WEEKDAY**  
**A silence that speaks volumes**

Saint Joseph was a man of action. So much so that he doesn't utter a single word in the New Testament. Yet, it was by listening to the Holy Spirit, paying attention to his dreams, and acting with compassion and prudence that Joseph helped to protect Mary and usher Jesus safely into the world. He had the courage to believe. That belief created a home for God to dwell among us and gives us an example of the power that faithful actions have to transform our hearts and the world.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Jeremiah 23:5-8; Matthew 1:18-25 (194)*.  
*"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid."*

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19 ADVENT WEEKDAY**  
**Take your time**

John the Baptist's miraculous birth parallels that of Jesus: Elizabeth and Mary both carrying the flesh-and-blood fulfillment of a divine promise. It's another metaphor for Advent: pregnancy, a time of waiting. Waiting is not appealing to us who seem to be convinced that "I've been so busy" is a mark of success, that hurried anxiety is normal, and that trust and serenity are not particularly satisfying. Some things cannot be rushed. In Advent, "Be still and know that I am God," is a reminder to slow down, to carry, to love and nourish what God has planted in you. Are you pregnant with hope?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Luke 1:5-25 (195)*. "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord."

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2015**

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**Baptismal graces**

Baptism, the first of the seven sacraments, is "God's most beautiful and magnificent gift," according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. And what does this gift confer? Many things! It makes you a child of God, guided by the Holy Spirit. It enables faith, hope, and love. It allows goodness to grow. It makes you a member of the Body of Christ. It binds you in unity with all Christians. It consecrates you for worship and seals you to serve. It cleanses sin and marks you forever. Cherish the great gifts of grace that you received through your Baptism.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18 (9)*. " . . . he will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love."

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 14**

FEAST OF JOHN OF THE CROSS, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

**The soul remains unchained**

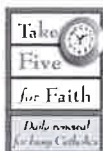
Church history is filled with some rough-and-tumble moments. John of the Cross was taken hostage and imprisoned—by members of his own religious order! John, beloved for his mysticism, was also a fairly stern reformer, and a group of his brother Carmelites opposed to his reform broke into his dwelling in Avila, Spain in 1577 and took him prisoner. He was kept in brutal conditions, with weekly public lashings, before he escaped. Yet somehow he managed to compose most of the great mystical poem "Spiritual Canticle" while in prison. Don't let adversity keep you from pursuing your most noble dreams. Let John of the Cross be your inspiration.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a; Matthew 21:23-27 (187)*. "Guide me in your truth and teach me."

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15 ADVENT WEEKDAY**

**The God of second chances**

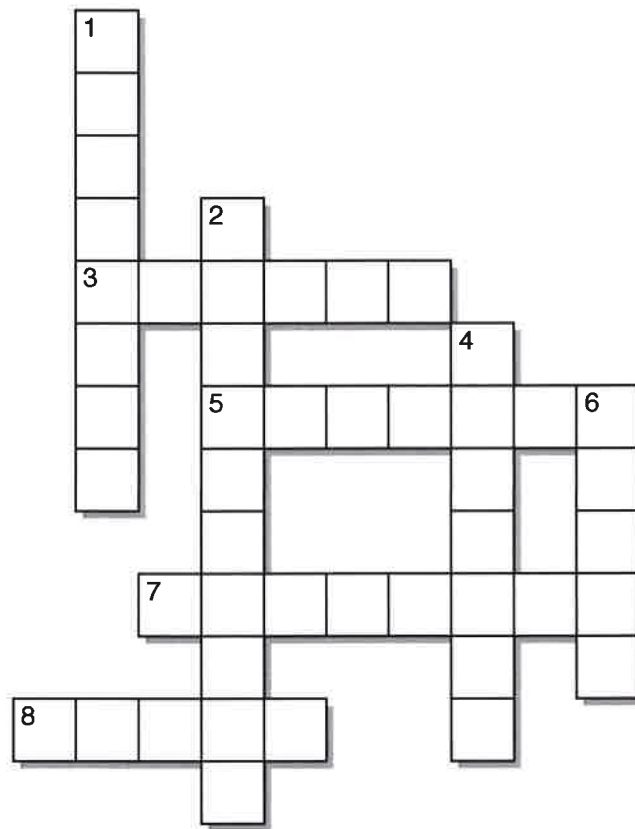
In this newly initiated Year of Mercy, Pope Francis invites us to spiritual renewal as we reacquaint ourselves with God's mercy. How appropriate, then, that on this Advent day we encounter the merciful God of second chances. God has given each of us the gift of conscience, to make decisions, to ponder what is right and when we err, to amend our ways. As we examine our decisions and actions of recent days, may we imagine the God of mercy inviting us to see any failures to love and to accept the gift of Divine mercy.



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

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## CatholicMom.com Gospel Activity – Luke 3:10–18



### Across

3. Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the \_\_\_\_.
5. "I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his \_\_\_\_."
7. "I am baptizing you with water, but one \_\_\_\_ than I is coming."
8. John the Baptist told the soldiers, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your \_\_\_\_."

### Down

1. "Exhorting them in many other ways, he \_\_\_\_ good news to the people."
2. Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is \_\_\_\_."
4. The crowds asked John the \_\_\_\_, "What should we do?"
6. "Whoever has two cloaks should \_\_\_\_ with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise."