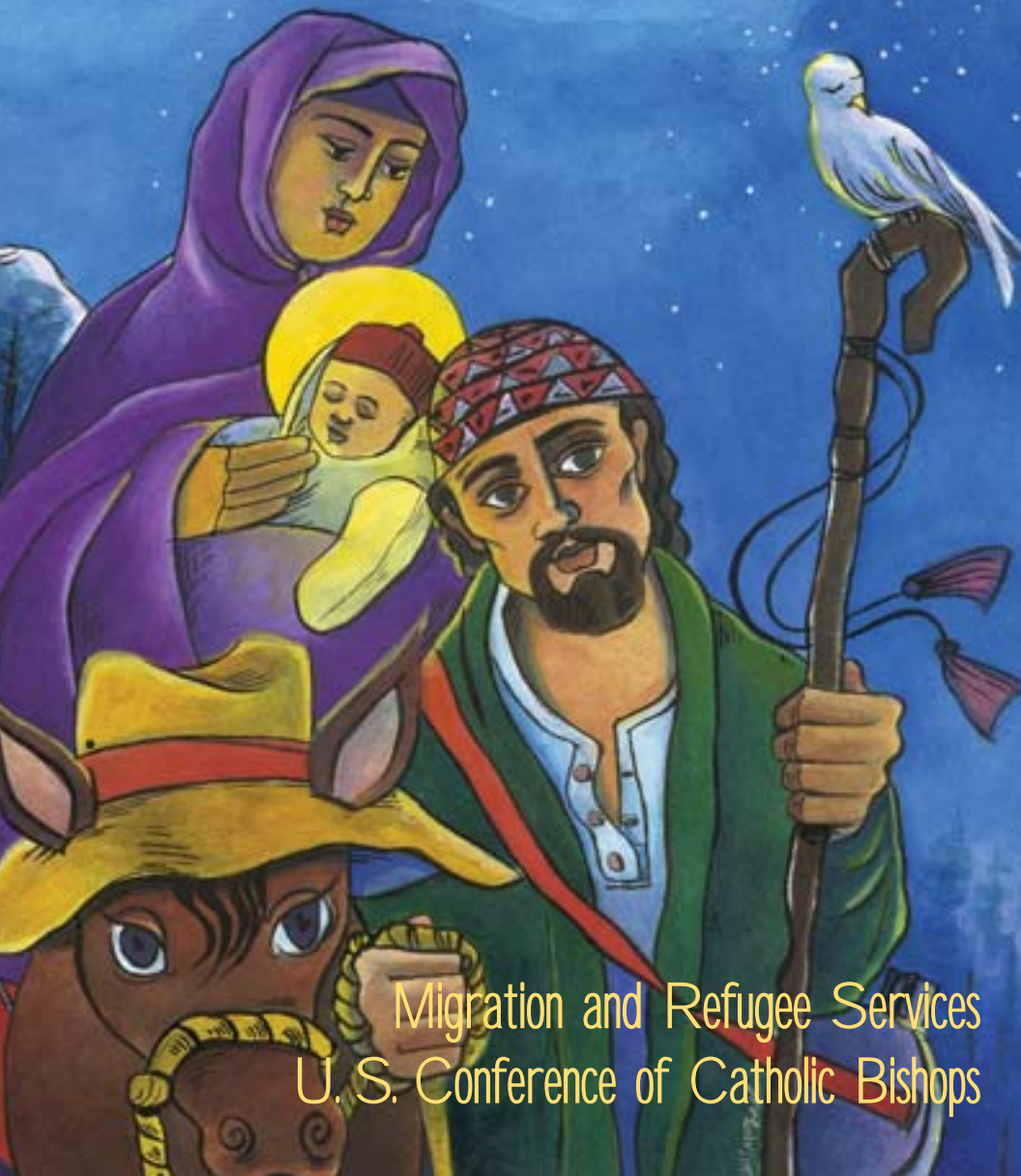


Advent Journey to Justice



Migration and Refugee Services
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops



Journey to Justice

With over 30 million refugees and displaced persons throughout the world, the sight of desperate men, women, and children fleeing death and destruction is too familiar. Most Americans usually see this vision of suffering from a distance, as we provide humanitarian relief in remote places and welcome thousands of newcomers to our country each year.

The ravages and displacement wrought by Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. Gulf Coast brought this reality home. Suddenly the “refugees” are our own, and it is we who experienced the generosity of over 50 countries around the world - aid to Americans who have lost everything: family members, friends, homes, and jobs.

It is with these somber images of loss and the need for hope, that we embark on our Advent journey, with the absolute confidence that the Light of Christ does indeed shine in our darkest moments. We all travel through Advent as migrants in a strange land, invited by the evangelist to “make a straight path” as we seek our true home with God, singing “Come Emmanuel” - God be with us.

Scripture throughout Advent reminds us that we cannot find God without seeking justice. The world's refugees and migrants are fitting companions for this journey. Their experiences help us to recognize that the journey to justice is a journey filled with faith, hope, and joy - even in the midst of loss and suffering. Their stories of courage and perseverance in many ways remind us of the journeys of the Holy Family, as they first sought shelter in the village of Bethlehem, and then fled to Egypt to save the life of the new born child, Jesus.

As we make this journey through Advent let us seek to “live justly, love goodness, and walk humbly with God.” (Micah6:8) Then, on Christmas morning, as we gaze towards the Nativity scene, we will recognize that the face of the Christ Child is the face of our neighbor, and that our God Emmanuel has indeed been with us on every step of our pilgrimage.

For additional copies call:202-541-3352 or email: [NMW @USCCB.org](mailto:NMW@USCCB.org)



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Advent Prayers for a Journey to Justice

Blessing of the Advent Wreath

Lord, send forth your blessings on this wreath and all those who gather around it. May its light always remind us that we are called to be a light to the world, and may our Advent observance strengthen us for the journey to your peaceable kingdom, where we may live together in justice.

Lighting the Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath should be kept in a central spot in the home, and may be lit for private or shared prayer throughout the day.

Leader: Do not be afraid. **Response:** Our God will come in justice.

Antiphons are provided for each week of Advent

Readings of the Day are provided for each week of Advent

Song: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Closing Prayer:

Behold, our God is coming; let us make straight his way. May the blind see this day, may the deaf hear this song. May the lame rise up and dance and the stranger find welcome in our land. Let the desert flow with living waters and parched lands bloom. Emmanuel, our God is with us! We shall not fear. *(See Isaiah 35)*

Morning Prayer

Lord, be with me as I wake from my sleep, for the night has passed and day draws near. I trust that the hour of our salvation is closer now than when I first accepted the faith. Let me bring the light of your justice into the darkness of our world, and let your love be revealed to those I meet, in all I say and do. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly. *(See Romans 13: 11-12)*

Evening Prayer

I turn my eyes to you O Lord, at the closing of the day, for you bring rest from the journey. Come Emmanuel, and guard me through this night, forgive me any wrongdoings I may have committed this day, strengthen me to better do your will tomorrow, and protect me from all evil. I give you praise Lord Jesus, for you have brought me safely to the close of this day, and in time I trust that you will lead me to my true home with you in heaven. *(See Psalm 121)*

Table Prayer

Lord, you fill our table with food for the journey; may we give to others as abundantly as you give to us. Bless all who have been part of bringing this food to our table: the farm worker who grows and harvests, the truck driver who carries the food to us, and all the hands who have shared in the preparation of this meal. Help us to hunger and thirst for justice, and to be mindful of all those not blessed with food tonight. Come Lord Jesus, be with us at our table.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse,
free
Thine own from Satan's
tyranny
From depths of Hell Thy
people save
And give them victory o'er
the grave
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Day-Spring,
come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent
here
Disperse the gloomy clouds
of night
And death's dark shadows
put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David,
come,
And open wide our heavenly
home;
Make safe the way that leads
on high,
And close the path to mis-
ery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.
(Traditional)

Be
watchful
and alert.
...See
with the
eyes of
Christ

1st Sunday of Advent

Antiphon:

When you restore us once more, God our savior, love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss. (*Ps 85: 5, 11*)

The story of the children of Sudan - the now famous “Lost Boys and Girls” is a saga of perseverance and faith in restoration. Over 26,000 children, some as young as five or six and orphaned by war, were forced to flee their villages to escape violence, abduction, rape, and death, during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s.

With no clear sense of where they would find safe haven, they wandered across a route of over a thousand miles. Many died along the way, killed by military forces or wild animals or simply succumbing to starvation, dehydration or exhaustion. They finally reached apparent safety in Ethiopia, only to have war break out there, forcing them back on the road again. At last they found refuge, if not comfort, in the refugee camp at Kakuma, Kenya.

Migration and Refugee Services (MRS), in partnership with dioceses across the country, has helped bring 3,600 of these children, now in their late teens, to the United States, where they have received assistance from foster families and unaccompanied minor programs. MRS is also working with the National Committee of Sudanese Youth to advocate with Congress on behalf of the thousands of Sudanese children and youth still left behind in refugee camps to be given admission for resettlement.

Those who have been resettled in the United States give witness to the fulfillment of God’s promise of justice and peace at last. As we begin our own Advent journey, we look to these children for encouragement and inspiration. We ask God for the grace to persevere in our quest for a just and peaceful world.

Action: Join the MRS Policy Network, so you can share in the essential work of public advocacy. Contact: MRS Migration and Refugee Policy at: 202-541-3208 mrspol@usccb.org



JRS

Week 1

Monday

Antiphon: [The peoples] shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again. (*Is 2: 4*)

Action: Take time today to read and reflect on the Church's teachings on war and peace. The text of the Bishop's document, "The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace" is available at: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/harvestexr.htm>

Tuesday

Antiphon: The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, and ...he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted. (*Is 11: 2,4*)

Action: The vision of the peaceable kingdom begins with each of us. If there is someone with whom you are in conflict, today would be a good day to seek reconciliation.

Wednesday

Antiphon: "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, ... I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way." (*Mt 15:32*)

Action: Make a donation of food or cash today to 2nd Harvest or your local food bank.

Thursday

Antiphon: Give thanks to the LORD, who is good, whose love endures forever. (*Ps 118: 1*)

Action: Set aside time during your prayer today to make an inventory of the gifts God has given you - health, family, security. As you offer prayers of thanks for these gifts, be mindful of those who do not share in them. Keep them in your prayers as well.

Friday

Antiphon: ...out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see. The lowly will ever find joy in the LORD, and the poor rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. (*Is 29:18-19*)

Action: Collect old eyeglasses from around the house and from friends. Donate them to an organization such as your local chapter of Lighthouse International, that provides vision services for the blind.

Saturday

Antiphon: Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give. (*Mt 10:8*)

Action: The true spirit of Christmas giving is captured in gifts that come from the heart instead. Plan homemade Christmas presents that you can give to family members.

Readings for the 1st Week of Advent

Sunday:

Is 63:16-17, 64:2-7

Ps 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19

1Cor 1:3-9

Mk 13:33-37

Monday:

Is 2:1-5

Ps 122: 1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Mt 8: 5-11

Tuesday:

Is 11:1-10

Ps 72: 1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

Lk 10:21-24

Wednesday:

Is 25: 6-10

Ps 23: 1-3, 3-4, 5-6

Mt 15: 29-37

Thursday:

Is 26:1-6

Ps 118: 8-9, 19-21, 25-27

Mt 7:21-29

Friday:

Is 29:17-24

Ps 27: 1,4,13-14

Mt 9:27-31

Saturday:

Is 30:19-21, 23-26

Ps 147: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Mt 9:35 - 10:1,5, 6-8

2nd Sunday of Advent

Antiphon:

A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD!
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! (Is 40:2)

Today the countries of the world are host to many millions of refugees. While the best response to this situation is long term solutions such as safe return to their homeland or voluntary resettlement in a new country, often such durable solutions prove impossible.

Too often, refugees are simply warehoused in camps or settlements for years or even generations, forced to rely on meager humanitarian aid. The 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees asserts that in order to protect the basic human dignity of refugees in such protracted situations, they should be given the same rights to work and acquire property that nationals of a country enjoy. Unfortunately, a majority of the current refugee receiving countries of the world are themselves impoverished and unable to ensure these rights.

Currently the United States resettles about 50,000 refugees a year. While this number is not insignificant, given the magnitude of the worldwide humanitarian crisis and the extent of our resources, we could do much more. Migration and Refugee Services works tirelessly to assure the successful resettlement of refugees here in the United States through community based church agencies.

Action: Help prepare the way for refugees to resettle in the United States. Write to the President and your Congressional representatives, asking that they support increased admissions to the United States, particularly for vulnerable populations of refugees, such as unaccompanied elderly refugees and refugee children; refugees with serious medical conditions; at-risk women; and refugees who have languished in camps for a long period of time.



Comfort
my people
...Make
straight
the way.

Week 2

Monday

Antiphon:

Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication. (Is 35: 4)

Action: Make a contribution for disaster relief through Catholic Charities or the Red Cross.

Tuesday

Antiphon:

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. (Is 40: 1)

Action: Collect toiletries and warm clothing such as socks, gloves, and stocking caps to donate to a local shelter.

Wednesday

Antiphon:

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. (Mt 11:28, 29)

Action: The Apostleship of the Sea ministers to seamen who are often burdened with loneliness, far away from home and family for the holidays. Greeting cards and prepaid phone cards are always a welcome donation.

Thursday

Antiphon:

For I am the LORD, your God, who grasps your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I will help you." (Is 41: 13)

Action: Contact your local Catholic Charities office to find out how you can assist a refugee family in resettling here and adjusting to their new culture.

Friday

Antiphon:

Whoever has ears ought to hear. (Mt 11:15)

Action: Go Christmas caroling through your neighborhood or at a local nursing home.

Saturday

Antiphon:

O LORD of hosts, restore us; let your face shine upon us, that we may be saved. (Ps 80: 20)

Action: Help your parish sponsor a multi-cultural Advent festival, celebrating the Christmas legends, music, traditions and foods of the various ethnic groups in your community.

Readings for the 2nd Week of Advent

Sunday:

Is 40:1-5, 9-11

Ps 85: 9-10, 11-12, 13-14

2 Pet 3:8-14

Mk 1:1-8

Monday:

Is 35:1-10

Ps 85: 9-10, 11-12, 13-14

Lk 5: 17 -26

Tuesday:

Is 40:1-11

Ps 96: 1-2, 3, 10, 11-12, 13

Mt 18: 12-14

Wednesday:

Is 40:25-31

Ps 103: 1-2, 3-4, 8, 10

Mt 11: 28-30

Thursday:

Is 41:13-21

Ps 145: 1,9,10-11, 12-13

Mt 11: 11-15

Friday:

Is 48:17 - 19

Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6

Mt 11: 16-19

Saturday:

Srch 48:1-4,9-11

Ps 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19

Mt 17:9, 10-13

Rejoice in
Justice.
Again,
I say
Rejoice!

3rd Sunday of Advent

Antiphon: The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD... (Is 61:1-2)

Try to imagine surviving torture, rape, and imprisonment as a political prisoner under a repressive regime. Finally, through some miracle you are released and decide to flee to a safe country. You have heard that in America human rights are protected, so you head there, trusting that once you reach that haven of liberty you will be able to find asylum. Instead, when you arrive in the U.S. with the forged documents you were forced to use to escape. You are immediately taken into custody and once again you find yourself in prison. Immigrant detention is a worldwide phenomenon, with detention of non-citizens in the United States administered by the Department of Homeland Security. Often the detainees are guilty of no crime other than being forced to flee imminent danger without proper travel documents. Many are asylum seekers or torture survivors, and as many as 5,000 minors (some as young as eight years old) are imprisoned each year. Deprived of constitutional protection, they may languish for months or even years awaiting processing and disposition of their cases.

In the United States the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC) partners with Jesuit Refugee Service in seeking to bring justice to immigration detainees by providing an array of legal and pastoral services.

Action: Bring glad tidings to immigrant detainees by sending Christmas cards with a word of welcome and comfort. If you are interested in volunteering in detention ministry, contact CLINIC at McCormick Pavilion, 415 Michigan Avenue NE, Washington D.C. 20017, call 202-635-2556 or email National@ClinicLegal.org. Contact Jesuit Refugee Service USA at 1616 P Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036-1420, or call 202-462-0400 or e-mail jrsusa@jesuit.org. For more information visit <http://www.clinic-legal.org> or <http://www.jrsusa.org>.



Week 3

Monday

Antiphon: Make known to me your ways, LORD; teach me the path of justice. (Ps 25: 4)

Action: Help migrant children learn by collecting school supplies for them and donating them through your local diocesan resettlement agency, usually Catholic Charities.

Tuesday

Antiphon: My soul will glory in the LORD that the poor may hear and be glad. (Ps 34: 3)

Action: Enjoy a simple Advent dinner of beans and rice tonight with your family. Use the savings from your normal meal to support a local hunger relief program or a national organization such as Bread for the World. <http://www.bread.org>

Wednesday

Antiphon: I will listen for the word of God; surely the LORD will proclaim peace... Love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss. (Ps 85:9,11)

Action: Listening to the spoken word is a pleasure many of our elderly miss out on. Take time today to call an elderly friend or family member -- or even better, visit a nursing home and spend some time reading aloud to the residents.

Thursday

Antiphon: My love shall never leave you nor my covenant of peace be shaken, says the LORD. (Is 54:10)

Action: Is there someone in your life with whom the peace is broken? Let today be the day you seek reconciliation as an act of Advent peacemaking.

Friday

Antiphon: Let not the foreigner say, "The LORD will surely exclude me from his people";...For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. (Is 56:3,7)

Action: Mary and Joseph faced exclusion as they sought shelter in Bethlehem. Join in the reenactment of their experience tonight by celebrating a Posada. See page 12 of this booklet for instructions.

December 17

Antiphon: May he save the poor and ... may he be like rain coming down upon the fields, that abundance may flourish in his days, great bounty. (Ps 72:4-7)

Action: Honor your loved ones and help children and families around the world become self-reliant, by giving a gift animal through Heifer International. Find them at <http://www.heifer.org>

Readings for the 3rd Week of Advent

(After Dec 17 see 4th Week)

Sunday:

Is 61:1-2, 10-11

Lk 1: 46-48, 49-50,53-54

I Ths 5:16-24

Jn 1: 6-8, 19-28

Monday:

Num 24: 2-7,15-17

Ps 25: 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Mt 21:23-27

Tuesday:

Zeph 3: 1-2, 9-13

Ps 34: 2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19-23

Mt 21:28-32

Wednesday:

Is 45: 6-8, 18, 21-25

Ps 85: 9-10, 11-12, 13-14

Lk 7:18-23

Thursday:

Is 54: 1-10

Ps 30: 2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13

Lk 7:24-30

Friday:

Is 56: 1-3, 6-8

Ps 67: 2-3, 5, 7-8

Jn 5: 33-36

December 17:

Gen 49: 2, 8-10

Ps 72: 1-2, 3-4, 7-8, 17

Mt 1:1-17

4th Sunday of Advent

Antiphon: "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. (Lk 1:30-31)"

With the holidays rapidly approaching, most American tables will soon be heavy with a bounty of holiday treats. As our homes fill with savory aromas that make our mouths water, it is good to give thanks not only to God for this abundance, but also to the farm workers who plant, cultivate, harvest and pack the fruits, vegetables, nuts, meat and poultry that will soon grace our tables.

In the United States today, over 80% of all farm workers are foreign born - almost 3 million workers. Without their contributions, American agriculture would not be able to provide the abundance and variety of foods that we enjoy in our groceries.

Because of the failure of Congress to pass legislation that would provide them full legal status, more than half of these workers remain in our country without documentation. This makes it difficult for them to ask for improved working conditions and leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and injury in the dangerous occupation of farm labor. The MRS Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees continues to provide services and advocate on their behalf.

Action: Take time today to prayerfully read and reflect upon the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter on migration, **Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity**. You may find the document on the web at <http://www.usccb.org/mrs/unity.shtml> or you may order a copy from: USCCB Publishing, United States Conference Catholic Bishops, 3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017-1194; By phone: (800) 235-8722.

Justice
Shall
Flourish

USCCB/MRS



Week 4

December 18:

Antiphon: Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up a righteous shoot to David; As king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall do what is just and right in the land. (*Jer 23:5*)

Action: Pray today for our national and international leaders, that they might govern wisely and do what is just.

December 19:

Antiphon: I will speak of the mighty works of the Lord; O GOD, I will tell of your singular justice. (*Ps 71:16*)

Action: Little works of justice can speak mightily. Make a point today to spend some time with someone who is alone and neglected during this holy season.

December 20:

Antiphon: The Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. (*Is 7:14*)

Action: Instead of exchanging gifts at work, suggest holding a baby shower in honor of the child Jesus, and donate the gifts to your diocesan resettlement office or your local crisis pregnancy center.

December 21:

Antiphon: For see, the winter is past, the rains are over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of pruning the vines has come, and the song of the dove is heard in our land. (*Song 2:11-12*)

Action: During the bitter cold of winter, it can be hard for the homeless to believe in the promise of spring. Contribute blankets and warm clothes and coats to a local shelter.

December 22:

Antiphon: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has...lifted up the lowly. (*Lk 1:46-47, 52*)

Action: Will you be traveling by plane this holiday? Airport chaplains provide pastoral care for those on the move. Take a moment to visit the airport chapel, and rejoice with Mary in the greatness of the Lord.

December 23:

Antiphon: Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me. (*Mal 3:1*)

Action: How has your Advent journey prepared the way for the Christ Child? Spend some time today reflecting on the presence of Jesus in your life.

December 24:

Antiphon: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people. (*Lk 1:68*)

Action: Before turning into bed tonight, take a few minutes to retell the Christmas story of redemption with your family, and share where your Advent journey has led you.

Readings for the 4th Week of Advent

Sunday:

2 Sam 7: 1-5, 8-12, 14, 16

Ps 89: 2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

Rom: 16: 25-27

Lk 1: 26-38

December 18:

Jer 23: 5-8

Ps 72: 1-2, 12-13, 18-19

Mt 1: 18-25

December 19:

Judg 13: 2-7, 24-25

Ps 71: 3-4, 5-6, 16-17

Lk 1: 5-25

December 20:

Is 7: 10-14

Ps 24: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Lk 1: 26-38

December 21:

Song 2: 8-14

Ps 33: 2-3, 11-12, 20-21

Lk 1: 39-45

December 22:

I Sam 1: 24-28

I Sam 2: 1, 4-5, 6-7, 8

Lk 1: 46-56

December 23:

Mal 3: 1-4, 23-24

Ps 25: 4-5, 8-9, 10, 14

Lk 1: 57-66

December 24

2 Sam 7: 1-5, 8-12, 14, 16

Ps 89: 2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

Rom 16: 25-27

Lk 1: 67-79

He is
called
Wonderful,
Counselor,
Almighty
God,
the
everlasting
Prince of
Peace

Christmas

Antiphon: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. (Is 9:1)

The long awaited Messiah has at last arrived, and he is all that we had hoped for and not at all what we had expected. We want a mighty leader and we find a little child. We want a God who is rich and regal, and we find God in a cow crib, swaddled in rags. We seek a God who will solve all our problems, and instead we find a God who invites us to set the path straight ourselves. We expect a God who is fierce and demanding and we discover a God who is gentle and loving.

As we gaze at the image of the infant in the crèche, we discover the face of all those we have served - or failed to serve - along the way of our Advent passage. It is their light that illuminates our darkness on the path to Christ. This is the God that comes, riding on a donkey, one with the poor. Are we prepared to welcome him?

If we have lived justly, loved generously, and walked humbly than we are indeed prepared for this Christmas feast. And to whatever degree we have failed, we have the light of the migrants who have gone before us, to show us the way. The darkness will not overcome us, for Christ is truly with us all.

Action: Begin a collection of Nativity sets from around the world, to celebrate the beauty and diversity of the Christ experience.



USCCB/MRS

Epiphany

Antiphon: Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. (*Mt 2:13-14*)

And so the Holy Family became refugees, fleeing the horror of the infanticide perpetrated by King Herod. If we were to encounter them today, would we reach out to welcome them into our land and offer them hospitality, or would we shun them in fear? Has anxiety hardened our hearts, or would we be willing to risk our own security to help someone at even greater risk than ourselves?

How far we have progressed on our own journey to justice will determine our answer. Fortunately, we are not alone on the path, for Emmanuel -our God - is with us. With God as our guide all things are possible. Let us begin anew our journey to our true home, trusting that like the magi, we will find that which we seek.

National Migration Week

Since 1980, at the urging of the U.S. Catholic bishops, Migration and Refugee Services has sponsored the annual observance of National Migration Week, in order to promote multicultural understanding, awareness of migrant and refugee issues, and to encourage institutions and individuals to extend welcome to newcomers.

Traditionally this observance is celebrated during the week following Epiphany, recognizing that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, because of their own experiences, are apt patrons of refugees and migrants throughout the world.

We encourage you to participate in the national observance in January, while realizing that many may need to choose another date that is more convenient for their school or parish. We appreciate your solidarity with this mission to extend hospitality to newcomers in our midst.

Action: Seek out and welcome newcomers in your parish, school, and neighborhood, seeking to find Christ in each person we meet. Help plan and sponsor a multi-cultural festival at your school or parish.

Readings for the Christmas Season:

Christmas Midnight Mass:

Is 9: 1-6
Ps 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13
Tit 2: 11-14
Lk 2: 1-14

December 26: St. Stephen

Acts 6: 8-10; 7: 54-59
Ps 31:3-4, 6, 8, 16, 17
Mt 10: 17-22

December 27: St. John

I Jn 1: 1-4
Ps 97: 1-2, 5-6, 11-12
Jn 20: 1-8

December 28: Holy Innocents

I Jn 1: 5-22
Ps 124: 2-3, 4-5, 7-8
Mt 2:13-18

December 29:

I Jn 2:3-11
Ps 96:1-2, 2-3, 5-6
Lk 2: 22-35

December 30:

I Jn 2:12-17
Ps 96:7-8, 8-9, 10
Lk 2: 36-40

December 31:

I Jn 2:18-21
Ps 96:1-2, 11-12, 13
Jn 1: 1-18

January 1: Solemnity of Mary

Num 6: 22-27
Ps 67: 2-3, 5, 6, 8
Gal 4: 4-7
Lk 2:16-21

Epiphany:

Is 60:1-6
Ps 72: 1-2, 7-8, 10
Eph 3: 2-3, 5-6
Mt 2: 1-12

Advent Feasts and Traditions

The Advent Wreath

The round wreath of evergreens represents the world and the promise of new life in the midst of winter. The wreath contains three purple candles, reminding us to turn our hearts to God, and one rose candle which symbolizes the joy of the season. One additional candle is lit on each of the four Sundays of Advent (with the pink one lit on the third Sunday.) In many European countries an apple symbolizing Adam's fall is placed in the center.

St. Nicholas Day - December 6

The origin of modern traditions such as Santa Claus and Christmas stockings has its roots in the traditional celebration of Saint Nicholas Day in Northern Europe. Nicholas was a bishop famous for his generosity to the poor and his love of children. Today children still put a shoe outside their bedroom doors on the eve of Saint Nicholas Day, and receive candy, coins or small gifts, reminiscent of the the life-saving dowries the saint provided.

Feast of the Immaculate Conception - December 8

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe- December 12

Mary, as the mother of Jesus, is central to the observance of Advent. The readings of the season celebrate her visit from the angel Gabriel, her visit with her cousin Elizabeth, her journey to Bethlehem, and finally, the birth of her son, Jesus. Advent enjoys two major feasts in her honor: the Immaculate Conception, which celebrates Mary's eternal freedom from sin, and Our Lady of Guadalupe, which remembers her appearance to the peasant, Juan Diego. These are excellent occasions to follow Mary's example and reach out to others less fortunate than ourselves.

St. Lucy Day

St. Lucy was a young girl who was martyred for her faith in the 4th century. According to tradition, each night she would bring food to the Christians hiding in the catacombs. In order to keep her hands free, she wore candles in her hair. In Sweden on St. Lucy's day, the youngest girl in the family wears a crown with candles or small electric lights as she brings sweet rolls to her family for breakfast.

The Posada

Posada (meaning shelter) is celebrated December 16-24 throughout the Spanish-speaking world. It reenacts Mary and Joseph's search for shelter on the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. On each of the nine days the participants travel from house to house, taking the role of pilgrims seeking lodging. Those inside the homes are innkeepers who refuse them. At the last home all are invited in for prayer and refreshments.

Simbang Gabi

Simbang Gabi is the novena of dawn masses traditionally held in the Philippines beginning December 16. Church bells are rung to call the faithful to prayer; and in some provinces, brass bands play traditional Christmas music. At midnight on December 24 the Misa de Gallo (Mass of the Rooster) is celebrated to welcome the birth of Jesus.

Readings for Advent Feast Days

December 6, St. Nicholas Day

Is 6:1-8

Ps 40: 2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10, 11

Lk 10:1-9

December 8, Feast of the Immaculate Conception

Gen 3: 9-15, 20

Ps 98: 1, 2-3, 3-4

Eph 1: 3-6, 11-12

Lk 1:26-38

December 12, Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe:

Rev 11: 19; 12:1-6,10

Judt:13: 18-19

Lk 1: 39-47

December 13 St. Lucy Day:

2Cor 10: 17- 11:2

Ps 31: 3-4,6,8,16-17

Mt 25:1-13

December 16-24 The Posada

Simbang Gabi:

See readings for the
4th Week of Advent