

# Advent Path 2024

## WORKBOOK



The angel went to her and said,  
Greetings,  
you who are highly favored!  
The Lord is with you."  
Luk 1:28

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# Introductory Notes

Welcome to Advent Path 2024.

Advent offers us the opportunity to engage anew in the Church's liturgical calendar as a source of inspiration and spiritual exploration. We once again begin the ancient cycle of the Church Year and return to prayers that have been crafted to share communal insights of our foremothers and forefathers who walked this path before us and as well as some who are walking the path with us now.

This year you are invited to reflect on and respond to some of these focusing prayers (called "collects") and have the opportunity to read and reflect on some key prayers and stories for the day. And then engage in an exercise to express your thoughts and insights each date of Advent.

## THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT



# First Sunday of Advent

December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

## The Collect for the First Sunday of Advent<sup>1</sup>

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemorations<sup>2</sup>

### **Nicholas Ferrar**

*Deacon, 1637*

Nicholas Ferrar was the founder of a religious community at Little Gidding, Huntingdonshire, England, which existed from 1626 to 1646. His family had been prominent in the affairs of the Virginia Company, but when that company was dissolved, he took deacon's orders and retired to the country.

At Little Gidding, his immediate family and a few friends and servants gave themselves wholly to religious observance. They restored the derelict church near the manor house, became responsible for services there, taught many of the local children, and looked after the health and well-being of the people of the neighborhood. A regular round of prayer according to the Book of Common Prayer was observed, along with the daily recital of the whole of the psalter. The members of the community became widely known for fasting, private prayer and meditation, and for writing stories and books illustrating themes of Christian faith and morality. The community also prepared "harmonies" of the gospels, one of which was presented to King Charles I by the Ferrar family.

<sup>1</sup> The Sunday collects used throughout this document are from *The Book of Common Prayer, 1979* <sup>2</sup> Stories and collects related to the daily commemorations used throughout this document are from *Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2022, Conforming to General Convention 2022*. Church Publishing, New York.

The community did not long survive the death of Nicholas Ferrar. However, the memory of the religious life at Little Gidding was kept alive, principally through Izaak Walton's description in his *Life of George Herbert*: "He (Ferrar) and his family . . . did most of them keep Lent and all Ember-weeks strictly, both in fasting and using all those mortifications and prayers that the church hath appointed . . . and he and they did the like constantly on Fridays, and on the vigils or eves appointed to be fasted before the Saints' days; and this frugality and abstinence turned to the relief of the poor . . ."

The community became an important symbol for many Anglicans when religious orders began to be revived. Its life inspired T. S. Eliot, and he gave the title, "Little Gidding," to the last of his *Four Quartets*, one of the great religious poems of the twentieth century.

#### The Collect

Lord God, make us worthy of your perfect love; that, with your deacon Nicholas Ferrar and his household, we may rule ourselves according to your Word, and serve you with our whole heart; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

#### **Charles de Foucauld,**

##### *Monastic and Martyr, 1916*

Charles de Foucauld, sometimes referred to as Brother Charles of Jesus, is often credited with the revival of desert spirituality in the early twentieth century and was the inspiration behind the founding of new religious communities for men and women.

Born in Strasbourg, France in 1858, Charles was orphaned at age six and raised by his grandparents. As a young man, he lost his faith and, in spite of the discipline of his grandfather, whom he deeply respected, Charles lived a life that was a mix of laxity and stubbornness. After training as a career army officer, Charles served in Algeria and Tunisia until he resigned his commission in 1882. He then became an explorer in Morocco. There he encountered devout Muslims, whose practice of their faith inspired Charles to begin a search for the faith that was his own. Upon returning to France, he continued his quest, and, in 1886, at age 28, re-discovered God and made a new commitment that would guide the rest of his life.

Charles entered the Cistercian Order of Strict Observance, the Trappists, first in France and then in Syria, for a commitment of seven years. He then went to Nazareth and lived as a servant to a convent of the Poor Clares. It was there that he began to develop a life of solitude, prayer, and adoration. The Poor Clares saw in him a vocation to the priesthood, encouraged him in spite of his reluctance, and he was ordained a priest in 1901.

Charles then moved to the Sahara, where his desire was to live a “ministry of presence” among “the furthest removed, the most abandoned.” He believed his call was to live among those whose faith and culture differed from his own. To witness to Christ among them was not to be eloquent preaching or missionary demands, but “to shout the Gospel with his life.” Charles sought to live so that those who saw his life would ask, “If such is the servant, what must the Master be like?”

Charles lived among the Tuareg people, learning their language and culture as he ministered to them. He was shot to death outside his refuge by bandits on December 1, 1916. He is considered a martyr by the Roman Catholic Church and was beatified in 2005.

#### The Collect

Loving God, help us to know you wherever we find you and seek to serve you in all people, that with your servant Charles de Foucauld, we may be faithful even unto death; through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*



## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day: • Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples: • Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3-sentence insight.
- Draw or paint your inspiration
- Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group • Something else ...

## Monday in the First Week of Advent

Monday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>

### The Collect for the First Sunday of Advent

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.  
*Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemorations

**Channing Moore Williams,**  
*Bishop and Missionary, 1910*

Channing Moore Williams, a farmer's son, was born in Richmond, Virginia, on July 18, 1829, and was brought up in straitened circumstances by his widowed mother. He attended the College of William and Mary and the Virginia Theological Seminary.

Ordained as a deacon in 1855, he offered himself for work in China, where he was ordained as a priest in 1857. Two years later, he was sent to Japan and opened work in Nagasaki. His first convert was baptized in 1866, the year that he was chosen as bishop for both China and Japan.

After 1868, he decided to concentrate all his work in Japan, following the revolution that opened the country to renewed contact with the western world. Relieved of his responsibility for China in 1874, Williams made his base at Yedo (now Tokyo), where he founded a divinity school, later to become St. Paul's University. At a synod in 1887, he helped bring together the English and American Anglican missions to form the Nippon Sei Ko Kai, the Holy Catholic Church of Japan, when the church there numbered fewer than a thousand communicants.

Williams translated parts of the Prayer Book into Japanese, and he was a close friend and warm supporter of Bishop Schereschewsky, his successor in China, in the latter's arduous work of translating the Bible into Chinese.

After resigning his jurisdiction in 1889, Bishop Williams stayed in Japan to help his successor there, Bishop John McKim, who was consecrated in 1893. Williams lived in Kyoto and continued to work in the opening of new mission stations until his return to the United States in 1908. He died in Richmond, Virginia, on December 2, 1910.

## The Collect

O God, who in your providence called Channing Moore Williams to the ministry of this church and gave him the gifts and the perseverance to preach the Gospel in new lands: Inspire us, by his example and prayers, to commit our talents to your service, confident that you uphold those whom you call; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  
  - Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
    - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
    - Draw or paint your inspiration
    - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
    - Something else ...
-

## Tuesday in the First Week of Advent

Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>

### The Collect for the First Sunday of Advent

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

**Francis Xavier,**

*Priest and Missionary, 1552.*

Francis Xavier was one of the great missionaries of the church. Born in Spain in 1506, he studied locally before taking up university studies in Paris in 1526, receiving a master's degree in 1530. While in Paris he met Ignatius Loyola and, with a small group of companions, they bound themselves together for the service of God on August 15, 1534, the beginning of what would later become the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits. After further theological study, Francis and Ignatius were ordained together in 1537.

Francis went to India as the nuncio to the east for King John III of Portugal, arriving at Goa on the western coast in 1542. He later moved south and traveled to Sri Lanka and the Molucca Islands, now Indonesia. For seven years, he labored among the people there, winning many converts to the faith, baptizing, teaching, and trying to ease the suffering of the people. His efforts were not always well received. New Christians were often abused and enslaved and sometimes killed.

In 1549, Francis moved on to the southern region of Japan and immediately set about learning the language and preparing a catechism to support his missionary efforts. In time, he moved north to the imperial capital, Kyoto, and made an effort to see the Mikado, the Japanese emperor. Civil strife and localized resistance made Francis' Japanese efforts difficult, but he came away from the experience with a deep sense of respect for the people and their culture. After returning to India in 1551, Francis was appointed the Jesuit Provincial for India, but he was not satisfied only to maintain the work already begun. He immediately set out for China, at

the time closed to foreigners, in hopes of launching new missionary efforts there. He set up camp near the mouth of the Canton River in August 1552, hoping to secure passage into the country. Later that year he took ill and died, at age forty-six, on December 3, 1552. His remains were later transferred back to Goa, India.

### The Collect

God of all nations; Raise up in this and every land, evangelists and heralds of your kingdom, that like your servant Francis Xavier we may proclaim the unsearchable riches of our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  
  - Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
    - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
    - Draw or paint your inspiration
    - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
    - Something else ...
-

## Wednesday in the First Week of Advent

Wednesday, December 4<sup>th</sup> –

### The Collect for the First Sunday of Advent

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

John of Damascus,

*Priest and Theologian, c. 760*

John of Damascus was the son of a Christian government official for the Muslim Caliph of Damascus. At an early age, he succeeded his father in this office, but in about 715, he entered the monastery of St. Sabas near Jerusalem. There he devoted himself to an ascetic life and to the study of theology.

In the same year that John was ordained as a priest, 726, the Byzantine Emperor Leo the Isaurian published his first edict against the Holy Images, which signaled the formal outbreak of the iconoclastic controversy. The edict forbade the veneration of sacred images, or icons, and ordered their destruction. In 729–730, John wrote three “Apologies (or Treatises) against the Iconoclasts and in Defense of the Holy Images.” He argued that such images were not idols, for they represented neither false gods nor even the true God in his divine nature; but only saints, or our Lord as a man. He further distinguished between the respect, or veneration (*proskynesis*), that is properly paid to created beings, and the worship (*latreia*), that is properly given only to God.

The Seventh Ecumenical Council, in 787, decreed that crosses, icons, the book of the gospels, and other sacred objects were to receive reverence or veneration, expressed by salutations, incense, and lights, because the honor paid to them passed on to that which they represented. True worship (*latreia*), however, was due to God alone.

John also wrote a great synthesis of theology, *The Fount of Knowledge*, of which the last part, “On the Orthodox Faith,” is best known. To Anglicans, John is perhaps best known as the author of the Easter hymns “Thou hallowed chosen morn of praise” (*The Hymnal* 1982, #198), “Come, ye faithful, raise the strain” (#199; #200), and “The day of resurrection” (#210).

## The Collect

Confirm our minds, O Lord, in the mysteries of the true faith, set forth with power by your servant John of Damascus; that we, with him, confessing Jesus to be true God and true Man and singing the praises of the risen Lord, may, by the power of the resurrection, attain to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

## Thursday in the First Week of Advent

Thursday December 5<sup>th</sup>

### The Collect for the First Sunday of Advent

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

Clement of Alexandria,

*Priest and Theologian*, c. 210

Clement was born in the middle of the second century. He was a cultured Greek philosopher who sought truth in many schools until he met Pantaenus, founder of the Christian catechetical school at Alexandria in Egypt. Clement succeeded Pantaenus as head of that school in about 190, and was for many years an apologist for the Christian faith to both pagans and Christians. His learning and allegorical exegesis of the Bible helped to commend Christianity to the intellectual circles of Alexandria. His work prepared the way for his pupil Origen, the most eminent theologian of early Greek Christianity. During the persecution under the Emperor Severus in 202, he left Alexandria, possibly for Jerusalem or Cappadocia. The exact time and place of his death are unknown.

Clement lived in the age of "Gnosticism," a comprehensive term for many theories or ways of salvation current in the second and third centuries, all emphasizing "Gnosis" or "knowledge." Salvation, for Gnostics, was to be had through a secret and rather esoteric knowledge accessible only to a few. It was salvation from the world, rather than the salvation of the world. Clement asserted that there was a true Christian Gnosis, to be found in the Scriptures, available to all. Although his understanding of this Christian knowledge—ultimately knowledge of Christ—incorporated several tenets of Greek philosophy that the Gnostics also held, Clement dissented from their negative view of the world and their denial of the role of free will.

Among Clement's writings are the hymns "Sunset to sunrise changes now" (*The Hymnal* 1982, #163) and "Jesus our mighty Lord" (#478).



## The Collect

O God of unsearchable wisdom, you gave your servant Clement grace to understand and teach the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, the source of all truth: Grant to your church the same grace to discern your Word wherever truth is found; through Jesus Christ our unfailing light, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

## Friday in the First Week of Advent

Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>

The Collect for the First Sunday of Advent

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.  
*Amen.*

The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

**Nicholas of Myra,**

*Bishop, c. 342*

Very little is known about the life of Nicholas, except that he suffered torture and imprisonment during the persecution under the Emperor Diocletian. It is probable that he was one of the bishops attending the Council of Nicaea in 325. According to popular tradition, he famously lost his temper at the council and punched the heretic Arius, but this story dates to more than 1,000 years after his death and is almost certainly apocryphal.

He was honored as a saint in Constantinople in the sixth century by the Emperor Justinian. His veneration also became immensely popular in the West after the supposed removal of his body to Bari, Italy, in the late eleventh century. In England, almost 400 churches were dedicated to him.

Nicholas is famed as the traditional patron of seafarers and sailors, and, more especially, of children. Many of the accounts of Nicholas' life recount his habit of secret gift-giving to those in need, a tradition that many Christians have felt inspired to continue in his honor.

As a bearer of gifts to children, his name was brought to America by the Dutch colonists in New York, from whom he is popularly known as Santa Claus.

## The Collect

Grant, Almighty God, that your church may be so inspired by the example of your servant Nicholas of Myra, that it may never cease to work for the welfare of children, the safety of sailors, the relief of the poor, and the help of those tossed by tempests of doubt or grief; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

## Saturday in the First Week of Advent

Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup>

### The Collect for the First Sunday of Advent

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

#### **Ambrose of Milan,**

*Bishop and Theologian, 397*

Ambrose was the son of a Roman governor in Gaul, and in 373, he himself became governor in Upper Italy. Though brought up in a Christian family, Ambrose had not been baptized. He became involved in the election of a Bishop of Milan only as mediator between the battling factions of Arians and Nicene Christians. The election was important, because the victorious party would control the powerful see of Milan.

Ambrose exhorted the nearly riotous mob to keep the peace and to obey the law. Suddenly both sides raised the cry, "Ambrose shall be our bishop!" He protested, but the people persisted. Hastily baptized, he was ordained as a bishop on December 7, 373.

Ambrose rapidly won renown as a defender of orthodoxy against Arianism and as a statesman of the church. He was also a skillful hymnodist. He introduced antiphonal chanting to enrich the liturgy and wrote straightforward, practical discourses to educate his people in such matters of doctrine as Baptism, the Trinity, the Eucharist, and the Person of Christ. His persuasive preaching was an important factor in the conversion of Augustine of Hippo. Ambrose did not fear to rebuke emperors, including the hot-headed Theodosius, whom he forced to do public penance for the slaughter of several thousand citizens of Thessalonica. He also preached passionate sermons in defense of the poor and the needy. In a homily on Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21) he declares: "The story of Naboth is an old one, but it is repeated every day. Who among the rich does not daily covet the goods of others? Who among the wealthy does not make every effort to drive the poor person out from his little plot

and turn the needy out from the boundaries of his ancestral fields? Who is satisfied with what is his? What rich person's thoughts are not preoccupied with his neighbor's possessions? It is not one Ahab who was born, therefore, but—what is worse—Ahab is born every day, and never does he die as far as this world is concerned. For each one who dies there are many others who rise up; there are more who steal property than who lose it . . . How far, O rich, will you extend your mad greed?" A meditation attributed to him includes these words: "Lord Jesus Christ, you are for me medicine when I am sick; you are my strength when I need help; you are life itself when I fear death; you are the way when I long for heaven; you are light when all is dark; you are my food when I need nourishment." Among hymns attributed to Ambrose are "The eternal gifts of Christ the King" (*The Hymnal* 1982, #233; #234), "O Splendor of God's glory bright" (#5), and a series of hymns for the daily office.

## The Collect

O God, who gave your servant Ambrose grace eloquently to proclaim your righteousness in the great congregation and fearlessly to bear reproach for the honor of your Name: Mercifully grant to all bishops and pastors such excellence in preaching and faithfulness in ministering your Word, that your people may be partakers with them of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

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## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  
  - Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
    - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
    - Draw or paint your inspiration
    - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
    - Something else ...
-

## THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT



## Second Sunday of Advent

December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemorations

There are no commemorations on this day.

### Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

## Monday in the Second Week of Advent

December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

There are no commemorations on this day.

### Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...



## Tuesday in the Second Week of Advent

December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

There are no commemorations on this day.

### Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

## Wednesday in the Second Week of Advent

December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

#### **[Frederick Howden, Jr.]**

##### *Priest and Chaplain of the Armed Forces, 1942*

Episcopal military chaplains care for their flock of men, women, and children stationed in countries around the world, as well as at bases in the United States. In times of battle, chaplains often accompany their units—only without any weapons—in order to provide pastoral care, sacramental rites, and the comfort of prayer under extreme stress. They ably administer rites and logistical assistance in field hospitals and veterans centers, National Guard postings, and frequently a parish at home. Many Episcopal chaplains currently serve the Armed Forces of the United States.

The ministry of the Rev. Frederick “Ted” Howden, Jr., stands out among many heroic chaplaincies. He was twelve years old when his father was consecrated bishop of the Missionary District of New Mexico and Southwest Texas. His father ordained him deacon at St. Clement’s Church in El Paso, Texas, on June 10, 1928, and priest, also at St. Clement’s, on January 13, 1929. Ted Howden immediately began to serve several congregations in New Mexico, traveling great distances between them.

When World War II broke out, Howden held the rank of captain in the New Mexico State Guard, a unit predominantly made up of Hispanic, Latino, and Native Americans. He was the chaplain to the 200th Coast Artillery when it was federalized and sent to the Philippines in September 1941. He

walked across the hills, from battery to battery, holding open-air services and distributing candy, soap, and cigarettes he had foraged for the troops.

When Bataan and Corregidor fell to Japanese forces in April and May 1942, Howden and his fellow soldiers were made prisoners of war and were forced to endure the Bataan Death March, during which some 18,000 died. During imprisonment in several prison camps, his heroism and faith were always apparent through the care he provided. Howden often gave his own food rations to others, insisting that they needed it more. He died of dysentery and starvation-induced pellagra on December 11, 1942, and was buried by his men in a small cemetery in the jungle of Mindanao, about a mile from the camp. His family would not learn of his fate until June 1943. After the war, in 1948, his remains were reinterred in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Howden has been commemorated in the Diocese of the Rio Grande, particularly by veterans of the armed forces and their families who have faced physical, spiritual, and emotional harm; disabling injuries; and death itself while in the service of our country. Recalling his self-sacrifice, the Church honors all who answer our Lord's call to chaplaincy in the world's most dangerous places.

### The Collect

Almighty God, our sure defense: We give you thanks for your servant[s] Frederick Howden, [N.,] and all military chaplains who provided comfort and inspiration in time of battle; and, following the example of Jesus the Good Shepherd, laid down their lives in the service of others. Inspire and strengthen us, also, for the duties of life still before us, that we may be faithful to the end; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. *Amen.*

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## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

## Thursday in the Second Week of Advent

December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

#### **Francis de Sales**

*Bishop, 1622*

#### **Jane de Chantal**

*Vowed Religious, 1641*

Francis de Sales served as the Roman Catholic bishop of Geneva from 1567 to 1622, but today he is primarily known for his writings on prayer and spiritual direction, particularly his work *Introduction to the Devout Life*.

As a young man, Francis studied for a political career, but he was deeply anxious for his salvation, prone to melancholy and despair, and was convinced that he has been predestined for damnation. In 1587, however, while a visitor at a church in Paris, he had a profound experience of the love of God. This sense of God's love and mercy would mark his writings on the spiritual life from that time forward. In response to this overwhelming sense of God's love, Francis changed his trajectory and resolved to become a priest.

In 1602 he became bishop of Geneva, although he was forced to remain in the parts of his diocese that were outside of the city, since Geneva itself was under Calvinist control. He wrote a number of books on the spiritual life which stressed the importance of love for God and neighbor rather than focusing on sin and penance, and which were notable in being directed toward laypeople. The influence of his *Introduction to the Devout Life* was not limited to Roman Catholic circles, but informed Protestant spiritual writers as well, including many Anglicans. In addition to his writing, Francis worked with Jane de Chantal in her foundation of a new religious order for women, the Congregation of the Visitation.

Jane de Chantal was a wealthy young widow with four small children. In her grief, she resolved

never to remarry. She devoted herself instead to caring for the poor and the sick, to raising her children, and to managing her late husband's estates. Francis de Sales would become her spiritual director in 1604.

In 1610, Francis and Jane established the Congregation of the Visitation. Initially devoted to serving the poor and the sick, the order gradually evolved in a more contemplative direction. During Jane's 31 years in the community, she gave spiritual direction to a number of women and men in the form of letters, many of which have been preserved. Unusually, her order actively welcomed women as sisters who would not be considered by other orders because of their poor health or advanced age. When others questioned the wisdom of this decision, Jane merely replied, "What would you have me do? I rather like sick people myself. I'm on their side." By the time she died in 1641, the order had already grown to include 34 houses.

### The Collect

Most gracious God, who has bidden us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before you; Grant that we, like your servants Francis and Jane, may see and serve Christ in all people, and know him as the giver of all good things; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

## Friday in the Second Week of Advent

December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

#### **Lucy of Syracuse**

*Martyr, 304*

Lucy, or Lucia, was martyred at Syracuse, in Sicily, during the Diocletian persecution of 303–304. Her tomb can still be found in the catacombs of Syracuse. She was venerated soon after her death and her cult spread quickly throughout the church. She is among the saints and martyrs named in the Roman canon of the mass.

Most of the details of Lucy's life are obscure. In the tradition, she is remembered for her purity of life and her gentleness of spirit. Because her name means "light," she is sometimes thought of as the patron saint of those who suffer from diseases of the eyes.

In popular piety, Lucy is perhaps most revered because her feast day was for many centuries the shortest day of the year. (The reform of the calendar by Pope Gregory VIII in 1582 would shift the shortest day to December 21/22, depending upon the year.) It was historically on Lucy's day that the light began gradually to return and the days to lengthen. This was particularly powerful in northern Europe, where the days of winter were quite short. In Scandinavian countries, particularly Sweden, Lucy's day has long been a festival of light that is kept as both an ecclesiastical commemoration and a domestic observance.

In the domestic celebration of Lucia, a young girl in the family dresses in pure white (a symbol of Lucy's faith, purity, and martyrdom), wears a crown of lighted candles upon her head (a sign that on Lucy's day the light is returning), and serves her family special foods prepared especially for the day. In praise of her service, the young girl is called Lucy for the day.

## The Collect

Most gracious God, who has bidden us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before you; Grant that we, like your servants Francis and Jane, may see and serve Christ in all people, and know him as the giver of all good things; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

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## Saturday in the Second Week of Advent

December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

#### **John of the Cross**

##### *Mystic and Monastic Reformer, 1591*

The Carmelite theologian John of the Cross has been called “the poet’s poet,” “spirit of flame,” and “celestial and divine.”

John was born in 1542 at Fontiveros, near Avila, Spain. After his third birthday, his father died, leaving his mother and her children reduced to poverty. John received elementary education in an orphanage in Medina del Campo. By the age of seventeen, he had learned carpentry, tailoring, sculpturing, and painting through apprenticeships to local craftsmen.

After university studies with the Jesuits, John entered the Carmelite Order in Medina del Campo and completed his theological studies in Salamanca. In 1567, he was ordained to the priesthood and recruited by Teresa of Avila for the reformation of the Carmelite Order.

John became disillusioned with what he considered the laxity of the Carmelites and, in 1568, he opened a monastery of “Discalced” (strict observance) Carmelites, an act that met with sharp resistance from the General Chapter of the Calced Carmelites. John was seized, taken to Toledo, and imprisoned in the monastery. During nine months of great hardship, he comforted himself by writing poetry. It was while he was imprisoned that he composed the greater part of his luminous masterpiece, *The Spiritual Canticle*, as well as a number of shorter poems. His other major works include *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Living Flame of Love*, and *The Dark Night*. It is this latter work, *Noche obscura del alma*, that gave the English language the phrase “dark night of the soul.”

After a severe illness, John died on December 14, 1591, in Ubeda, in southern Spain.

## The Collect

Judge eternal, throned in splendor, who gave John of the Cross strength of purpose and faith that sustained him even through the dark night of the soul: Shed your light on all who love you, in unity with Jesus Christ our Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*

## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

## THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT



## Third Sunday of Advent

*also known as Gaudete Sunday*

December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Third Sunday of Advent

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

#### **Nino of Georgia**

*Missionary, c. 332*

Georgia began to be Christianized in the fourth century. According to the Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia, the people of Georgia were drawn to the Gospel of Jesus Christ during the reign of the Emperor Constantine through the example of a woman named Nino, who was brought there as a captive from Cappadocia and sold as a slave.

The Georgian Prince Bakurius, from whom Rufinus heard the story, said that the captive woman first aroused the attention of the people through her piety and virtue. When asked, she replied that her way of life was an act of worship to Christ her God. Later, the mother of a young girl who had taken ill brought her to the captive woman, after having sought a remedy for her daughter's illness from all her other neighbors. Through the prayers of Nino, the little girl was healed.

The news of this miracle drew the attention of the queen, who was herself suffering from a grave illness. The queen was carried to the captive woman's cell and, through her prayers, she was likewise restored to health. At the queen's request, Nino told her of Christ Jesus, the Son of God, and when the queen expressed a desire to be baptized, the captive woman performed the sacrament herself.

After her conversion, the queen sought to convert her husband, but the king resisted. Later, while hunting, the king lost his way in the forest and a great darkness fell upon him, so that he could not see. Then the king remembered what he had heard about the captive woman's God and vowed to worship that God alone if he would save him. Immediately a light broke

through the darkness and revealed the path home. The king then summoned Nino and was instructed in the Gospel by her. A magnificent church was erected and, at Nino's request, an envoy was sent to the emperor to request that priests be sent to Georgia to administer the Eucharist and to catechize the people.

Nino is known in the Orthodox tradition as Equal to the Apostles and Enlightener of Georgia. While many of the historical details remain sketchy, Georgia is highly unusual in its claim to have been evangelized by a female slave rather than by a famous apostle and evangelist, and the rough outlines of this tradition are therefore taken seriously by historians.

Nino's tomb is believed to be in the Bodbe Monastery, which is one of the major pilgrimage sites in Georgia. The Georgian church also uses a distinctive cross with drooping arms as a symbol of the cross that Nino is believed to have created to explain the gospel, by twisting a grapevine and tying it together with a strand of her hair.

## The Collect

Almighty God, who called your servant Nino to be your apostle to the people of Georgia, to bring those wandering in darkness to the true light and knowledge of you; Grant us so to walk in that light, that we may come at last to the light of your everlasting day; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

## Monday in the Third Week of Advent

December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024

The Collect for the Third Sunday of Advent

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

There are no commemorations on this day.

Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...



## Tuesday in the Third Week of Advent

December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024

The Collect for the Third Sunday of Advent

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

### **Dorothy L. Sayers**

*Apologist and Spiritual Writer, 1957*

Dorothy Leigh Sayers is perhaps best known as a prolific fiction writer, but she was also a theological writer, linguist, translator, and passionate advocate of the truth of the Christian faith.

Dorothy was born in 1893 at Oxford to the chaplain of Christ Church. She would eventually graduate from Oxford in 1915 with honors. Although women were not awarded degrees at the time, she received her degree five years later when the policy changed. After graduation she became a copywriter at Benson's advertising and was highly successful in that business. During her time there she wrote her first novel, *Whose Body?* featuring a famous recurring character of hers, Lord Peter Wimsey.

In addition to fiction, however, Sayers also drew on her deep Christian faith and devotion to write about concerns facing the church. She began with *The Zeal for Thy House*, a play, and afterwards a BBC radio drama about the life of Jesus entitled *The Man Born to Be King*. She also took the church to task for its woeful neglect of dogma and doctrine, arguing in *Creed or Chaos* for the utmost importance of doctrine for Christian laity, and in the process cemented her place as a Christian apologist.

Writing on the centrality of dogma in Christianity, she wrote:

It is not true at all that dogma is hopelessly irrelevant to the life and thought of the average man. What is true is that ministers of the Christian religion often assert that it is, present it for consideration as though it were, and, in fact, by their faulty exposition of it make it so. The central dogma of the Incarnation is that by which relevance stands or falls. If Christ were only man, then he is entirely irrelevant to any thought about God; if he is only God, then he is entirely irrelevant to any experience of human life. It is, in the strictest sense, necessary to the salvation of relevance that a man should believe rightly the Incarnation of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Unless he believes rightly, there is not the faintest reason why he should believe at all. And in that case, it is wholly irrelevant to chatter about Christian principles.

She died in 1957 and is buried under the tower in St. Anne's Church in London.

## The Collect

Almighty God, who strengthened your servant Dorothy Sayers with eloquence to defend Christian teaching: Keep us, we pray, steadfast in your true religion, that in constancy and peace we may always teach right doctrine, and teach doctrine rightly; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

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## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  
  - Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
    - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
    - Draw or paint your inspiration
    - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
    - Something else ...
-



## Wednesday in the Third Week of Advent

December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Third Sunday of Advent

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

There are no commemorations on this day.

### Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

## Thursday in the Third Week of Advent

December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Third Sunday of Advent

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

There are no commemorations on this day.

### Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

## Friday in the Third Week of Advent

December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024

The Collect for the Third Sunday of Advent

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

### **Katharina von bora**

*Church Reformer, 1552*

Katharina von Bora was born in 1499, the daughter of impoverished German nobles, and was educated at the Benedictine convent in Brehna. Instinctively devout, she initially felt deeply drawn to the monastic life, and as a teenager took vows at a Cistercian convent in Nimbschen.

As a young woman, however, Katharina became increasingly critical of many of the abuses that she perceived in the church, and became keenly interested in the movements of ecclesiastical reform. In 1523, she and 11 other sisters secretly contacted Martin Luther and asked for his help in escaping from the convent. Smuggled out in a fish wagon, they soon found that they had nowhere to go, because their families refused to take them back. Several of the Protestant reformers sheltered the women, and Katharina found a temporary home with the family of the famous painter Lucas Cranach.

Eventually all of the women found husbands within the new community of church reformers, but for Katharina no match was found. Most of her potential suitors found her intellect intimidating and her assertiveness off-putting. Eventually, she expressed a desire to wed Martin Luther himself, and rather to the surprise of most of his friends, he agreed.

Many within the early Lutheran community were opposed to Luther's marriage, fearing that it would open him to criticism that he had only left the monastic life because he did not want to fulfill his vow of celibacy, rather than because he was genuinely concerned about abuses within the church. But Luther came to believe that married life was itself a vocation from God, and also that clerical marriage gave women the opportunity to assist in the work of the Reformation as coworkers and colleagues.

Katharina therefore became an early model for the vocation of a pastor's spouse, assisting Martin in his ministry and providing hospitality to many, as well as raising six children and opening their home to a number of orphans. The family regularly hosted dozens of people at dinner, which would involve heated theological debates. Katharina was an active participant in these, knowing both the scriptures and Latin as well as many of the men, and Martin encouraged her contributions. He gave her a degree of authority that was unprecedented in that time, including allowing her to handle the publication of his works, and naming her as his sole heir upon his death. She died on December 20, 1552.

## The Collect

Almighty God, who called your servant Katharina von Bora from a cloister to work for the reform of your church: Grant that, for the sake of your glory and the welfare of your church, we may go wherever you should call, and serve however you should will; through Jesus Christ, our only mediator and advocate. *Amen.*

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## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  
  - Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
    - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
    - Draw or paint your inspiration
    - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
    - Something else ...
-

## Saturday in the Third Week of Advent

December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024

The Collect for the Third Sunday of Advent

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

### **Saint Thomas the Apostle**

The Gospel according to John records several incidents in which Thomas appears, and from them we are able to gain some impression of the sort of man he was. When Jesus insisted on going to Judea, to visit his friends at Bethany, Thomas boldly declared, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). At the Last Supper, he interrupted our Lord's discourse with the question, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" (John 14:5). And after Christ's resurrection, Thomas would not accept the account of the women and the other apostles, until Jesus himself appeared before him, showing him his wounds. This drew from him the first explicit acknowledgment of Christ's divinity, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

Thomas appears to have been a thoughtful if perhaps literal-minded man, inclined to skepticism; but he was a staunch friend when his loyalty was once given. The expression "Doubting Thomas," which has become established in English usage, is not entirely fair to Thomas. He did not refuse belief: he wanted to believe, but did not dare, without further evidence. Because of his goodwill, Jesus gave him a sign, although Jesus had refused a sign to the Pharisees. His Lord's rebuke was well deserved: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29). The sign did not create faith; it merely released the faith that was in Thomas already.

According to an early tradition mentioned by Eusebius and others, Thomas evangelized the Persians. Syrian Christians of India cherish a tradition that after his mission to Persia, he continued East and brought the Gospel to India. The site of his burial, in present-day Chennai, has been a shrine and place of Christian pilgrimage since antiquity.

Thomas' honest questioning and doubt, and Jesus' assuring response to him, have given many modern Christians courage to persist in faith, even when they are still doubting and

questioning.

## The Collect

Everliving God, who strengthened your apostle Thomas with firm and certain faith in your Son's resurrection: Grant us so perfectly and without doubt to believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, that our faith may never be found wanting in your sight; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  - Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
    - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
    - Draw or paint your inspiration
    - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
    - Something else ...
-

## THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT



## Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

The Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

There are no commemorations on this day.

Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...



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## Monday in the Fourth Week of Advent

December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

There are no commemorations on this day.

### Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

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## Tuesday in the Fourth Week of Advent

December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### The Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### The Stories & Collects for Today's Commemoration

There are no commemorations on this day.

### Advent Path Reflection Exercise

Thinking about today's collects and biographic sketches ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small

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## CHRISTMAS DAY

### The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ



December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024

O God, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

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That Jesus was born is a fact both of history and revelation. The precise date of his birth, however, is not recorded in the Gospels, which are, after all, not biographies, and show little concern for those biographical details in which more modern Christians are interested. Such interest began to become prominent in the fourth century, together with the development of liturgical observances concerning the events of biblical history.

Scholars have offered various theories about how December 25 came to be selected as the date for the liturgical commemoration of the Nativity in the Western Church. An older scholarly view suggests that the date, coming as it does at the winter solstice, was already a sacred one, being observed by Roman pagans as the festival of the birth of the Unconquerable Sun (dies natalis Solis Invicti). This correspondence is noted by some early Christian writers themselves, who see it as a fitting parallel, but the pagan celebration was only established in the late third century, and the Christian observance of December 25 seems to have even earlier antecedents.

An alternative explanation calculates the date of Christmas based on the date of Passover and

Easter. Many early Christian theologians, particularly in North Africa, calculated that the Crucifixion had taken place on the 14 of Nisan, which worked out to be March 25 on the Roman calendar. This date also became celebrated as the Feast of the Annunciation because of a widespread pious belief that Jesus died on the same date that he was conceived, showing how deeply interconnected all of the events of salvation history were. December 25, then, becomes the date of Christ's birth, because it is exactly nine months after the date of his conception. This method of calculating also explains the traditional dating in the Eastern church, which historically fixed the Nativity on January 6 rather than December 25. The Eastern church calculated the date of both Annunciation and Crucifixion using not the 14 of Nisan, but rather the 14 of Artemisios, the first spring month on the Greek calendar. This translates to April 6 on the Roman calendar, which is nine months before January 6.

The full title of the feast dates from the 1662 edition of the Book of Common Prayer. Prior to that revision, the day was known only as "Christmas Day." The word "Christmas," which can be traced to the twelfth century, is a contraction of "Christ's Mass."

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Thinking about today's collect and description ....

- What one word that captures something that spoke to you about this day:
  
- Then "Get Creative!" in expressing your thoughts and insights. Here are some examples:
  - Write about what intrigues you about the ancestor. It can be anything ... a haiku ... a 3- sentence insight.
  - Draw or paint your inspiration
  - Do something special or new: cooking, crafting, or participating in a small group
  - Something else ...

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