

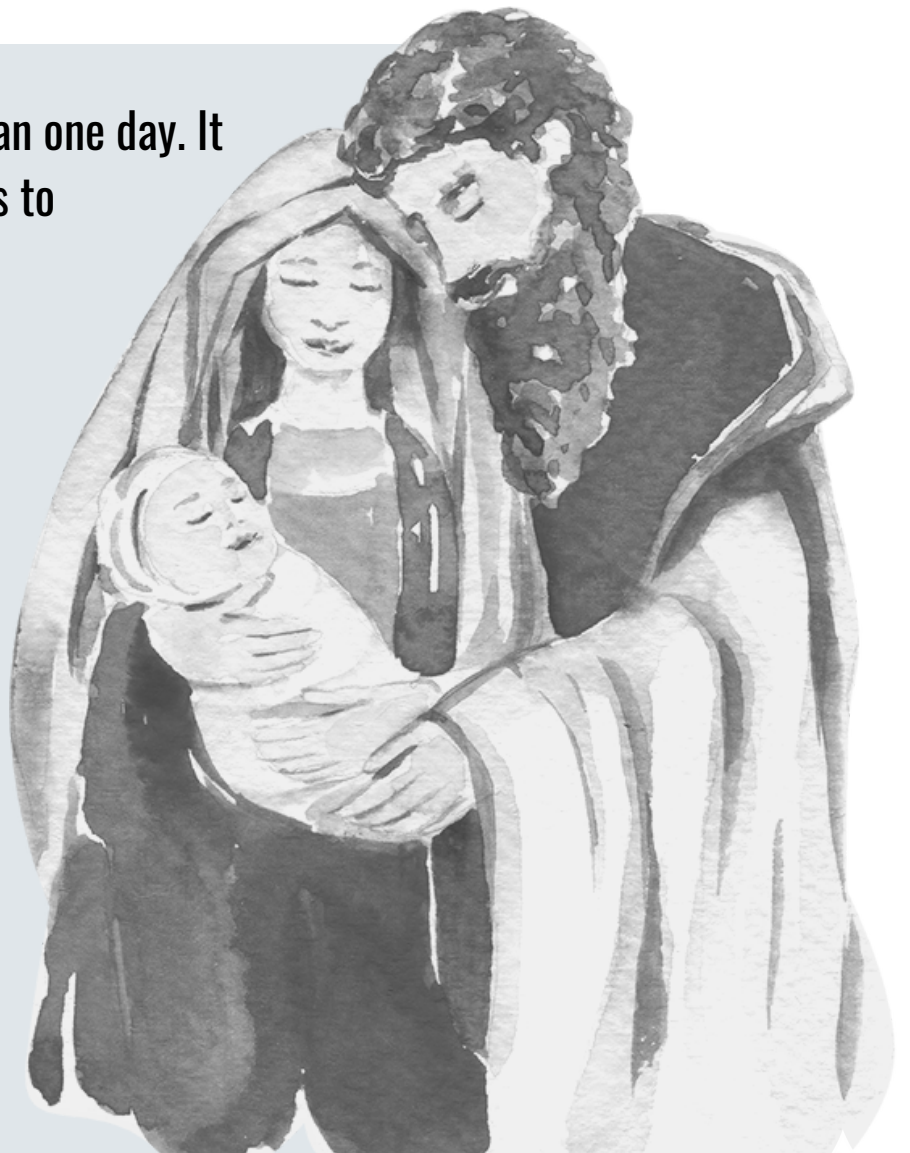
Practicing Christmas at Home:

# A Daily Guide to 12 Days of Christmas Joy

Christmas is more than one day. It  
is a season of 12 Days to  
**experience JOY!**

Let this playful  
booklet of  
**song,  
scripture,  
prayer,  
& good news**  
be your  
daily guide to

**12 days of  
Christmas joy.**



A Resource offering from Baptized for Life



# Contents of this Guide to Joy!



## **Good and Joyful News from 2020**

A piece of JOYFUL NEWS from 2020 that you may have missed with all the other dark and frustrating bits of news that crowded the airways and newspapers.



## **Play with the Song**

One verse from the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" and an invitation for you to guess what connections can be made between the lyric and Bible verses.



## **Scripture and Prayer for the Day**

Brief scriptures assigned for the day and a prayer.



## **Feast Day**

A description of the day, if it is one of the Feast Days during "Christmastide," or the 12 Days of Christmas.

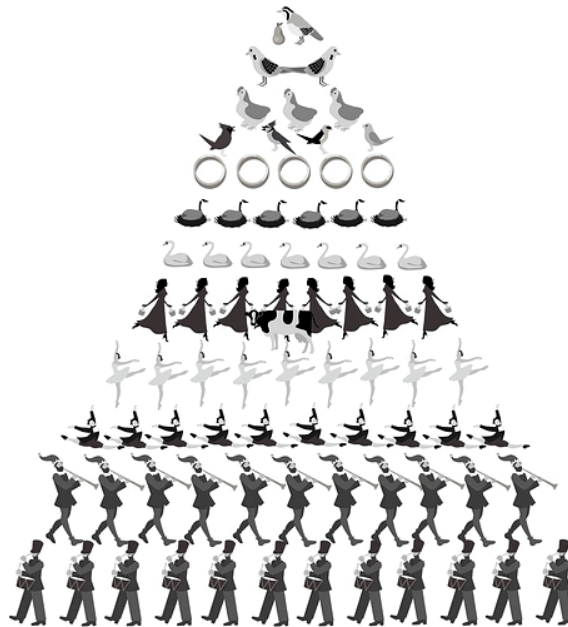


## **A Deep Dive**

A "deep dive" into a rich and ancient theological reading from the first few centuries of the Christian faith to feed any part of your mind and soul that is hungry for more than the materialism or shallow secular religious chatter at Christmas time. These Christian sermons are over 1,500 years old!

\*Theological readings are taken from the New Albany Breviary, The Mystery of the Incarnation (Year 3) December 25, 2020-January 6, 2021

## Just for laughs and ideas, let's consider the song ... "The Twelve Days of Christmas"



In 1979, a Canadian hymnologist, Hugh D. McKellar, published an article, "How to Decode the Twelve Days of Christmas" in which he suggested that "The Twelve Days of Christmas" lyrics were intended as a catechism song to help young Catholics learn their faith, at a time when practicing Catholicism was criminalized in England (1558 until 1829). McKellar offered no evidence for his claim. Years later, in 1982, Fr. Hal Stockert wrote an article (subsequently posted online in 1995) in which he suggested a similar possible use of the twelve gifts as part of a catechism.

Snopes.com, a website reviewing urban legends, Internet rumors and other stories of unknown or questionable origin, also concluded that the hypothesis of the twelve gifts of Christmas being a surreptitious Catholic catechism is incorrect. None of the enumerated items in the verses would distinguish Catholics from Protestants, and so would hardly need to be secretly encoded.

HOWEVER, the Christian symbolism and scriptural connections suggested by hundreds of years of creative are intriguing and even inspiring.

Each day of this [Daily Guide to Joy](#) will ask YOU to suggest Christian and Biblical connections. You can see a list of popular connections in the back of this booklet.

# Your Daily | JOY Guide to

## It all begins on ...Christmas Eve!

This liturgy of Christmas Day actually starts at sundown the night before. The Christmas Eve Eucharist is actually the first worship service of Christmas. The emphasis is usually on the story of the birth of Christ. The church is greened in preparation.

### THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS Friday, December 25, 2020



#### Good and Joyful News from 2020

##### Italy's Oldest Graduate!

Giuseppe Paternò has become Italy's oldest graduate at the age of 96 after being awarded first-class honors in philosophy from the University of Palermo in Sicily. "It's one of the happiest days of my entire life," said Paternò on graduating. Prevented from going to university when younger by poverty and war, he finally enrolled in 2017. "Neighbors used to ask, 'why all this trouble at your age?' They couldn't understand the importance of fulfilling a dream, regardless of my age," says Paternò. [Source: The Guardian]



#### Play with the Song

"On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me,  
a partridge in a pear tree"

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric? \*See the back of the booklet



#### Scripture and Prayer for the Day

Isaiah 52:7-10 • Psalm 98 • Hebrews 1:1-4, 5-12 • John 1:1-14

Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born this day of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.



#### Feast Day

##### The Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas Day

Christmas Day is the day of the "Christ Mass." It is a festival day, a day of rejoicing that God has been made human in the person of a tiny baby, born of the virgin Mary. Gift giving on Christmas day is a tradition that can remind us, and help us to put into action, the great gift that God gave the world that day in Bethlehem.



#### A Deep Dive

Theological Reading: A Reading from a sermon by Saint Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome (AD 390-461) Sermo 1 in Nativitate Domini, 1-3: PL, 54, 190-193

Dearly beloved, today our Savior is born; let us rejoice. Sadness should have no place on the birthday of life. The fear of death has been swallowed up; life brings us joy with the promise of eternal happiness. No one is shut out from this joy; all share the same reason for rejoicing. Our Lord, victor over sin and death, finding no one free from sin, came to free us all. Let the saints rejoice as they see the palm of victory at hand. Let sinners be glad as they receive the offer of forgiveness. Let the pagans take courage as they are

summoned to life. In the fullness of time, chosen in the unfathomable depths of God's wisdom, the Son of God took for himself our common humanity in order to reconcile it with its creator. He came to overthrow the devil, the origin of death, in that very nature by which he had overthrown humankind. And so at the birth of our Lord the angels sing in joy. Glory to God in the highest, and they proclaim peace to men of good will as they see the heavenly Jerusalem being built from all the nations of the world. When the angels on high are so exultant at this marvelous work of God's goodness, what joy should it not bring to the lowly hearts of men and women? Beloved, let us give thanks to God the Father, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit, because in his great love for us he took pity on us, and when we were dead in our sins he brought us to life with Christ, so that in him we might be a new creation. Let us throw off our old nature and all its ways and, as we have come to birth in Christ, let us renounce the works of the flesh. Christian, remember your dignity, and now that you share in God's own nature, do not return by sin to your former base condition. Bear in mind who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Do not forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of God's kingdom. Through the sacrament of baptism you have become a temple of the Holy Spirit. Do not drive away so great a guest by evil conduct and become again a slave to the devil, for your liberty was bought by the blood of Christ.

### Collect for Christmas Day

Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born this day of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever. *Amen.*

## Feast Day of St. Stephen Saturday, December 26, 2020



### Good and Joyful News from 2020

#### SpaceX's SAFE and Historic Launch!

After a dramatic postponement, the highly anticipated SpaceX Crew Dragon launch finally happened on May 30. This is the first time a commercial spacecraft has sent astronauts to orbit, creating possibilities for the private sector in space exploration.



### Play with the Song

"On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me, Two turtle doves..."

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric?



### Scripture and Prayer for the Day

#### Psalms 31 • Matthew 23:34-39

We give you thanks, O Lord of glory, for the example of the first martyr Stephen, who looked up to heaven and prayed for his persecutors to your Son Jesus Christ, who stands at your right hand; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.



### Feast Day

#### The Feast of St. Stephen

You can read about St. Stephen in Acts, chapters 6 and 7. He is considered to be a proto-deacon of the church, with others, because he was set apart to minister to the needs of the widows on behalf of the apostles. He was martyred by stoning, and Saul (later Paul) stood by and held his murderer's cloaks. Stephen preached the Gospel as he was being stoned and saw a vision of Jesus standing at God's right hand..



## A Deep Dive

An ancient reading (called a “Konatakion”) for the Birth of the Lord

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters crying: “Come, one and all, receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, from Christ Who now has shone forth!”

Today the nature of the waters is sanctified.

The Jordan is parted in two; it holds back the flow of its waters as it beholds the washing of the Master.

You have come to the river as a Man, O Christ the King, and hasten to be baptized like a servant by the Forerunner, on account of our sins, O good God Who love humankind. When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest.

For the voice of the Father bore witness to You, calling You His Beloved Son; and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truthfulness of His word.

O Christ our God, You have revealed Yourself, and have enlightened the world, glory to You.

Let us the faithful praise the greatness of God’s plan for us. For He Who alone is pure and undefiled becomes a man because of our transgressions. He is cleansed with our cleansing in the Jordan, sanctifying both us and the waters, and crushing the heads of the dragons in the water. Therefore, let us draw water in gladness, for upon those who draw in faith the grace of the Spirit is invisibly bestowed by Christ God, the Savior of our souls.

## Collect for the Feast of St. Stephen's

We give you thanks, O Lord of glory, for the example of the first martyr Stephen, who looked up to heaven and prayed for his persecutors to your Son Jesus Christ, who stands at your right hand; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

## First Sunday after Christmas Day Sunday, December 27, 2020



## Good and Joyful News from 2020

### Notre-Dame’s Bees Buzzing Onward!

Most assumed that the bees living on the roof had been lost when fire consumed much of Paris’s Notre-Dame cathedral. Happily, the bees and their habitat survived. Against all odds, the bees survived the inferno and continued to thrive through the coronavirus lock-down. “There’s nothing wrong with them at all,” reports beekeeper Sibyle Moulin, who looks after some 30-45,000 insects in the three hives. “The behavior of the colonies is perfectly normal.” The beehives are just 30 metres below Notre-Dame’s main roof but were untouched by the flames. “The mystery remains,” says Moulin. “All that smoke, heat, water...” She kept visiting the bees through the coronavirus crisis. As humans stressed over COVID-19, Moulin reported that the bees were “completely unbothered”. [Source: The Guardian]



## Play with the Song

““On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me, three French hens...”

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric?





## Scripture and Prayer for the Day

**Psalms 147 • Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7 • John 1:1-18**

Shed upon your Church, O Lord, the brightness of your light, that we, being illumined by the teaching of your apostle and evangelist John, may so walk in the light of your truth, that at length we may attain to the fullness of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.



## Feast Day

**The First Sunday After Christmas**

The first Sunday after Christmas is focused more on the theology of the Incarnation and the dual nature of Christ. John 1 is read. This reading helps us to see that the Incarnation and dual natures of Christ are not dry theology. They are the very light of God poured into our lives. The Word was made flesh and it changed the world. There is no other God like our God, who came to live among us. There is no other story like this Story, and it has radically transformed our world.



## A Deep Dive

**Theological Reading: A reading from a sermon by St. Fulgentius of Ruspe, bishop (AD 460-533)  
Sermo 3,1-3,5-6: CCL 91A, 905-909**

Our message is the Word of life. We announce what existed from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our own eyes, what we have touched with our own hands. Who could touch the Word with his hands unless the Word was made flesh and lived among us? Now this Word, whose flesh was so real that he could be touched by human hands, began to be flesh in the Virgin Mary's womb; but he did not begin to exist at that moment. We know this from what John says: What existed from the beginning. Notice how John's letter bears witness to his Gospel, which you just heard a moment ago: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. Someone might interpret the phrase the Word of life to mean a word about Christ, rather than Christ's body itself which was touched by human hands. But consider what comes next: and life itself was revealed. Christ therefore is himself the Word of life. And how was this life revealed? It existed from the beginning, but was not revealed to men and women, only to angels, who looked upon it and feasted upon it as their own spiritual bread. But what does Scripture say? Humankind ate the bread of angels. Life itself was therefore revealed in the flesh. In this way what was visible to the heart alone could become visible also to the eye, and so heal human hearts. For the Word is visible to the heart alone, while flesh is visible to bodily eyes as well. We already possessed the means to see the flesh, but we had no means of seeing the Word. The Word was made flesh so that we could see it, to heal the part of us by which we could see the Word. John continues: And we are witnesses and we proclaim to you that eternal life which was with the Father and has been revealed among us – one might say more simply "revealed to us." We proclaim to you what we have heard and seen. Make sure that you grasp the meaning of these words. The disciples saw our Lord in the flesh, face to face; they heard the words he spoke, and in turn they proclaimed the message to us. So we also have heard, although we have not seen. Are we then less favored than those who both saw and heard? If that were so, why should John add: so that you too may have fellowship with us? They saw, and we have not seen; yet we have fellowship with them, because we and they share the same faith. And our fellowship is with God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son. And we write this to you to make your joy complete – complete in that fellowship, in that love and in that unity.

## Collect for Peace

O God, the author of peace and lover of concord, to know you is eternal life and to serve you is perfect freedom: Defend us, your humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in your defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# The Feast of the Holy Innocents

## Monday, December 28, 2020



### Good and Joyful News from 2020

**99-Year-Old Captain Tom Moore is a national hero in the UK!**

He raised more than \$37 million in support of the National Health Service by walking around his garden at the start of the coronavirus pandemic. At the time, Moore was a 99-year-old World War II veteran. For his 100th birthday hundreds of thousands of people sent cards, dozens of murals appeared around the country, and the Royal Air Force made a special appearance over Moore's house in Marston, Moretaine, where he celebrated with family. He was also promoted to the rank of honorary colonel by the Queen herself.



### Play with the Song

**"On the fourth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, four calling birds"**

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric?



### Scripture and Prayer for the Day

**Psalms 124 • Matthew 2:13-18**

Behold, the dwelling of God is with mankind; He will dwell with them and they shall be his people. Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



### Feast Day

**The Feast of the Holy Innocents**

This is a more reflective, somber day. This day commemorates the innocent children who were killed by Herod in Bethlehem, when he was trying to eliminate the baby that was said to be the Messiah (Matthew 2). Along with these innocent babies, we remember all innocent people who have been subject to violence or even death. We pray that God will frustrate the designs of tyrants and give us grace to bring healing to a world marked by suffering.



### A Deep Dive

**Theological Reading: A reading from a sermon by St. Quodvultdeus, bishop (AD 407-450) Sermo 2 de Symbolo: PL 40, 655**

A tiny child is born, who is a great king. Magi are led to him from afar. They come to adore one who lies in a manger and yet reigns in heaven and on earth. When they tell of one who is born a king, Herod is disturbed. To save his kingdom he resolves to kill him, though if he would have faith in the child, he himself would reign in peace in this life and forever in the life to come. Why are you afraid, Herod, when you hear of the birth of a king? He does not come to drive you out, but to conquer the devil. But because you do not understand this you are disturbed and in a rage, and to destroy one child whom you seek, you show your cruelty in the death of so many children. You are not restrained by the love of weeping mothers or fathers mourning the deaths of their sons and daughters, nor by the cries and sobs of the children. You destroy those who are tiny in body because fear is destroying your heart. You imagine that if you accomplish your desire you can prolong your own life, though you are seeking to kill Life himself. Yet your throne is threatened by the source of grace, so small, yet so great, who is lying in the manger. He is using you, all unaware of it, to work out his own purposes freeing souls from captivity to the devil. He has taken up the sons of the enemy into the ranks of God's adopted children. The children die for Christ, though they do not know it. The parents mourn for the death of martyrs. The child makes of those as yet unable to speak fit witnesses to himself. See the kind of kingdom that is his, coming as he did in order to be this kind of king.



See how the deliverer is already working deliverance, the savior already working salvation. But you, Herod, do not know this and are disturbed and furious. While you vent your fury against the child, you are already paying him homage, and do not know it. How great a gift of grace is here! To what merits of their own do the children owe this kind of victory? They cannot speak, yet they bear witness to Christ. They cannot use their limbs to engage in battle, yet already they bear off the palm of victory.

### Collect for the Feast of the Holy Innocents

We remember today, O God, the slaughter of the holy innocents of Bethlehem by King Herod. Receive, we pray, into the arms of your mercy all innocent victims; and by your great might frustrate the designs of evil tyrants and establish your rule of justice, love, and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

## Thomas Becket (1170 C.E.) Tuesday, December 29, 2020



### Good and Joyful News from 2020

#### Disabled army veteran conquers the Matterhorn!

Neil Heritage lost both his legs in an attack by a suicide bomber in Iraq in 2004. After recovering from his injuries, he completed triathlons, learned to ski and even joined a team to row across the Atlantic Ocean. Now, 39, the former soldier from the United Kingdom has notched up another achievement, becoming the first above-the-knee double amputee to scale the Matterhorn. The ex-corporal, whose ascent raised 6,500 euros for his veterans' charity, says he is "over the moon—it's been a dream of mine for a long time." It was his third attempt in three years to reach the peak. Co-climber Mark Hooks said it was "just so special, managing to achieve something we've worked so hard on over the years." Hooks said his friend's specially designed prosthetic limb fell off near the summit and took more than 20 minutes to reattach. Heritage won't be resting on his laurels. His next challenge is to kayak the Amazon river.



### Play with the Song

**"On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, five gold rings..."**

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric?



### Scripture and Prayer for the Day

#### Psalms 124 • Matthew 2:13-18

O God, our strength and our salvation, you called your servant Thomas Becket to be a shepherd of your people and a defender of your Church: Keep your household from all evil and raise up among us faithful pastors and leaders who are wise in the ways of the Gospel; through Jesus Christ the shepherd of our souls, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**



### Feast Day

#### Thomas Becket (1170)

Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 until his murder in 1170. He is venerated as a saint and martyr by both the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. He engaged in conflict with Henry II, King of England, over the rights and privileges of the Church and was murdered by followers of the king in Canterbury Cathedral. Here is our prayer for this feast:

Almighty God, you granted your martyr, Thomas Becket, the grace to give his life willingly for the freedom of your Church. By his prayers, make us willing to renounce our life in this world for Christ so that we may find it in heaven. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**



## A Deep Dive

Theological Reading: A Reading from a sermon of Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux (AD 200-258)  
Sermon 1 for Epiphany 1-2: PL 133, 141-143

"The goodness and humanity of God our Savior has appeared in our midst." We thank God for the many consolations he has given us during this sad exile of our pilgrimage here on earth. Before the Son of God became human his goodness was hidden, for God's mercy is eternal, but how could such goodness be recognized? It was promised, but it was not experienced, and as a result few believed in it. "Often and in many ways the Lord used to speak through the prophets." Among other things, God said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction." But what did humans respond, thinking thoughts of affliction and knowing nothing of peace? They said: "Peace, peace, there is no peace." This response made the angels of peace weep bitterly saying "Lord, who has believed our message?" But now they believe because they see with their own eyes, and because God's testimony has not become even more credible. He has gone so far as to pitch his tent in the sun so even the dimmest eyes see him. Notice that peace is not promised by sent to us; it is no longer deferred, it is given; peace is not prophesied by achieved. It is as if God the Father sent upon the earth a purse full of his mercy. This purse was burst open during the Lord's passion to pour forth its hidden contents - the price of our redemption. It was only a small purse, but it was very full. As the Scriptures tell us: A little child has been given to us, but in him dwells all the fullness of the divine nature. The fullness of time brought with it the fullness of divinity. God's Son came in the flesh so that mortals could see and recognize God's kindness. When God reveals his humanity, his goodness cannot possibly remain hidden. To show his kindness what more could he do beyond taking my human form? My humanity, I say, not Adam's - that is, not such as he had before his fall. How could he have shown his mercy more clearly than by taking on himself our condition? For our sake the Word of God became as grass. What better proof could he have given of his love? Scripture says: Lord, what are we that you are mindful of us; why does your heart go out to us? The incarnation teaches us how much God cares for us and what he thinks and feels about us. We should stop thinking of our own sufferings and remember what he has suffered. Let us think of all the Lord has done for us, and then we shall realize how his goodness appears through his humanity. The lesser he became through his human nature, the greater was his goodness; the more he lowered himself for me, the dearer he is to me. The goodness and humanity of God our Savior has appeared, says the Apostle. Truly great and manifest are the goodness and humanity of God. He has given us a most wonderful proof of his goodness by adding humanity to his own divine nature.

### Collect for December 29

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

**Francis Joseph Gaudet (1861-1934)**  
**Wednesday, December 30, 2020**



## Good and Joyful News from 2020

### Kids learn Braille the fun way!

Lego has unveiled a project to help blind and visually impaired children learn Braille in a "playful and engaging way" amid concerns that fewer children are learning the system because of audiobooks and computer programs. Its new "Braille Bricks" will be molded with the same studs used for letters and numbers in the Braille alphabet. They will also feature printed characters to allow sighted teachers and family to read them.



## Play with the Song

**"On the sixth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, six geese a-laying..."**

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric?



## Scripture and Prayer for the Day

**Psalms 20 • John 7:53 – 8:7**

Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



## Feast Day

**Francis Joseph Gaudet (1861 – 1934)**

Gaudet was born to a mother of Native American descent and an enslaved father. Frances was raised by her grandparents. Although supporting herself and her children as a seamstress, the young mother dedicated her life to social work and prison reform. She worked with the Prison Reform Association, becoming a major activist in prison and education reform at the turn of the century. In 1894, Joseph-Gaudet started holding prayer meetings for black prisoners. She helped in any way she could, writing and delivering letters, and found them clothing. She later extended this ministry to white prisoners as well. Her dedication to the imprisoned and to penal reform won Joseph-Gaudet the respect of prison officials, city authorities, the Governor of Louisiana, and the Prison Reform Association. In 1900 she became a delegate to the Women's Christian Temperance Union international convention in Edinburgh, Scotland. Upon returning, Joseph-Gaudet began attending sessions of the new juvenile court in New Orleans and taking responsibility for young offenders, especially young blacks arrested for a misdemeanor or vagrancy. Her home proving too small for her efforts to assist homeless children, Joseph-Gaudet raised \$5000 and purchased a farm on Gentilly Road and in 1902 founded the Colored Normal and Industrial School, which eventually encompassed 105 acres and numerous buildings. The facility served as an orphanage, as well as a boarding school for children with working mothers, with Gaudet as principal. In 1919 Gaudet donated the facility to the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana, which renamed it to honor her, as well as added Rev. Taylor of St. Luke's Church as chaplain. Joseph-Gaudet continued to serve as the principal for an additional two years. In 1913, Joseph-Gaudet published her autobiography - *He Leadeth Me*.



## A Deep Dive

**Theological Reading: A reading from a treatise *On the Refutation of All Heresies*, by St. Hippolytus (AD 170-235) Cap. 10, 33-34: PG 16, 3452-3453**

Our faith is not founded upon empty words; nor are we carried away by mere caprice or beguiled by specious arguments. On the contrary, we put our faith in words spoken by the power of God, spoken by the Word himself at God's command. God wished to win us back from disobedience, not by using force to reduce us to slavery but by addressing to our free will a call to liberty. The Word spoke first of all through the prophets, but because the message was couched in such obscure language that it could be only dimly apprehended, in the last days the Father sent the Word in person, commanding him to show himself openly so that the world could see him and be saved. We know that by taking a body from the Virgin he re-fashioned our fallen nature. We know that his manhood was of the same clay as our own; if this were not so, he would hardly have been a teacher who could expect to be imitated. If he were of a different substance from me, he would surely not have ordered me to do as he did, when by my very nature I am so weak. Such a demand could not be reconciled with his goodness and justice. No. He wanted us to consider him as no different from ourselves, and so he worked, he was hungry and thirsty, he slept. Without protest he endured his passion, he submitted to death and revealed his resurrection. In all these ways he offered his own manhood as the first fruits of our race to keep us from losing heart when suffering comes our way, and to make us look forward to receiving the same reward as he did, since we know that we possess the same humanity. When we have come to know the true God, both our bodies and our souls will be immortal and incorruptible. We shall enter the kingdom of heaven, because while we lived on earth we acknowledged heaven's King. Friends of God and co-heirs with Christ, we shall be subject to no evil

desires or inclinations, or to any affliction of body or soul, for we shall have become divine. Whatever evil you may have suffered, being human, it is God that sent it to you, precisely because you are human; but equally, when you have been deified, God has promised you a share in every one of his own attributes. The saying Know yourself means therefore that we should recognize and acknowledge in ourselves the God who made us in his own image, for if we do this, we in turn will be recognized and acknowledged by our Maker. So let us not be at enmity with ourselves, but change our way of life without delay. For Christ who is God, exalted above all creation, has taken away humankind's sin and has re-fashioned our fallen nature. In the beginning God made man and woman in his image and so gave proof of his love for us. If we obey his holy commands and learn to imitate his goodness, we shall be like him and he will honor us. God is not beggarly, and for the sake of his own glory he has given us a share in his divinity.

### Collect for December 30

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that the newness of the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the yoke of sin. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. *Amen.*

## New Year's Eve (Eve of the Holy Name) Thursday, December 31, 2020



### Good and Joyful News from 2020

#### Reducing the Waste of Surplus Food!

Every day huge amounts of food are thrown away as supermarkets offload produce that has passed its best-before date; restaurants, cafés and bakeries dispose of uneaten meals and foods for similar reasons. Now an app called Too Good to Go is reducing this waste. Devised in Copenhagen, the app offers users in 14 European countries access to unsold, safe-to-eat produce from participating suppliers. The food is heavily discounted at about a third of the regular price.

Launched in 2016, Too Good To Go has now been downloaded by 22 million people in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Austria, Italy, Poland, Portugal and the U.K. Users can see which outlets in their neighborhood have surplus food available that day, which they can then pick up at closing time.

The app helps households on restricted budgets, providing an estimated 100,000 meals a day, and also plays a part in mitigating climate change. "Food waste contributes to eight per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions," says Mette Lykke, Too Good To Go's CEO. "Together we can fight food waste and ensure quality surplus produce doesn't end up in the bin. Our mission is a world where food produced is food consumed." [Source: CNET, The Grocer]



### Play with the Song

"On the seventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me, seven swans a-swimming..."

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric?



### Scripture and Prayer for the Day

Isaiah 65:15b-25 • Revelation 21:1-6 • John 8:12-19

O God our Creator, you have divided our life into days and seasons, and called us to acknowledge your providence year after year: Accept your people who come to offer their praises, and, in your mercy, receive their prayers; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



## A Deep Dive

Theological Reading: A reading from a sermon by Saint Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome (AD 390-461) Cap. 10, 33-34: PG 16, 3452-3453

God's Son did not disdain to become a baby. Although with the passing of the years he moved from infancy to maturity, and although with the triumph of his passion and resurrection all the actions of humility which he undertook for us were finished, still today's festival renews for us the holy childhood of Jesus born of the Virgin Mary. In adoring the birth of our Savior, we find we are celebrating the commencement of our own life, for the birth of Christ is the source of life for Christian folk, and the birthday of the Head is the birthday of the body. Every individual that is called has his own place, and all the sons of the Church are separated from one another by intervals of time. Nevertheless, just as the entire body of the faithful is born in the font of baptism, crucified with Christ in his passion, raised again in his resurrection, and placed at the Father's right hand in his ascension, so with Him are they born in this nativity. For this is true of any believer in whatever part of the world, that once he is reborn in Christ he abandons the old paths of his original nature and passes into a new man by being reborn. He is no longer counted as part of his earthly father's stock but among the seed of the Savior, who became the Son of man in order that we might have the power to be the sons of God. For unless He came down to us in this humiliation, no one could reach his presence by any merits of his own. The very greatness of the gift conferred demands of us reverence worthy of its splendor. For, as the blessed Apostle teaches, We have received not the spirit of this world but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things which are given us by God. That Spirit can in no other way be rightly worshipped, except by offering him that which we received from him. But in the treasures of the Lord's bounty what can we find so suitable to the honor of the present feast as the peace which at the Lord's nativity was first proclaimed by the angel-choir? For it is that peace which brings forth the sons of God. That peace is the nurse of love and the mother of unity, the rest of the blessed and our eternal home. That peace has the special task of joining to God those whom it removes from the world. So those who are born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God must offer to the Father the unanimity of peace-loving sons, and all of them, adopted parts of the mystical Body of Christ, must meet in the First-begotten of the new creation. He came to do not his own will but the will of the one who sent him; and so too the Father in his gracious favor has adopted as his heirs not those that are discordant nor those that are unlike him, but those that are one with him in feeling and in affection. Those who are re-modelled after one pattern must have a spirit like the model. The birthday of the Lord is the birthday of peace: for thus says the Apostle, He is our peace, who made both one; because whether we are Jew or Gentile, through Him we have access in one Spirit to the Father.

### Collect for December 31

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## The Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, New Year's Day Friday, January, 1, 2021



## Good and Joyful News from 2020

### The Golden Labrador Who Keeps on Giving!

Stumpy is a handsome Labrador who was destined for a career as a guide dog. Sadly, problems with a deformed leg meant it wasn't to be. But then Stumpy found a new way to help others: by giving blood. The nine-year-old Labrador has saved more than 100 canine lives since the age of one by donating blood for emergency transfusions. Stumpy has been crowned the United Kingdom's most prolific blood-donor dog. He has a negative blood type which is especially valuable because it allows his blood to be given to any dog. Stumpy's owner, vet Elly Pittaway, says: "Stumpy obviously has no idea what he's doing it for, but if he did, I'm sure he'd be very proud of himself." [Source: Daily Mail, BBC News]





## Play with the Song

**"On the eighth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, eight maids a-milking..."**

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric?



## Scripture and Prayer for the Day

**Psalm 8 • Luke 2:15-21**

Eternal Father, you gave to your incarnate Son the holy name of Jesus to be the sign of our salvation:

Plant in every heart, we pray, the love of him who is the Savior of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.



## Feast Day

**The Holy Name (New Year's Day)**

January 1st is actually not the first day of the Church Year. In our calendar, this is the day that Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day according to the custom of the Jews (Luke 2). This is when the child was given a name. The name "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Joshua" which means "the Lord will save." The angel that appeared to both Mary and Joseph told them to "call his name Jesus" for he will "save his people from their sins." The name of God is an important and holy aspect of the Hebrew faith. God's name was revealed to Moses as the "I AM" and "Yahweh". To this day, Jews do not pronounce or write the name of God, to set it apart. Because of the power of God to save in Jesus Christ, we celebrate his name on this day. Meanwhile, we are enjoying the public holiday of New Year's Day as well.



## A Deep Dive

**Theological Reading: A Reading from a letter by Saint Athanasius, bishop (AD 296-373) Epist. ad Epictetum, 5-9: PG 26, 1058, 1062-1066**

The Word took to himself the sons of Abraham, says the Apostle, and so had to be like his brothers in all things. He had then to take a body like ours. This explains the fact of Mary's presence: she is to provide him with a body of his own, to be offered for our sake. Scripture records her giving birth, and says: She wrapped him in swaddling clothes. Her breasts, which fed him, were called blessed. Sacrifice was offered because the child was her firstborn. Gabriel used careful and prudent language when he announced his birth. He did not speak of "what will be born in you" to avoid the impression that a body would be introduced into her womb from outside; he spoke of "what will be born from you," so that we might know by faith that her child originated within her and from her. By taking our nature and offering it in sacrifice, the Word was to destroy it completely and then invest it with his own nature, and so prompt the Apostle to say: This corruptible body must put on incorruption; this mortal body must put on immortality. This was not done in outward show only, as some have imagined. This is not so. Our Savior truly became a man, and from this has followed the salvation of humanity as a whole. Our salvation is in no way fictitious, nor does it apply only to the body. The salvation of the whole man, that is, of soul and body, has really been achieved in the Word himself. What was born of Mary was therefore human by nature, in accordance with the inspired Scriptures, and the body of the Lord was a true body: It was a true body because it was the same as ours. Mary, you see, is our sister, for we are all born from Adam and Eve. The words of St John, the Word was made flesh, bear the same meaning, as we may see from a similar turn of phrase in St Paul: Christ was made a curse for our sake. Man's body has acquired something great through its communion and union with the Word. From being mortal it has been made immortal; though it was a living body it has become a spiritual one; though it was made from the earth it has passed through the gates of heaven. Even when the Word takes a body from Mary, the Trinity remains a Trinity, with neither increase nor decrease. It is forever perfect. In the Trinity we acknowledge one Godhead, and thus one God, the Father of the Word, is proclaimed in the Church.

## Collect for January 1

Eternal Father, you gave to your incarnate Son the holy name of Jesus to be the sign of our salvation: Plant in every heart, we pray, the love of him who is the Savior of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**



**Saturday, January 2, 2021**



## Good and Joyful News from 2020

### Whales Find New Home After a Life in Captivity!

Two 12-year-old beluga whales that spent years in captivity entertaining humans at an aquarium in Shanghai, China, have found freedom at an open water sanctuary in Iceland. The four-meter-long whales, which each weigh about 900kg, were flown 6,000 miles for over 30 hours in a 747 aircraft fitted with purpose-built containers from Changfeng Ocean World to a sanctuary in a bay on Iceland's Heimaey Island. The whales, both females and previously known as Little Grey and Little White, will enjoy open water for the first time since they left a Russian whale research center in 2011. Andy Bool, head of the charity Sea Life Trust, said: "We're delighted that they are safely in their sea sanctuary care pools." Conservationists hope the sanctuary will be a model for rehoming 3,000 whales and dolphins currently housed in traditional captive facilities or performing in shows. [Source: The Independent]



## Play with the Song

**"On the ninth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, nine ladies dancing..."**

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric?



## Scripture and Prayer for the Day

**Genesis 12:1-7 • John 6:35-42, 48-51**

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near. Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you, bring the nations into your fold, pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



## A Deep Dive

**Theological Reading: A reading from a sermon by St. Quodvultdeus, bishop (AD 407-450) Sermo 2 de Symbolo: PL 40, 655**

A spiritual person is one who no longer lives by the flesh, but is led by the Spirit of God, one called a Son of God, remade in the likeness of God's Son. As the power of sight is active in the healthy eye, so the Holy Spirit is active in the purified soul. We may form a word either as a thought in the heart or as a sound on the lips. So the Holy Spirit, bearing witness to our spirit, cries out in our hearts saying "Abba Father," or speaks in our place, as Scripture says: "It is not you who speak; it is the Spirit of the Father who speaks in you." In the gifts that he distributes, we can see the Spirit as a whole in relation to its parts. We are all members of one another, but with different gifts according to the grace God gives us. "So the eye cannot say to the hand, I do not need you, nor can the head say to the feet, I have no need of you." All the members together make up the body of Christ in the unity of the Spirit, and render each other a necessary service through their gifts. God has arranged the various parts of the body according to his own will, but there exists among them all a spiritual fellowship which makes it natural for them to share one another's feelings and to be concerned for one another. "If one member suffers, all suffer with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Moreover, as parts are present in a single whole, so each of us is in the Spirit since all who make up the one body have been baptized into the one Spirit. As the Father is seen in the Son, so the Son is seen in the Spirit. To worship in the Spirit, then, is to have our minds open to the light, as we may learn from our Lord's word to the Samaritan woman. Misled by the tradition of her country, she imagined that it was necessary to worship in a certain place but our Lord gave her a different teaching. He told her that one must worship in Spirit and in Truth, and clearly by the truth he meant himself. As then we speak of worship in the Son because the Son is the image of God the Father as, so we speak of worship in the Spirit because the Spirit is the manifestation of the divinity of the Lord. Through the light of the Spirit, we behold the Son the splendor of God's glory, and through the Son, the very stamp of the Father we are led to him who is the source both of his stamp, who is the Son, and of its seal, who is the Holy Spirit.

## Collect for January 2

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives: through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

# The Second Sunday after Christmas Sunday, January 3, 2021



## Good and Joyful News from 2020

### Mutant Enzyme Heralds Breakthrough in Recycling!

Scientists have created an enzyme that can break down used plastic bottles for recycling in a matter of hours. Engineered from bacteria found in leaf compost, the enzyme reduces PET bottles (made from polyethylene terephthalate, a form of polyester) to their chemical building blocks, which are then used to make high-quality new bottles. Existing recycling technologies usually produce plastic suitable only for clothing and carpets. Carbios, the French startup behind the breakthrough, aims to be recycling at an industrial scale within five years. "This represents a significant step forward for true circular recycling of PET," says Professor John McGeehan, director of the UK-based Centre for Enzyme Innovation. [Source: The Guardian]



## Play with the Song

**"On the tenth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, ten lords a-leaping..."**

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric?



## Scripture and Prayer for the Day

**Psalms 84 • Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19 • Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23**

Almighty and most merciful God, grant that by the indwelling of your Holy Spirit we may be enlightened and strengthened for your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**



## A Deep Dive

**Theological Reading: A reading from a sermon by St. Quodvultdeus, bishop (AD 407-450) Sermo 2 de Symbolo: PL 40, 655**

The Lord, the teacher of love, full of love, came in person with summary judgment on the world, as had been foretold of him, and showed that the law and the prophets are summed up in two commandments of love. Call to mind, brethren, what these two commandments are. They ought to be very familiar to you; they should not only spring to mind when I mention them, but ought never to be absent from your hearts. Keep always in mind that we must love God and our neighbor: Love God with your whole heart, your whole soul, and your whole mind, and your neighbor as yourself. These two commandments must be always in your thoughts and in your hearts, treasured, acted on, fulfilled. Love of God is the first to be commanded, but love of neighbor is the first to be put into practice. In giving two commandments of love Christ would not commend to you first your neighbor and then God but first God and then your neighbor. Since you do not yet see God, you merit the vision of God by loving your neighbor. By loving your neighbor you prepare your eye to see God. Saint John says clearly: If you do not love your brother or sister whom you see, how will you love God whom you do not see! Consider what is said to you: Love God. If you say to me: Show me whom I am to love, what shall I say if not what Saint John says: No one has ever seen God! But in case you should think that you are completely cut off from the sight of God, he says: God is love, and he who remains in love remains in God. Love your neighbor, then, and see within yourself the power by which you love your neighbor; there you will see God, as far as you are able. Begin, then, to love your neighbor. Break your

bread to feed the hungry, and bring into your home the homeless poor; if you see someone naked, clothe them, and do not look down on your own flesh and blood. What will you gain by doing this? Your light will then burst forth like the dawn. Your light is your God; he is your dawn, for he will come to you when the night of time is over. He does not rise or set but remains forever. In loving your neighbor and caring for him you are on a journey. Where are you traveling if not to the Lord God, to him whom we should love with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind? We have not yet reached his presence, but we have our neighbor at our side. Support, then, this companion of your pilgrimage if you want to come into the presence of the one with whom you desire to remain forever.

### Collect for January 3

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

**Monday, January 4, 2021**



### Good and Joyful News from 2020

#### The Musician Inspiring a New Generation!

Twenty-one-year-old British cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason first won attention aged 17 as the first black musician to win the prestigious BBC Young Musician of the Year competition. But it was his performance at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex in 2018, watched by a global audience, that made him famous. Now, thanks to the so-called "Sheku effect", a new generation of young cellists is emerging, with Britain's National Schools Symphony Orchestra reporting a 68 per cent increase in applications from young cellists. Kanneh-Mason is using his celebrity to lobby for more music education in British schools. "It needs to be taught more, and better," he says. He regularly visits schools to perform with young musicians. "I work with many children who wouldn't have had access," he says. There's so much talent among young people that needs to be combined with opportunity." Audiences in Britain and Germany will get a chance to hear him in concert this summer before he departs for a major tour of Australia followed by performances in Los Angeles, and at Carnegie Hall in New York in October. [Source: *i* Newspaper/BBC News/The Guardian/The Big Issue]



### Play with the Song

"On the eleventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me, eleven pipers piping..."

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric?



### Scripture and Prayer for the Day

Exodus 3:1-12 • John 14:6-14

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.



## A Deep Dive

Theological Reading: A reading from the Five Hundred Chapters by Saint Maximus the Confessor, abbot (AD d.662)) Centuria 1, 8-13: PG 90, 1182-1186

The Word of God, born once in the flesh (such is his kindness and his goodness), is always willing to be born spiritually in those who desire him. In them he is born as an infant as he fashions himself in them by means of their virtues. He reveals himself to the extent that he knows someone is capable of receiving him. He diminishes the revelation of his glory not out of selfishness but because he recognizes the capacity and resources of those who desire to see him. Yet, in the transcendence of mystery, he always remains invisible to all. For this reason the apostle Paul, reflecting on the power of the mystery, said: Jesus Christ, yesterday and today; he remains the same forever. For he understands the mystery as ever new, never growing old through our understanding of it. Christ is God, for he had given all things their being out of nothing. Yet he is born as man by taking to himself our nature, flesh endowed with intelligent spirit. A star glitters by day in the East and leads the wise men to the place where the incarnate Word lies, to show that the Word, contained in the Law and the Prophets, surpasses in a mystical way knowledge derived from the senses, and to lead the Gentiles to the full light of knowledge. For surely the word of the Law and the Prophets when it is understood with faith is like a star which leads those who are called by the power of grace in accordance with his decree to recognize the Word incarnate. Here is the reason why God became a perfect man, changing nothing of human nature, except to take away sin (which was never natural anyway). His flesh was set before that voracious, gaping dragon as bait to provoke him: flesh that would be deadly for the dragon, for it would utterly destroy him by the power of the Godhead hidden within it. For human nature, however, his flesh would restore human nature to its original grace. Just as the devil had poisoned the tree of knowledge and spoiled our nature by its taste, so too, in presuming to devour the Lord's flesh he himself is corrupted and is completely destroyed by the power of the Godhead hidden within it. The great mystery of the divine incarnation remains a mystery forever. How can the Word made flesh be essentially the same person that is wholly with the Father? How can he who is by nature God become by nature wholly man without lacking either nature, neither the divine by which he is God nor the human by which he became man? Faith alone grasps these mysteries. Faith alone is truly the substance and foundation of all that exceeds knowledge and understanding.

### Collect for January 4

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. *Amen.*

## Eve of Epiphany Tuesday, January 5, 2021



## Good and Joyful News from 2020

### Beavers return to Britain and could help prevent floods!

Hunted to extinction in Britain 400 years ago, the water-loving beaver is being reintroduced in "trial" enclosures across England. A British government study suggests the herbivorous rodent's habit of building dams in rivers could help prevent flooding by drastically slowing the flow of water as well as purifying water polluted by agricultural fertilizer. The beavers are being sourced from the wild population in Scotland, where they were reestablished as a native species four years ago. Ecologist Derek Gow hails beavers as "ecosystem engineers" He says, "They turn landscapes that are largely dead into environments that wildlife can recolonize." [Source: The Guardian]



## Play with the Song

"On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, twelve drummers drumming..."

Can you think of possible Christian connections to this lyric?



## Scripture and Prayer for the Day

Isaiah 66:18-23 • Romans 15:7-13 • John 15:1-16

Ever-living God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ: Inspire our witness to him, that all may know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



## A Deep Dive

Theological Reading: A Reading from a sermon by Saint Augustine, bishop (AD 354-430) Sermo 13 de Tempore; PL 39, 1097-1098

Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal creator of all things, today became our Savior by being born of a mother. Of his own will he was born for us today, in time, so that he could lead us to his Father's eternity. God became a man so that we might become God. The Lord of the angels became a man today so that we could eat the bread of angels. Today, the prophecy is fulfilled that said: Pour down, heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just one: let the earth be opened and bring forth a savior. The Lord who had created all things is himself now created, so that he who was lost would be found. Thus humanity, in the words of the psalmist confesses: Before I was humbled, I sinned. Humans sinned and became guilty; God is born a man to free us from his guilt. Humanity fell, but God descended; Humanity fell miserably, but God descended mercifully; Humanity fell through pride, God descended with his grace. My brethren, what miracles! What prodigies! The laws of nature are changed in the case of humanity. God is born. A virgin becomes pregnant with a man. The Word of God marries the woman who knows no man. She is now at the same time both mother and virgin. She becomes a mother, yet she remains a virgin. The virgin bears a son, yet she does not know a man; she remains untouched, yet she is not barren. He alone was born without sin for she bore him without the embrace of a man, not by the concupiscence of the flesh but by the obedience of the mind.

## Collect for January 5

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

# The Epiphany Wednesday, January 6, 2021



## Good and Joyful News from 2020

**Orchestra brings Beethoven to the deaf!**

A Hungarian orchestra is helping deaf people to "hear" and enjoy the music of Beethoven through touch. Budapest's Danubia Orchestra Óbuda holds concerts for hearing-impaired people who quite literally feel the Fifth Symphony by Beethoven, who himself battled with hearing loss and wrote some of his greatest music while going deaf. Some of the audience sit next to the musicians and place their hands on the instruments to feel the vibration. Others hold balloons that convey the vibration of the sounds. Some are given special hyper-sensitive hearing aids. "When I sat next to the musician who played the double bass, I started crying," says Zsuzsanna Foldi, who has been deaf all her life. Máté Hámosi, the orchestra's conductor, says the aim is to bring music to people who otherwise have no chance to enjoy it, and to call attention to hearing difficulties that are often ignored. [Source: Reuters]





## Scripture and Prayer for the Day

**Psalms 72:1-7, 10-14 • Matthew 2:1-12**

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



## Feast Day

### The Feast of The Epiphany

The Epiphany follows the Twelve Days. It is the feast that commemorates the coming of the Wise Men to Jesus, following the star. These magi were gentiles, non-Jews. No one knows for sure why they were looking for a Jewish Messiah. But they were guided to him by the light of a star. The Epiphany completes the cycle of Christ's birth story, but it also points us out from that moment to the world. Just as the Magi, gentiles, came to see Jesus and followed his light, so all people can be drawn to him. The light of Christ still shines today through us. We are not called to put it under a basket and hide it, or try to keep it for ourselves. We are called to shine his light to all the world. The Feast of the Epiphany both closes the Christmas season and opens the Season after the Epiphany. This is called "ordinary" time. It's not "ordinary" in the sense of "unimportant." Instead, it shows us that our ordinary lives are indeed filled with the light and love of God, and are the place where God works.



## A Deep Dive

**Theological Reading: A Reading from a sermon by Saint Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome (AD 390-461) Sermo 3 in Epiphania Domini, 1-3. 5: PL 54, 240-244**

The loving providence of God determined that in the last days he would aid the world, set on its course to destruction. He decreed that all nations should be saved in Christ. A promise had been made to the holy patriarch Abraham in regard to these nations. He was to have a countless progeny, born not from his body but from the seed of faith. His descendants are therefore compared with the array of the stars. The father of all nations was to hope not in an earthly progeny but in a progeny from above. Let the full number of the nations now take their place in the family of the patriarchs. Let the children of the promise now receive the blessing in the seed of Abraham, the blessing renounced by the children of his flesh. In the persons of the Magi let all people adore the Creator of the universe; let God be known, not in Judaea only, but in the whole world, so that his name may be great in all Israel. Dear friends, now that we have received instruction in this revelation of God's grace, let us celebrate with spiritual joy the day of our first harvesting, of the first calling of the Gentiles. Let us give thanks to the merciful God, who has made us worthy, in the words of the Apostle, to share the position of the saints in light, who has rescued us from the power of darkness, and brought us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. As Isaiah prophesied: the people of the Gentiles, who sat in darkness, have seen a great light, and for those who dwelt in the region of the shadow of death a light has dawned. He spoke of them to the Lord: The Gentiles, who do not know you, will invoke you, and the peoples, who knew you not, will take refuge in you. This is the day that Abraham saw, and rejoiced to see, when he knew that the sons born of his faith would be blessed in his seed, that is, in Christ. Believing that he would be the father of the nations, he looked into the future, giving glory to God, in full awareness that God is able to do what he has promised. This is the day that David prophesied in the psalms, when he said: All the nations that you have brought into being will come and fall down in adoration in your presence, Lord, and glorify your name. Again, the Lord has made known his salvation; in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice. This came to be fulfilled, as we know, from the time when the star beckoned the three wise men out of their distant country and led them to recognize and adore the King of heaven and earth. The obedience of the star calls us to imitate its humble service: to be servants, as best we can, of the grace that invites all to find Christ. Dear friends, you must have the same zeal to be of help to one another; then, in the kingdom of God, to which faith and good works are the way, you will shine as children of the light: through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with God the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

### Collect for Epiphany

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the Peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**



# Creative meanings of the words found in the song | "12 Days of Christmas"

(Remember, these interpretations are unproven as intentional from the author of the lyrics. For generations Christians have publicized endless ideas about the lyrics. Here are just some of them...)

1. The **Partridge in the Pear Tree** is Jesus Christ on the Cross (the 'tree' being a reference to the wood of the Cross). It might refer to the second tree (the Tree of Life) in the garden of Eden (the first being the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil). Saying 'pear' might be an attempt to distinguish it from the fabled apple of the tree with the serpent. The partridge is also known to sacrifice itself for its young, unlike other species of bird known to let young birds fall or die while staying with their other offspring.
2. The **2 Turtle Doves** might be The Old and New Testaments. Or, others say they represent the prescribed animal sacrifice that Mary and Joseph offered at the Temple (two pigeons or doves)
3. The **3 French Hens** are Faith, Hope, and Charity, the theological virtues. Other people have said they represent the Trinity.
4. The **4 Calling Birds** are the four gospels and/or the four gospel authors: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
5. The **5 Golden Rings** are the first five books of the Old Testament.
6. The **6 Geese A-laying** are the six days of creation.
7. The **7 Swans A-swimming** are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord) or the seven sacraments/sacramental rites.
8. The **8 Maids A-milking** are the eight beatitudes.
9. The **9 Ladies Dancing** are the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control)
10. The **10 Lords A-leaping** are the ten commandments.
11. The **11 Pipers Piping** are the eleven faithful apostles.
12. The **12 Drummers Drumming** are the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.

