

What benefits come from regular church attendance?
How does sporadic attendance affect a person's faith?

Prayer

O God, our Creator and our Redeemer, help us to realize that we do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from you.



**Third Saturday of Advent
Angel with Candle – Angels**

Read Hebrews 1:1-14

The thought of an angel conjures up a variety of images in our minds. Yet, the thought of an angel can be so puzzling! A child intuitively gasps their meaning whereas an adult may often miss it. An angel is a messenger - - any messenger – usually a messenger of good news. We may call a nurse an “angel of mercy.” Or, when we want to express confidence in God’s care, we may pray, “Let your holy angel have charge over us.” An angel may be a liberating thought or struggle, a melody in our hearts, a flesh and blood person, or even an “angel of death.” An angel is a useful symbol, a figurative way of saying that the Creator communicates with his creatures in many ways.

How does God communicate with us?
How can I be an “angel of mercy” to someone?

Prayer

Grant me faith with which to see Your Spirit, Lord, at work in me.

Prayer

Teach us to take care of our bodies, Lord, and to refrain from actions and habits that tend to destroy our health.



Third Wednesday of Advent

Scroll – Isaiah

Read Isaiah 6:1-8

The test of great literature is its ability to grow old and remain fresh. The book of Isaiah was already centuries old when Jesus quoted from it in his sermon at Nazareth (Luk 4:16-23). Generations of Christians have found comfort and hope in its prophecies of the Messiah. The vision of Isaiah 6 has been a part of the Christian liturgy for more than fifteen centuries. And many Christians feel that the way to church renewal today is to be found in living the role of the Suffering servant (e.g. Isaiah 53).

Here is literature that speaks to human need. How different it is from books that pander to the senses and breathe despair.

Name some of your favorite books.

Which ones would you like to read again?

In the picture of God as the "man upstairs" helpful or not?

Prayer

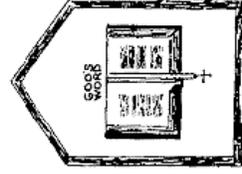
For worthwhile literature we thank you, Lord, and especially for the gift of the Holy Bible.

Third Thursday of Advent

Word of God – Jeremiah

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

Here is the prophecy that was fulfilled by Christ through establishment of the new testament or covenant. The old covenant which is replaced was the "contract" God made with his people through giving the Law. But the people broke their side of the covenant; that is, they broke the Law.



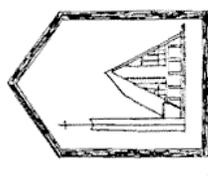
Laws may compel obedience through a system of rewards and punishments, but something more is necessary to change us ourselves. The new covenant is that "something more." Christ does not merely invite us into the kingdom of God, God brings us into the kingdom. There we live, not by the coercion of laws but by "the law written upon our hearts."

What value is there in a system of rewards and punishments? What is the relationship between the Old and the New Testament?

How is the Law written upon our hearts? (Jeremiah's thought is expanded in Hebrews 8-10).

Prayer

Grant your Holy Spirit to us, O God, and write your law on our hearts.



Third Friday of Advent

Church – Nehemiah the Builder

Read Nehemiah 13:10-22

When the Jews were permitted to return to Jerusalem after the captivity in Babylonia (606-536 B.C.) the Sabbath Day became more central for them. Sabbath and synagogue became closely associated; by the time Jesus was born, they were the normative marks of Judaism.

Sabbath and synagogue tended to make religion a matter of "do's and don'ts"; on the other hand they established a system of regular weekly worship for the whole community. Without this provision, religion may become a private affair which people may practice as they wish. Nehemiah and his associates recognized the weakness of "religion when I feel like it."

Week three of Advent **Jesse Tree Scripture & Reflections**



Third Sunday of Advent **Crown - King Solomon**

Read 1 Kings 3:3-38

Solomon asked God for wisdom to govern his people and became a great king. His failure came later because he betrayed God by accepting other gods and exploiting his people with work and taxes to build his majestic royal city of Jerusalem.

Whenever you are in a leadership position, remember that you must use the power of authority you have in service to God and God's people; never use it to exploit others of for your own selfishness.

Ask God for the wisdom necessary to discern how to respond to the needs of people you led.

Do you remain faithful to God's call to be a servant of those in need?

Prayer

Lord grant us the gift of wisdom. May we use it for the betterment of all your people. Increase the amount of wisdom in our world so that it can make a difference in the lives of all whom we meet and even those whom we shall never know.

Third Monday of Advent **Elijah and the Raven**

Read 1 Kings 17:1-16



Millions of people watch the nature channel because of a universal interest in animals. Christians from ancient times have rightly seen a religious significance in this interest. St. Francis of Assisi expressed this in his hymn, "All creatures of our God and King." The story of Elijah and the raven has the same concern.

When we learn to love life in its many forms then we will be better able to love life in its human form. Conservation of wild life is akin to love and concern for human life. The famed Frank Lubach stated that one who cannot curb his foot from kicking a dog many someday be guilty of abusing people.

Do you abuse your pets? Other animals?

How does a pet help a person?

How do you treat other people? Younger children?

Prayer

Help us to remember, O God, that thou love not only people but also all other creatures.



Third Tuesday of Advent **Hand of Blessing – Elisha and Healing**

Read II Kings 5:1-27

Part of the heritage of Jesus is Elisha's concern for the health of people. This prophet was widely known for his ability to heal. Jesus himself showed far greater concern for human health, and he clearly demonstrated that many diseases commonly presumed to be incurable are not incurable at all. AS he was concerned with people, it was inevitable that he was concerned with their health. It has taken the world many centuries to become as interested in health as our Lord was.

The symbol pictures a dove , representing the Spirit who is the Agent of healing, and a hand extended in blessing, representing the transmission of God's healing power.

Why is cleanliness so important?

Why is greed such a corrupter of people?