

Lay Devotions
FOR THE SEASON OF
Advent

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OPENING PRAYERS

The head of the household lights the candle(s) of the Advent Wreath (an additional candle is lit each week, with the rose candle lit on the Third Sunday of Advent) and leads those present in the opening Versicle and Response:

℣. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. ℟. Make his paths straight.

Then the household together recites the following prayers:

OUR Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us

not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.

HAIL, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and in the hour of our death. Amen.

Members of the household then read aloud the passage of scripture and patristic reflection appointed for the day, and the head of the family reads the day's Collect or Antiphon. Families with young children wishing to shorten the readings may omit the reflection. ¶ Concluding prayers are found on page 31.

DAILY READINGS

November 27

Isaiah 7:1–7, 10–15



AND it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his

people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field; And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying,

Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. . . . Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

A reflection from St. Leo the Great

DEARLY beloved, the magnitude of the works of God exceeds by far the power of human speech: yet hard as it is to discourse on these wonders, we cannot keep silence. The saying of the prophet, Who shall declare his generation? points to the Human Nature as well as to the Divine Essence of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Unless faith first believes, no words can explain how the two natures were united in one person. Here is room for everlasting praise, because the entire fullness of everlasting praise is not sufficient to overflow it. Come, let us rejoice, in that this great mystery of mercy is beyond the power of expression; let us realize that it is good to be overpow-

ered, when the heights of our salvation are so far above our powers of utterance. No one comes nearer to understanding the truth than he who grasps the fact that in divine matters the further he advances the further he must realize the distance to be towards the object of his search. For he who thinks that he is within reach of his goal will not attain to it, but rather will fail in his search. To save us from being distressed by the confines of our weakness, we are given the help of the voices of the Prophets and Evangelists; they teach us, and enkindle our hearts, so that we seem to see the Lord's Nativity, by which the Word was made flesh, no as a past event but as ever present before us.

Collect

O LORD, raise up, we pray thee, and come among us, and with great might succor us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us. Through thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God... &c. Amen.

November 28

Isaiah 2:1-9

THE word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last

days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.

A reflection from St. Leo the Great

DEARLY beloved, if we study the origin of our creation with faith

and wisdom, we find that man was made in the image of God, that he might imitate his Originator; if the form of Divine Goodness is reflected in us, as though in a mirror, then that is the natural, honourable purpose of our species. And indeed every day the grace of our Saviour renews us, so that what fell in the first Adam is raised up in the second. ... God in his love for us, then, renews us in his image, and, so that he may find in us the fashion of his goodness, he gives us wherewithal we may do good, lighting up, as it were, the lamps of our minds, enkindling us with the fire of his love, that we may love, not him only, but all that he loves as well.

Collect

STIR up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the ways of thine Only-begotten; that by his coming we may be worthy to serve thee with purified minds. Through the same Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen.

November 29

Matthew 15:1-13

AT that time, Jesus said unto them: Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They

that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

A reflection from St. Leo the Great

OUR Saviour himself instructed his disciples concerning the times and seasons of the coming of the kingdom of God and the end of the world, and he hath given the same teaching to the whole Church in saying by the mouth of his Apostle: Take heed lest your hearts be weighed down through surfeiting and drunkenness and the care of this life. Dearly beloved, we know that this warning applies more especially to us, for though the day which our Lord foretold is at present

hidden from us, yet we doubt not that it is near. Let every man, then, make himself ready against the coming of the Lord, lest it find him a slave to gluttony, or entangled in worldly cares. Fore we see by daily experience, dearly beloved, that fulness of drink blunts the keenness of the mind, and excess of food weakens the will. ... [I]t is the function of the soul to deny things to the body which is subject to it, and, acting on its interior conviction, to keep back the outer man from things unseemly. Then will the soul, more often free from bodily lusts, sit at leisure in the inner court of the mind, meditating on divine wisdom. There, where the turmoil of earthly cares is stilled, will it feed on holy thoughts and find joy in pleasures that will never end. If in this life it is difficult to persevere, it is possible, nevertheless, oftentimes to begin again, in order that we may be occupied more frequently and more intently with spiritual things rather than carnal ones. When we overcome greater obstacles by better efforts, even temporal actions lead on to incorruptible riches.

Collect

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God: that the coming festival of our redemption may bring us aid in this present life, and bounteously bestow the rewards of eternal blessedness. Through thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen.

November 30

St. Andrew, Apostle

Romans 10:10-18

FOR with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

From the St. Andrew Daily Missal

THE feast of St. Andrew has been kept since the fourth century on November 30th. St. Andrew was both an apostle and a martyr. The Collect tells us that he was called to govern

and teach the Church; and the Epistle and the Gospel deal with the vocation of him who was the first among the apostles to know Jesus Christ. When he was called, he immediately left his nets to become a fisher of men, and 'his sound hath gone forth into all the earth to preach the gospel of peace.' After the coming of the Holy Ghost he preached in Palestine, and then in Scythia, Epirus, and Thrace. 'But all have not obeyed the Gospel,' and St. Andrew ere long became the apostle of the cross. The priests of Achaia describe his martyrdom at Patras. He died on that special form of a cross which has ever since been called after him, and 'the Lord received his sacrifice in the odour of sweetness.' His body, having been first taken to Constantinople, was in 1210 moved to the Cathedral at Amalfi, in the kingdom of Naples. In 1642 his head was placed by Pius II in the basilica of St. Peter, his brother. His name is inscribed in the Canon of the Mass. St. Andrew is the patron of Scotland. Let us, with St. Andrew, follow Christ even to the cross.

Collect

WE humbly beseech thy majesty, O Lord, that as blessed Andrew the apostle was both a preacher and a ruler of thy Church, so he may unceasingly intercede for us with thee. Through thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, &c. Amen.

December 1

Isaiah 1:16–28



WASH you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn

to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.

A reflection from St. Leo the Great

BELOVED, with pastoral tenderness we preach to you, as the season and our wonted devotion urges. We must keep the fast of the tenth month in which, in return for the completed gathering in of all the fruits, an offering of moderation is most worthily made to God their bounteous giver. What can be more powerful than a fast? By its observance we draw near to God, and withstanding the devil, we conquer our alluring sins. For fasting has always been food for virtue. From abstinence indeed proceed pure thoughts, prudent wishes, more healthful counsels: and through voluntary afflictions, the flesh dies for them that are lustful, and the breath returns to virtues. But because the salvation of our souls is not only secured by fasting, let us complete our fast by deeds of mercy to the poor. Let us devote to virtue what we withdraw from pleasure. Let the self-denial of him who fasts become the refreshment of the poor. Let us be zealous for the defence of widows, the benefits of orphans, the consolation of those who mourn, the reconciliation of those at variance. Let the pilgrim be welcomed, the oppressed be aided, the

naked clothed, the sick tended. So that whoever of us by his righteous toils has offered to God the Author of all good gifts the sacrifice of this piety, may be worthy to receive the reward of the heavenly Kingdom.

Collect

STIR up thy might, we beseech thee, O Lord, and come; that we, who are ever threatened by the peril of our sins, may be counted worthy to be rescued by thy protection, and saved by thy deliverance. Who with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.

December 2

St. Bibiana, Virgin & Martyr

Sirach 51:13-17



O LORD my God, Thou has exalted my dwelling place upon the earth, and I have prayed for death to pass away. I called upon the Lord, the Father of my Lord, that He would not leave me in the day of my trouble, and in the time of the proud without help. I will praise Thy name continually, and will praise it with thanksgiving, and my prayer was heard. And Thou hast saved me from destruction, and hast delivered me from the evil time. Therefore I will give thanks and praise to Thee, O Lord our God.

From the St. Andrew Daily Missal

SAINTE Bibiana was born in Rome of a noble Christian family: and as the Collect tells us, in her the flower of virginity was united with the palm of martyrdom. A wise and prudent virgin, she was less afraid of the loss of all her goods and of the sufferings of imprisonment, than the loss of that hidden treasure or that pearl of great price, of which the Gospel speaks. When delivered to the caresses and flattery of her jailer Rufinus, who strove to pervert her, she called upon the Lord, who saved her from destruction. Rufinus then had recourse to violence, but with no greater success. Seeing which, the enraged governor of Rome ordered that Bibiana should be tied to a column and beaten to death with thongs loaded with lead (A.D. 363). The Basilica of St. Mary Major was built over her tomb.

Collect

O GOD, the giver of all good gifts, who didst unite in thy servant Bibiana the flower of virginity with the palm of martyrdom, deign to unite through her intercession our souls by charity to thee, that dangers being removed, we may obtain the eternal reward. Through thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.



December 3

Isaiah 3:1-11



FOR, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water. The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable. When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand: In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people. For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory. The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. Say ye to the righteous,

that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

From the St. Andrew Daily Missal

AT Christmas Jesus will be born in our hearts, for at that time the anniversary of His birth will be celebrated. He refuses nothing, to the prayer of the Church, His spouse, and thus He will grant to our souls the same graces which He gave the shepherds and the wise Kings. Christ will come again also, at the end of all time, to 'condemn the guilty to the flames, and to call the just with a loving voice to heaven.' ... The same welcome will be given to us by our Lord when He comes to judge us, as we give to Him now when coming to redeem us. Let us prepare for the Christmas feast by holy prayers and aspirations and by reforming our lives, that we may be ready for that last great assize upon which depends the fate of our soul for all eternity. And all this with confidence, for those 'who wait upon the Lord will never be confounded.'

Collect

INCLINE thine ear to our prayers, O Lord, we beseech thee; and lighten the darkness of our minds by the grace of thy visitation. Who with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.

December 4
St. Peter Chrysologus,
Bishop, Confessor, & Doctor

Matthew 5:13-19

YE are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

From the St. Andrew Daily Missal

SAINTE Peter gained the name Chrysologus, which means 'speech of gold,' by his great eloquence. As the Collect reminds us, his promotion to the See of Ravenna, owing to an ap-

parition of the Apostle St. Peter to Pope Sixtus III, was miraculous. 'Ye are the salt of the earth... and the light of the world,' says the Gospel. 'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke... do the work of an evangelist,' continues the Epistle. That was what St. Peter did: he composed more than one hundred and sixty homilies, full of learning, which earned him the title of Doctor of the Church. It was he who wrote this well-known saying: 'He who amuses himself with Satan cannot rejoice with Christ.' He died at Imola in A.D. 450. Let us listen lovingly to the word of God.

Collect

O GOD, who didst elect the blessed and illustrious Doctor, Peter Chrysologus, by a divine direction, to govern and instruct Thy Church; grant, we beseech Thee, that we may deserve to have him for our intercessor in heaven, whom we have had as our teacher of the supernatural life on earth. Through thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen.

December 5

Luke 1:26-35, 38

AND in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was

Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

A reflection from St. Ambrose

THE divine mysteries are well hidden, and their meanings are not easy to grasp. For, as the prophet says: What man is he that can know the counsel of God? And yet we can gather from other sayings of our Lord and Saviour, that there was some prevalent

reason for singling out for the Child-bearing of our Lord one who was espoused to a man. Why was her time not fulfilled before her espousal? To give the devil no chance of saying that she had conceived in adultery. And the Angel came in unto her. Mark the virtue of a virgin in her behaviour, mark it in her hesitancy, mark it in her words, in the mystery itself. It is natural for a virgin to be timid, perturbed at the approach of men, and troubled at their salutation. Here is an example of modesty for women to study. She was alone in her chamber, she who would not be seen by men, and an Angel alone discovers her there. She was alone with neither companion nor witness, when the Angel saluted her, so that their converse could not be basely interpreted. Now this mystery was not to be trusted to men, but was to issue from the mouth of an Angel. Today is heard for the first time: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee. It is both heard and believed. Then she says: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: let it happen to me according to thy word. How humble she is! How she consecrates herself! She who is chosen to be the Mother of the Lord calls herself his handmaid, instead of exalting herself at the unexpected promise.

Collect

STIR up thy might, we beseech thee, O Lord, and come: that we who put our trust in thy goodness may speedily be delivered from all adver-

sity. Who with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.

December 6

St. Nicholas, Bishop & Confessor

Luke 1:39–47



AND Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

A reflection from St. Ambrose

THOSE who exact faith are generally expected to incite faith. Accordingly, when the Angel announced secret counsels, he announced the conception of an aged and barren wo-

man, to incite the faith of the Virgin Mary. For with God nothing shall be impossible, he asserts, of all things that he is pleased to do. Mary set out for the hill country when she heard this, not because she doubted his words, nor because she mistrusted the messenger, not because the example he had given her lacked proof; but she went rejoicing in her consecration, inspired by her sacred office, hastening for very joy. Whither does she go, she who is now bearing God? She hastens with all speed to higher realms, for the grace of the Holy Spirit knows no delay. ... Mary's example of modesty has been shown: let young women also study her humility. She came as one relative to another, as the younger to the elder, nor did she merely come; she was the first to utter her greeting. It should always be the case, that the more chaste a virgin is, the more is she humble. She will know how to submit to her elders. Let whoever makes profession of chastity be expert in, be the mistress of, humility; for this is the root of piety, and the first principle of its teaching. How wondrous indeed is this incident, when the superior comes to the inferior, to bring aid to the inferior: Mary comes to Elizabeth, Christ to John.

Collect

O GOD, who didst adorn blessed Nicholas thy Bishop with many wonderful works, grant, we beseech thee, that through his merits and

prayers we may be delivered from the flames of hell. Through thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, &c. Amen.

December 7
St. Ambrose of Milan,
Bishop, Confessor, & Doctor

Isaiah 4:1-3



AND in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach. In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

Reflection from St. Gregory the Great

THE sight of all these signs and wonders ought to call forth praise, and not be a stumbling block. But to the minds of the unbelievers it became a stumbling block when, after all his miracles, they saw him dying. As Paul says: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. It does indeed seem foolish to man that the Author of life should die for men. And man makes a stumbling block of that very act that really puts him more fully in God's debt. For God deserves more honour from men in proportion to the humiliations that he receives on behalf of men. What is meant by: And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me; except an open proclamation of the abjection and humiliation of his death? It is as though he were to say plainly: I do indeed work miracles, but I am not ashamed to suffer insults. Therefore when the time comes for me to die for men, let them take care, lest after worshipping me for my miracles, they despise me in my death.

Collect

STIR up thy power, we beseech thee, O Lord, and come: and with great might succour us, that with the help of thy grace that which is hindered by our sins may be hastened by thy merciful forgiveness. Who with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.

December 8
*The Conception of the
Blessed Virgin Mary*

Isaiah 5:1-7



Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

From the St. Andrew Daily Missal

DURING this season the Greek Church commemorates Our Lord's ancestors, especially Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On the Fourth Sunday she honours all the patriarchs of the Old Testament from Adam to St. Joseph, and the prophets of whom St. Matthew speaks in his genealogy of Our Lord. The Latin Church, without honouring them in any special form of devotion, nevertheless speaks to us of them in the Office when quoting the promises made to them concerning the Messiah. In this way, the Church makes pass before our eyes the magnificent procession which all down the ages goes before Jesus Christ. There we see Jacob, Judah, Moses, David, Micah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Zachariah, Habakkuk, Hosea, Haggai, Malachi, and above all Isaiah, St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, and the glorious Virgin Mary who sums up in herself all Messianic hopes, seeing that their fulfilment hung on her Fiat. 'Be it done unto me according to Thy Word.' All these holy souls yearned for the Redeemer, and in their fervent longing they besought him to hasten the day when He would come.

Collect

O GOD, who makest us glad with the yearly expectation of the birth of thine only Son Jesus Christ: grant that as we joyfully receive him for our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our Judge. Who with

God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.

December 9

Isaiah 6:1-10

IN the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat,

and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

From the St. Andrew Daily Missal

THE longed for Messiah is the Son of God Himself, the Great Royal Deliverer who is to conquer Satan and reign over His people forever, whom all nations shall serve. The very reason why we should utter our 'Come,' crying to Our Lord, 'O, thou corner stone, uniting in thyself the two peoples, come,' is that the divine mercy extends, not only to Israel, but to all the Gentiles as well. 'And when he comes we shall all be guided together by this Divine Shepherd.' 'He shall feed his flock,' says Isaiah, '...He shall gather together the lambs with his arm, and shall take them up in his bosom.' This coming of Christ which the Prophets foretold and to which God's people looked forward is two-fold in character; it is, at the same time the coming of mercy in which the Divine Redeemer appeared on earth in the lowly state of His human life, and the coming to Judgment when He will appear full of glory and majesty at the end of the world as Judge and supreme rewarder of men. The seers of the Old Testament did not distinguish between these two comings, therefore the liturgy at Advent which repeats their words to us speaks in turn of one and the other. Our Lord Himself, in the Gospel for the First Sunday of

Advent passes without any transition from His first to his Second Coming and, in his homily on the Gospel for the Third Sunday of Advent, St. Gregory explains that St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Redeemer, is in spirit and power Elijah, the forerunner of the Judge.

Collect

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God: that the new birth in the flesh of thine only-begotten Son may deliver us; who are held fast in the old bondage under the yoke of sin. Through the same Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen.

December 10

Matthew 1:18-24



Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name

JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife.

A reflection from St. Jerome

WHY was he not born simply of a virgin, instead of an espoused one? Firstly, to reveal Mary's lineage by means of Joseph's: secondly, to prevent her being stoned by the Jews as an adulteress: thirdly, to provide a protector for the flight into Egypt. Ignatius the Martyr adds a fourth reason for his being born of an espoused maiden: to hide her child-bearing from the devil, who would expect him to be born of a married woman. ... Before they came together, she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost. By Joseph alone was she found; he had the bridegroom's privilege of knowing all about his bride. In the words, Before they came together, there is no indication that they did come together afterwards; but Scripture shows that they had not done so then. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. If any one is married to an adulteress, they become one body, and

it is laid down in the law that, in addition to the culprit, any one who is privy to the crime is also guilty: how can Joseph be described as a just man, if he hid his wife's sin? This is the very testimony of Mary's purity, for Joseph knew that she was chaste, and marvelled at what was happening, and so he hid in silence the mystery that he did not understand.

Collect

ALmighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy 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 quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal. Though him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

December 11

Revelation 22:1-10

AND he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb

shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

From the St. Andrew Daily Missal

THese two comings, moreover, have the same end in view, since if the Son of God has descended to our level in becoming man (the First Coming), it is in order to enable us to ascend to His Father by bringing us into His heavenly kingdom (the Second Coming). And the sentence which will be passed by the Son of Man, to whom will be committed all judgment, when He comes a second

time into the world will depend upon the welcome which awaited Him when He came the first. 'This Child,' said Simeon, 'is set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be contradicted.' The Father and the Holy Ghost will bear testimony to Christ that He is the Son of God and our Lord Himself will prove it by His words and miracles. And men will have to make their own, this threefold testimony of God in Three Persons, and will thus themselves decide their future fate.

Collect

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou has given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen.

December 12

Revelation 22:11-21



HE that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with

me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whore-mongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

From the St. Andrew Daily Missal

THE effect of the Divine Judgment is, therefore, that a permanent separation will be made by

Almighty God between the good and the wicked. 'Judge me, O God,' says the psalmist, 'and distinguish my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man.' All who shall have denied Christ upon earth He will banish from His Presence, cutting them off for ever and ever from those faithful to Him, while He will gather His true disciples around Him, to make of them God's eternal children. All who have followed Him by their faith and love He will lead into His Father's kingdom, where, intimately united to the Son of God made Man, they will be for all eternity what St. Paul calls 'Christ and His Mystical Body' and St. Augustine 'the whole Christ.'

Collect

O LORD Jesus Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee; Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at thy second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight. Who with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.



December 13

St. Lucy of Syracuse,

Virgin & Martyr

Matthew 13:44-52



A GAIN, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

From the St. Andrew Daily Missal

BORN in Sicily towards the end of the third century, of noble origin, St. Lucy, as the Gospel twice reminds

us, gave away all her riches to the poor and when she had nothing more she gave herself to Jesus. Whilst the foolish virgins neglected to fill their lamps with the 'oil of gladness' of which the Introit speaks, Lucy, whose name signifies light, waited with her lighted lamp in hand, that is with her soul filled with grace, the coming of her Spouse. 'Pure hearts are the temples of the Holy Ghost,' she declared to her judge. It is this Spirit, also symbolized by the 'oil of gladness' as we are told in the ceremonies of Maundy Thursday, an oil that gave suppleness and strength to her soul in such a miraculous way that St. Lucky resisted her executioners unto death rather than lose the treasure of her virginity. Where her name occurs in the Canon of the Mass, and is repeated every day by thousands of priests who glorify God in her. She died in 303. The lighted lamp in hand is the soul in a state of grace; let us in this season of Advent wait for the Spouse who will soon come.

Collect

GRACIOUSLY hear us, O God of our salvation, and grant that we, who keep with joy the festival of Blessed Lucy, thy virgin and martyr, may be taught to be loving and devout towards Thee. Through thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end, Amen.

December 14

Isaiah 9:2-7

THE people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

A reflection from St. Augustine

THUS lauded him the multitude: Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel! Well might it be a mental crucifying for the envy of the rules of

December 15

*Octave of the Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

Isaiah 11:1-13



the Jews to endure, when so great a multitude was shouting out Christ their King! But what was it for the Lord to be King of Israel? What great matter for the King of all worlds to become King of men? For Christ was not King of Israel for exacting of tribute, or arming a host with the sword, and visibly subduing enemies; but King of Israel that he should counsel for eternity, that he should bring unto the kingdom of heaven them that believe, hope, and love. Being then Son of God, the Word by which all things were made, that it should be his will to be King of Israel is a condescension, not a preferment, a betokening of mercy, not an increasing of power. For he who was called on earth King of the Jews, is in heaven Lord of Angels.

Collect

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us thine only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin; Grant that we, being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit. Through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the same Spirit liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen.



AND there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy

mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

A reflection from St. Jerome

AND there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse. The whole of the first part of the Book of Isaiah up to the vision, or burden, of Babylon, that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw, is all one prophecy of Christ... The Jews interpret the rod and flower of the stem of Jesse as the Lord himself, as they see in the rod the power, and in the flower the beauty, of his rule. On the other hand, we understand the rod out of the stem of Jesse to mean holy Mary the Virgin, as she

may be compared to a young stem on which no fruit has ever hung, as we read above: Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son. And the flower we understand to mean our Lord and Saviour, who says in the Song of Solomon: I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon this flower, who will suddenly spring forth from the stem and root of Jesse through Mary the Virgin, for in him all the fulness of the Godhead is pleased to dwell bodily. It shall not be a portion of the Spirits, as in the case of the Saints, but as it is written in the Hebrew Gospel read by the Nazarenes: The whole fountain of the Holy Ghost shall be poured forth upon him; where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Collect

ALMIGHTY, everlasting God, direct our actions according to thy good pleasure: that in the Name of thy beloved Son we may be worthy to abound in good works. Through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen.

December 16

Mark 1:1-15

THE beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send

my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him. Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of

God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

A reflection from St. Augustine

BLESSED is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel; is rather to be so taken, that, In the name of the Lord, should be understood to mean, in the name of God the Father: although it may be also taken to mean, in his own name, because he too is Lord. Whence also it is written elsewhere: The Lord rained from the Lord. But his own words are a better guide for our understanding, where he saith: I am come in the name of my father, and ye have not received me; another will come in his own name, him ye will receive. For Christ is the Master of humility, as he that, Humbled himself, being made obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. We are not to imagine, then, that he forgoeth his Godhead, what times as he teacheth us humility: in that, he is equal with the Father; in this, like unto us: thereby that he is equal with the Father, he created us that we should have our being: thereby that he is like unto us, he redeemed us, that we should not lose our being.

Collect

STIR up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded. Through thy

son Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unit of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen.

December 17

2 Thessalonians 2:1-8, 14-17



Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming... Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. There-

fore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

A reflection from St. Ambrose

SEE how the shepherds come with haste, for no one should look for Christ slothfully. See how the shepherds believe the Angel: and then can you be unwilling to believe the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Angels and Prophets and Apostles? See how every word of the Scriptures is weighed and measured with care and purpose. They came with haste, it says, To see this Saying. For by, This Saying, when the Lord's flesh is seen, the Word is seen, which is the Son. Think not this but a mean example offered to your belief, because shepherds are of humble station: their lack of education made their faith all the greater. The Lord sought out, not men from lecture halls and debating rooms, but simple, unlettered folk, who were incapable of embellishing and gilding what they heard. It is simplicity that is required: ambition is out of place. Do not imagine that because they were humble, the shepherds' sayings are to be made light of. Mary's faith is strengthened by them, and through them the people come together to

worship God. All they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. Let us learn from the chastity of the holy Virgin in all things: no less modest in speech than in body, she collected together all these proofs of the faith, and hid them in her heart.

Antiphon

O WISDOM, which camest out of the mouth of the Most High, and reachest from one end to another, mightily and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence.

December 18 *The Expectation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

Luke 21:25–33

AND there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to

them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

Reflection from St. Gregory the Great

OUR Lord and Saviour wanted to find us ready for his coming, and so he denounced beforehand those evil things that would come to pass in the growing-old of the world, with the intent of curbing our earth-bound desires. We are told of the great catastrophes that will take place in the last days, so that if we will not fear God in the time of peace, then at least we may fear our doom at the approach of these catastrophes and his judgment. ... Inasmuch however, as so many things which have been foretold have already been fulfilled, there is no doubt but that those few still remaining will also come to pass. For what has already happened shows clearly what will certainly come. We tell you of these things, dearest brethren, to stir up your minds to watchful care, that they slumber not through carelessness, nor wax faint through ignorance, but that fear may give them eagerness, and eagerness strength in well-doing.

Antiphon

O ADONAI, and leader of the house of Israel, who appearedst in the bush to Moses in a flame of fire, and gavest him the law in Sinai: Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

December 19

Isaiah 13:1-11



THE burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land. Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with

wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

From the St. Andrew Daily Missal

FROM all this we see the great function of Advent. It is the season which prepares us to receive our Lord with the necessary dispositions, in His first coming of which the Christmas celebrations are the Church's official anniversary. At the same time it helps to fit us to be among the number of the 'blessed of my Father' when our Redeemer shall come for the second time. During this season the Church's Liturgy will bring before us the two comings, so that we may look forward with the same confidence to the coming of the Babe of the manger, who is going to be born more and more within us by the graces of Christmas and also to the coming of our sovereign Judge, who will bring us into His kingdom and separate us from evildoers, putting a great chasm between them and us.

Antiphon

O ROOT of Jesse, which standest for an ensign of the people, at

whom kings shall shut their mouths,
unto whom the Gentiles shall seek:
Come and deliver us, and tarry not.

December 20
The Vigil of St. Thomas

Isaiah 35:1–6

THE wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

A reflection from St. Leo the Great

THE loving mercy of God is alone the cause of our restoration: we would not love him had he not first loved us, and put to flight the darkness of our ignorance by the light of his truth. This he declares by the holy

Isaiah: And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. And again: I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. John the Apostle teaches us how this was fulfilled, saying: And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. And again: We love God, because he first loved us.

Antiphon

O KEY of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel; that openest and no man shutteth, and shuttest and no man openeth: Come, and bring the prisoners out of the prison-house, them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death

December 21
St. Thomas, Apostle

Isaiah 40:1–8

COMFORT ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for

all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

From the St. Andrew Daily Missal

It is from Bethlehem that the King, the Ruler, shall go forth who is to bring peace to all the nations and who will deliver his people from the power of their enemies. In a special way our souls will share in this deliverance during the Christmas celebrations which mark the anniversary of the entrance into the world of Christ, the vanquisher of Satan. 'Grant, we beseech thee,' the Church prays, 'that the new birth of Thine only-begotten Son may set us free, whom the old bondage doth hold under the yoke of sin.' In the same way that St. John the Baptist prepared the Jews for the coming of the Messiah, so he prepares us for the

union, closer every year, which our Lord forms with our souls at Christmas. 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' cried the forerunner of Christ. So let us make straight the way into our hearts, that our Saviour may enter and give us his graces of life and freedom.

Antiphon

O DAY-SPRING, Brightness of the Light everlasting, and Sun of righteousness: Come and enlighten them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

December 22

Matthew 11:2-10

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft

raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Reflection from St. Gregory the Great

LET us hear what Jesus said to the crowds about John, after John's disciples had gone away: What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? He points his meaning by denying, not by affirming, this. A reed bends over as soon as a breeze even touches it. And by the reed did he not mean our worldly minds? For as soon as they are touched by praise or blame, they immediately bend to one side or the other.

Antiphon

O KING of Nations, and their Desire; the Cornerstone, who makest both one: Come and save mankind, whom thou formedst of clay.

December 23

John 1:19–28



AND this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And

they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Reflection from St. Gregory the Great

IN these words read to us, beloved brethren, the humility of John is commended: he was so full of virtue that he was believed to be the Christ, and yet he firmly held himself to be no more than what he was, and would not be persuaded by popular opinion into the vanity of thinking more highly of himself. He confessed, and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ. In saying: I am not; he gave a plain denial of that which he was not, without denying that which he was. This very act of speaking the truth made him a member of the One

whose name he would not take on a false presumption. By refusing to appropriate the name of Christ he was made a member of Christ: in humbly recognizing his own weakness he won for himself an actual share of the glory of Christ. As we read these words, a saying of our Lord's from another part of the Gospels comes to mind, and it has much bearing on the subject before us. In another place, when the disciples ask our Lord about the coming of Elijah, he answers: Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. And if you wish to know, John himself is Elijah.

Antiphon

O EMMANUEL, our King and Law-giver, the Desire of all nations and their Salvation: Come and save us, O Lord our God.

December 24

*The Vigil of the Nativity of Our Lord
(Christmas Eve)*

Luke 3:1-6



Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And

he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Reflection from St. Gregory the Great

By the voice of our Redeemer it is said: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. It is clear that the end of the kingdom of the Jews is at hand, when it is divided and subject to so many rulers. Fittingly the names of the high priests as well as of the rulers are given; he whom John the Baptist preached was both the King and the High Priest who was to come; St. Luke the Evangelist fixes the date of his preaching by both rulers and priests. ... And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. It is clear from all the versions that John actually baptized, as well as preaching the baptism of repentance. Yet his baptism was not able to remit sins; the remission of sins is given us only through the baptism of Christ. Notice how it is expressed: preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. The baptism that he preached

gave the absolution from sins which he himself was not able to give. Just as in the word of his preaching there was the forerunning of the Incarnate Word of the Father, so, in his baptism that could not absolve sins lay the antecedent of that baptism of repentance which did give absolution.

Antiphon

○ VIRGIN of Virgins, how shall this be? for neither before thee was any seen like thee, nor shall there be after. Daughters of Jerusalem, why marvel ye at me? The thing which ye behold is a divine mystery.

CONCLUDING PRAYERS

After the readings appointed for the day, the head of the household leads the others in this closing Versicle and Response:

℣. Drop down ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. ℞. Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation.

The devotions conclude with the singing of a verse of one of the following Hymns and, optionally, the recitation of the St. Andrew Prayer.

Hymn I: *Veni, veni Emmanuel*

I.

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

II.

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

III.

○ come, thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

IV.

○ come, thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

V.

○ come, Adonai, Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

VI.

○ come, thou Wisdom from on high,
And order all things, far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

VII.

O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's
peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Hymn II: *Conditor alme siderum*

I.

CREATOR of the stars of night,
Thy people's everlasting light,
Jesu, Redeemer, save us all,
And hear thy servants when they call.

II.

Thou, grieving that the ancient curse
Should doom to death an universe,
Hast found the medicine, full of grace,
To save and heal a ruined race.

III.

Thou camest, the Bridegroom of the
Bride,
As drew the world to evening tide,
Proceeding from a virgin shrine,
The spotless Victim all divine.

IV.

At whose dread Name, majestic now,
All knees must bend, all hearts must
bow;
And things celestial thee shall own,
And things terrestrial, Lord alone.

V.

O thou whose coming is with dread,
To judge and doom the quick and dead
Preserve us, while we dwell below,
From every insult of the foe.

[DOXOLOGY]

To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One,
Laud, honour, might, and glory be
From age to age eternally. Amen.

The Saint Andrew Prayer

Although the following prayer does not mention Saint Andrew by name, it is so named because it has traditionally been said from his feast (November 30) until Christmas Eve, often many times a day, as a pious devotion.

ALL and blessed be the hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in the piercing cold. In that hour vouchsafe, O my God, to hear my prayer and grant my desires, (here mention your request) Through the merits of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of His blessed Mother. Amen.

