

Journey to Bethlehem and the birthing of Jesus: reflections on the daily scripture readings during the four weeks of Advent.

First week of Advent

Monday: November 29

**Readings:** Isaiah 2:1-5 – Let peace reign; and Matthew 8:5-11-The power of faith.

**Reality:** Often faith is usually spoken in serious and somber terms; here is more of a light-hearted hymn as we begin Lent: “Faith is such a simple thing. It cannot talk, but only sing. It cannot reason, but can dance. Take a chance. Take a chance. Life is full of ways to go. Sun, rain, wind, and snow. All unknowingly we trace a geography of grace. From breath to breath, and blink to blink, it never quite the way we think.” -Al Carmines.

**Response:** “Faith means being grasped by a power that is greater than we are, a power that shakes us and turns us, and transforms heals us.” – Paul Tillich.

Tuesday: November 30 – St. Andrew, Apostle

**Readings:** This is the feast of St. Andrew Apostle– Romans 10:9-18 and Matthew 4:18-22. Romans challenges us to walk the talk as Christians and Matthew challenges us to follow Jesus after he invites us to “Come follow me”

**Reality:** There is an epitaph on a tombstone which is over one hundred years old. It reads, “Pause stranger, when you pass me by, as you are now, so once was I. As I am not, so you will be, so prepare for death and follow me.” And unknown passerby read these words and underneath scratched this reply: “To follow you I am not content, until I know which way you went.”

And might I add, if it is you, Jesus who rose from the dead, for I will follow you – enough is said.

**Response:** Donate food and clothing to pantries throughout the year.

### Wednesday - December 1

**Readings:** Isaiah 25:6-10 – Great and Final Day; Matthew 15:29-37 – Miracle of the Loaves.

**Reality:** A story is told about people, some bound for heaven and others for hell, who sat around a banquet table. Each person was given a 10-foot pole with a hook at the end. The object was to use the pole to grab something from the table. Some of the individuals tried in vain to feed themselves, but they could not maneuver the pole in such a way to do so. Consequently, they were asked to leave the banquet table. Others discovered they could only eat from the table by feeding one another. They were invited to remain for all of eternity.

**Response:** Bake some bread, brownies, or cookies and share.

### Thursday – December 2

**Readings:** Isaiah 26:1-6 – Enter the Holy City; Matthew 21:24-27 – Kingdom Come

**Reality:** Young Josh had been promised a new puppy for his tenth birthday. He had a difficult time choosing among the dozen likely pups. One was cuter than the other. Finally, he decided upon one nondescript, shaggy pup who was wagging his tail furiously. Josh exclaimed, “I want the one with the happy ending.”

**Response:** See the good in others

### Friday- December 3 – St. Francis Xavier, Priest – First Friday

**Readings:** Isaiah 29:17-24 – Guiding Light; Matthew 9:27-31.

**Reality:** “In Christ we are offered the possibility of partaking in the reality of God and in the reality of the world, but not in the one without the other. The reality of God discloses Himself in me and entirely in the reality of the

world, and when I encounter the reality of the world, it is already sustained, accepted, and reconciled in the reality of God. This is the inner meaning of the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

**Response:** Meditate on the manger scene, and the words, “There is no room in the inn.”

**Saturday- December 4- St. John Damascene, Priest and Doctor of the Church.**

**Readings:** Isaiah 30: 19-21, 23-26 – Gracious to you; Matthew 9:35 – 10:1, 6-8 – Cured and Sent.

**Reality:** There is a plastic lighted nativity scene on the lawn in front of a church. On one very cold, yet sunny afternoon, a parishioner noticed two little girls standing by the manger. One of the girls did not have a coat on. Curious, the parishioner inquired of the coatless little girl. “Where is your coat?” The girl looked up and said, “The baby Jesus was cold, so I put my coat on him. He is warmer now.”

**Response:** Be gracious and kind with your words, hugs, and even your coats.

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