

Catholic

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ONE LIGUORI DRIVE
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ADVENT PILGRIMS

A DAY-BY-DAY WALK BY BRIDGET HAASE, OSU

Today we pack up our spiritual desires, fill our canteens with the living water of God's word, slip on our sandals of sacrifice, and pick up our walking staffs of persevering commitment. In the company of our faith community, the prophets, and the evangelists, let's set out for the little town of Bethlehem.



WEEK ONE

11/30 First Sunday of Advent

Is 63:16b–17, 19b, 64:2–7; 1 Cor 1:3–9; Mk 13:33–37

SETTING OUT



Jesus reminds us of the most important aspect of our travel in these next four weeks: staying awake and being alert to the work of God in the present moment. Our God is a God of surprises and will come when we least expect. Are we attentive pilgrims who do not pass God by?

12/1 Monday: Is 2:1–5; Mt 8:5–11

SENSITIVITY

With thoughtful sensitivity, the centurion doesn't want to put Jesus in the awkward position of entering a gentile home. With confident and humble faith, he asks, not for Jesus' presence, but for a healing word for his paralyzed servant. On our Advent journey, let's ask ourselves if we truly walk in other people's shoes.

12/2 Tuesday: Is 11:1–10; Lk 10:21–24

INNER CONFLICT

Within us there is the wolf of "rush" as we make our Christmas to-do lists: bake cookies, shop for the perfect tree, wrap gifts, and decorate our homes. Yet we feel the gentle lamb of "hush" beckoning us to pray daily on our pilgrimage to meet the Christ Child. The holiday craziness may rear its head but, with God's abiding grace, the wolf can become the guest of the lamb.



12/3 Wednesday: Is 25:6–10a; Mt 15:29–37

SMALL BREADBASKET

"I don't have much to give," we lament. But when we selflessly share, Jesus—

working with the little we have—multiplies our efforts and makes up for our deficiencies. Our small offerings become

fruitful beyond all our expectations. As we walk the dusty road to the stable, let's reach into our life's breadbasket, generously take what we *have* been given, and nourish our companions.

12/4 Thursday: Is 26:1–6; Mt 7:21, 24–27



INCLEMENT WEATHER

Jesus gives us the blueprint for building our lives on the will of God: *listen* to divine words of unconditional love and unending mercy and *act* upon them with peaceful surrender. When we do, no tragedy, trial, or circumstance can shake our bedrock faith. Whether whipping winds or pelting rain, we continue, in

spite of the weather, to the little town of Bethlehem.

12/5 Friday: Is 29:17–24; Mt 9:27–31

TRUE SIGHT



Helen Keller said that living without a vision is worse than physical blindness. Our perspective, blurred by our faults and selfishness, often fails to recognize the power and providence of God in challenging situations. May God heal our blind spots so that we see the Divine in people, events, and ordinary moments as we traverse life's deep valleys and climb its steep hills.

12/6 Saturday: Is 30:19–21, 23–26; Mt 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6–8

CARING HEARTS

Along the way to Bethlehem, we encounter much suffering: the homeless, the forgotten elderly, the immigrant. Each encounter is a call for our hearts to be moved with pity, to realize we are all family, and to give what we can. Can we take the first step and generously open our pilgrim's knapsack?

Optional Memorial: St. Nicholas—Is 6:1–8; Luke 10:1–9

SECRET SANTA



Has anyone ever asked you, "Are you *saved*?" A better question may be "Are you *spent*...for whom and for what?" The feast of St. Nicholas is a good time to think about the size of our hearts. May we become "secret Santas," lavishly giving away our time, talent, and treasure as we broaden our acts of anonymous charity on our way to welcome our Savior.

WEEK TWO

12/7 Second Sunday of Advent: Is 40:1–5, 9–11; 2 Pt 3:8–14; Mk 1:1–8

GOD'S SURPRISE

God seems to have fallen short on marketing skills when he chose "the son of Zechariah" to make straight the path to the Messiah. John lived in the desert where most people wouldn't even venture, ate locusts, wore clothing made from camel's hair, and had no power or prestige. God uses the most unexpected people to proclaim Jesus' coming. On our Bethlehem trek, let's pull the mirror from our backpacks and take a long look at ourselves!

12/8 Monday: Immaculate Conception (holy day of obligation)

Gn 3:9–15, 20; Eph 1:3–6, 11–12; Lk 1:26–38

GOD'S VISION

Today we reflect upon the deepest aspiration that God holds for each of us: to live a life that sings of the dignity of our human condition and of a surrendering "yes" to all that God asks. Through the intercession of Mary, conceived without sin, the "holy one without blemish," may we do our part in fulfilling God's dream. There is the power of one in each of us and the strength of numbers in all of us.