

Catholic

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UPDATE

Advent
Day-by-Day

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We hope you enjoy these sample pages. For ordering information, visit Liguori.org.

ALL are called to holiness

What a cast of characters fills the Advent Scriptures! An unorthodox prophet, who doesn't come from the religious establishment, and attracts crowds in the desert, not the Temple. A homeowner, a Roman centurion, fisherfolk, a shepherd, a paralytic, a son who rethinks his original "no" to his father, an unwed mother, her puzzled fiancé, her older, pregnant relative and two babies. Ordinary folks like us. The only priest in the stories, Zechariah, does not fare well. He's struck speechless for questioning the fantastic news of his wife's pregnancy.

On October 11, 2012, we'll celebrate the 50th anniversary of opening Vatican Council II. One of its documents, *Lumen Gentium* ("Dogmatic Constitution on the Church") contained a chapter called "The Universal Call to Holiness." Did its authors think of these Advent figures when it stressed that Christ calls everyone to holiness and offers the grace to accomplish sanctity in a rich variety of forms?

In contrast to earlier Church documents, this one didn't enforce rules or condemn bad behavior. Instead, it spoke of God's people in warm terms of dignity, welcome, tenderness and safe haven. If we ever thought holiness was limited to a narrow few, let's explore its broader meaning this Advent.

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First Week of Advent

SUNDAY: On the lookout, alert

Anyone who travels knows the drill: Stop the mail and newspaper. Ask a friend to water the plants and feed the dog. Check that windows are locked. Those things seem pretty basic to responsible homeowners. And if we're the house sitter, we don't want to be caught with our feet up, enjoying the owner's beer or partying with our friends when the owner returns.

Through this comparison, Jesus says, "I've given you so much. Can't you care responsibly for the gifts, and be grateful to the giver? Come to me during this season—don't be distracted by imposters who don't deserve your attention."

MONDAY: A soldier's words

Is 2:1-5; Mt 8:5-11

For the first time this Advent, we'll hear the centurion's words from the Gospel in the new translation of the Mass. This occurs during the Lamb of God prayer just before Communion. This powerful, efficient Roman expressed great confidence in Jesus' ability to heal—and spared him the cultural embarrassment of a Jew entering a pagan's home.

TUESDAY: A child's brilliance

Is 11:1-10; Lk 10:21-24

When Jesus praises children (and the childlike) it's a good time to pause and ask: What important understanding have I learned from people not necessarily known for their status, education, wealth or power? Have they taught me wonder, gratitude, generosity, tenderness?

WEDNESDAY: The call of a friend

Rom 10:9-18; Mt 4:18-22

We are all called, maybe in less dramatic ways than the fishermen of today's Gospel. During Advent,

what's the special call? Some may need to slow down from a hectic pace and give more time to quiet prayer. Others may simply need to appreciate that life at this time is chaotic—and be grateful for the children or relatives who cause commotion. Some may feel called to service, others to journal or reflect on nature or the arts.

This season has inspired wonderful sculpture, painting, music and literature—enjoy it!

THURSDAY: A firm foundation

Is 26:1-6; Mt 7:21, 24-27

What foundation can we build that is solid as the rock Jesus describes in today's Gospel? Long ago, St. Benedict recommended prayer and work as the balanced activities which ground a lifetime. If we let work grow out of proportion, we risk losing the meaning of life. If we don't work, we risk wasting our talents.

FRIDAY: Seeing our blindness

Is 29:17-24; Mt 9:27-31

In what areas do we still have blind spots? Is one recognizing our own holiness? Vatican II reminded the laity that we participate in Christ's priestly, prophetic and regal roles.

We have a great dignity because we sanctify ourselves and others through our work as plumbers, nurses, attorneys, farmers, parents, musicians, clerks, mechanics, teachers and librarians. May Jesus open our eyes to our important roles as blind men's.

SATURDAY

Is 30:19-21, 23-26;

Mt 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6-8

It seems as though Jesus' heart broke when he saw crowds abandoned, without leadership. When he asks God to send laborers for the harvest, he doesn't specify clergy, religious, religious professionals or Ph.D.s in theology. The harvest is so great, he needs everyone!

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