



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF  
ARLINGTON



REFLECTIONS  
*for*  
ADVENT *and*  
CHRISTMAS

YEAR A



MOST REVEREND MICHAEL F. BURBIDGE  
BISHOP OF ARLINGTON





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# First Sunday of Advent

*Matthew 24:37-44*



“Stay awake” is the call of Advent. May we keep our eyes open to God’s many blessings in our midst, to the behaviors that have to change in our lives, and to those who need our help.

Do not “sleepwalk” throughout this sacred season. “Stay awake” so it is your best Advent ever!



Jan Adam Kruseman, *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* (1848)

Monday of the  
First Week of Advent

*Matthew 8:5-11*



Jesus promises new life to those who seek his healing and loving embrace. In faith, ask the Lord to heal your physical, emotional, and spiritual sufferings. His response will ultimately provide you with the grace, help, and strength you need.

In the Lord you will find new life!

Tuesday of the  
First Week of Advent

*Luke 10:21-24*



Jesus calls us to be “childlike” and to rely completely on the Father’s love. Easier said than done! It requires surrendering and letting go of our need to be in control.

Ask for the Lord’s grace and know that a “childlike” trust in God will restore the joy of our youth!

Wednesday of the  
First Week of Advent

MEMORIAL OF SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER, PRIEST

*Matthew 15:29-37*



Like Saint Francis Xavier, we are called to be a missionary disciple. Reach out to a family member or friend who has wandered from the Church and lovingly and gently invite them to return this Advent. Assure them that God is longing to embrace them in his love and mercy.

# Thursday of the First Week of Advent

*Matthew 7:21, 24-27*



Jesus tells us that “storms” will come our way, but if we build our lives on solid foundations, we will withstand them. Be steadfast in faith, trust in the Lord, follow his commands, and be known for your generous service. These foundations will keep you from collapsing!

Friday of the  
First Week of Advent

*Matthew 9:27-31*



Due to our spiritual blindness, we ask the Lord in faith to open our eyes: to his blessings in our midst, to our unique gifts, to our sins that need to be transformed, and to the goodness within those we meet this day. “Lord, help me to see.”

Saturday of the  
First Week of Advent

OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF SAINT NICHOLAS, BISHOP

*Luke 10:1-9*



In honor of Saint Nicholas, pause to thank God for his many gifts in your midst and find a way to share them with someone in need this day. Renew your promise to be known for your charity in speech, deeds, and through your loving and compassionate service.

Remember that “God loves a cheerful giver!”



Bartholomeus Breenbergh, *The Preaching of John the Baptist* (1634)

## Second Sunday of Advent

*Matthew 3:1-12*



Throughout Advent, it is essential that we respond to John the Baptist's call to repentance.

Now is the time to turn away, with God's grace, from the sins and behaviors that separate us from the Lord, his Church, and one another. Then, we will be ready and spiritually prepared to welcome him anew into our hearts and lives.

Monday of the  
Second Week of Advent

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF  
THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

*Luke 1:26-38*



On the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, may we entrust our lives to Mary, our Mother, and seek her help so we, too, can offer our “yes” to God’s holy will and plan for our lives, even when what he is asking may seem impossible.

When we surrender in such a way, we find our peace, joy, and sanctification.

Tuesday of the  
Second Week of Advent

OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF  
SAINT JUAN DIEGO CUAUHTLATOATZIN

*Matthew 11:25-30*



Through the intercession of Saint Juan Diego, may we draw ever closer to Mary, our Mother, in this sacred season and allow her image to be reflected on our hearts and in our lives. This occurs when we listen to her son and follow all that he teaches us.

Wednesday of the  
Second Week of Advent

OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF OUR LADY OF LORETO

*Luke 1:26-38*



Through the intercession of Our Lady of Loreto, may our home be a house of prayer, especially in this Advent season. There, may Mary be welcomed and embraced and, through her intercession, may we find consolation and peace.

Perhaps, pray a rosary today in her honor.

Thursday of the  
Second Week of Advent

*Matthew 11:11-15*



Jesus often speaks about the need for us “to listen.” Perhaps the Lord is asking you to allow a few moments for silence today so he can speak to your heart the message he wants you to hear.

Let’s also make an effort to listen respectfully and attentively to one another.

Friday of the  
Second Week of Advent

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

*Luke 1:39-47*



Through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, may we come to experience the peace of her Son throughout our land and learn to live together in harmony, with mutual respect and love for one another, and let's begin in our own homes!

Saturday of the  
Second Week of Advent

MEMORIAL OF SAINT LUCY, VIRGIN AND MARTYR

*Matthew 17:9a, 10-13*



Saint Lucy's name is associated with "light." With her help, do your part to bring light into a world filled with darkness through your faithful witness, gracious words, and a specific charitable act today.

In this way, you bring Jesus, the Light of the World, to others.

## Third Sunday of Advent

*Matthew 11:2-11*



“Rejoice!” This is the call of Gaudete Sunday. Yes, it is possible to do so even amid our burdens and crosses as long as we do not rely upon ourselves or the empty promises of the world but on Jesus, who is Emmanuel, God with us!



Luca Giordano, *The Calling of Saints Peter and Andrew* (1685)

Monday of the  
Third Week of Advent

*Matthew 21:23-27*



Jesus continues to work miracles in our lives and seeks our faith in his saving power. Never underestimate the healing love of the Lord who transforms us and our difficult situations in life.

Think of the many times he has come to your rescue and know he will never stop helping and watching over you.

Tuesday of the  
Third Week of Advent

*Matthew 21:28-32*



For those who express contrition for their sins and a resolve to begin anew, God never tires of forgiving us, with the promise that no sin is greater than his love and mercy. Celebrate these gifts in the Sacrament of Penance. In turn, we must be willing to forgive one another.

Wednesday of the  
Third Week of Advent

*Matthew 1:1-17*



We begin the O Antiphons today referring to “Wisdom, O Holy Word of God” and so we pray: “Lord, grant me a mind to know you, a heart to seek you, conduct pleasing to you, faithful perseverance in waiting for you, and a hope of finally embracing you” (Saint Thomas Aquinas).

Thursday of the  
Third Week of Advent

*Matthew 1:18-25*



We do not have one word in the Bible from St. Joseph. He was a man of action and faithfully responded in obedience and trust to God's holy will and divine plan. With his help, renew your "yes" to the promises you have made to the Lord and let your actions do the speaking! Also, add a bit more silence in your daily life.

Friday of the  
Third Week of Advent

*Luke 1:5-25*



The mission of John the Baptist was made clear from his birth: he would point others to the Messiah. We are called to do the same.

May your deep faith, joyful spirit, and good deeds this week attract others to Jesus, especially in this time as we prepare for the celebration of his birth.

Saturday of the  
Third Week of Advent

*Luke 1:26-38*



Pray to God for the gift you truly need at Christmas, maybe physical or emotional healing, freedom from distress, peace within your family, or the grace to live faithfully, prayerfully, and joyfully.

Be confident in the angel's promise: "Nothing will be impossible for God."



Philippe de Champaigne, *The Dream of Saint Joseph* (1642)

## Fourth Sunday of Advent

*Matthew 1:18-24*



God does not demand success.  
He only asks that we give our best  
efforts and trust that he will use  
them in miraculous ways.

Do not be afraid to try. Do not be  
afraid of failure. Know of God's  
great confidence in you and use your  
gifts to the best of your ability.

Monday of the  
Fourth Week of Advent

*Luke 1:46-56*



Focus today on God's many blessings in your midst and the marvelous deeds he has worked in your life. Then, you will have a joyful and grateful heart ready to celebrate the birth of his Son.

With Mary, say: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord."

Tuesday of the  
Fourth Week of Advent

*Luke 1:57-66*



Zechariah lost his speech for a period of time. The same can happen to us if we are not vigilant.

Find your voice today. Share your faith with others, convey the joy that is yours in Jesus, and speak his words of consolation and encouragement to those in need.

Wednesday of the  
Fourth Week of Advent

MASS IN THE MORNING

*Luke 1:67-79*



Arise with joyful anticipation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Arise from the old way of living and walk in the new life he brings. Arise from your worries and concerns and embrace his peace. Arise from fear and live courageously — for Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us!



Adolf Joseph Weidlich, *The Journey to Bethlehem* (1865)



Sandro Botticelli, *The Mystical Nativity* (1501)

# The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

MASS DURING THE DAY

*John 1:1-18*



“Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.” Only in relationship with him do we find the true peace, genuine freedom, and lasting joy for which we are searching.

May these precious gifts be yours at Christmas and always.

Feast of Saint Stephen,  
First Martyr

*Matthew 10:17-22*



Saint Stephen shows us that we lead others to the Lord through the power of love. Stephen's love of God kept him from compromising his faith. His love of neighbor allowed him to pray for those who were stoning him.

Make progress in love today and share its power with others, even those who mistreat you.

Feast of Saint John,  
Apostle and Evangelist

*John 20:1a and 2-8*



Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist,  
reminds us of a truth we are never  
too young or old to hear: “God is  
love and God loves you.”

If we are having a difficult time  
loving others, it may be because we  
are not convinced of God’s love for  
us. It is a pure gift! Embrace it!

# Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

*Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23*



More than ever, our Church and world need holy families who pray and worship together, who love, respect, and forgive one another, and who live together in peace.

With the help of Mary and Joseph and the grace of their Son, strive daily to be a happy and holy family.

# The Fifth Day in the Octave of Christmas

*Luke 2:22-35*



Saint John says when we disobey God's commandments and hate others, we walk in darkness and lose our way. The good news of Christmas is that Christ has rescued us from darkness so we may walk in his Light.

Be faithful to the Lord and reconciled with others, and all will be bright!

# The Sixth Day in the Octave of Christmas

*Luke 2:36-40*



Anna, the prophetess, was advanced in age and spoke constantly about the newborn King.

Take a moment today to pray for your parents and grandparents (living and deceased) who, through their words and example, have led you closer to Jesus. Treasure their wisdom and guidance.

# The Seventh Day in the Octave of Christmas

*John 1:1-18*



As you make New Year's resolutions, include some that impact your spiritual life: to pray daily, to turn away from sinful behavior, to be courageous in living your faith, to be more attentive to those you love, and to help the needy.

God always gives us the grace to begin anew!

Solemnity of Mary,  
the Holy Mother of God

THE OCTAVE DAY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

*Luke 2:16-21*



In striving to carry out your New Year's resolutions, rely on the grace of God and the help of Mary, the one we honor today. She is our guide, protector, powerful intercessor, and our Mother!

Ask her to walk with you every step of the way throughout the New Year and always.



William-Adolphe Bouguereau, *Regina Angelorum* (1900)

Memorial of Saints Basil the Great  
and Gregory Nazianzen

BISHOPS AND DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

*John 1:19-28*



We have gifts, talents, and wisdom  
to offer but our world needs so  
much more. It needs Jesus!

Like Saint John the Baptist, may  
we realize that our sacred duty is to  
point others not to ourselves but to  
Jesus, the true Light, the Lamb of  
God who takes away the sins of  
the world.

# Christmas Weekday

## OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS

*Luke 2:21-24*



On the Memorial of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, we renew our promise never to use the Lord's name in vain nor in times of anger or frustration. Instead, may we always praise, revere, and respect the Holy Name and invoke it for the strength, grace, and peace for which we long.

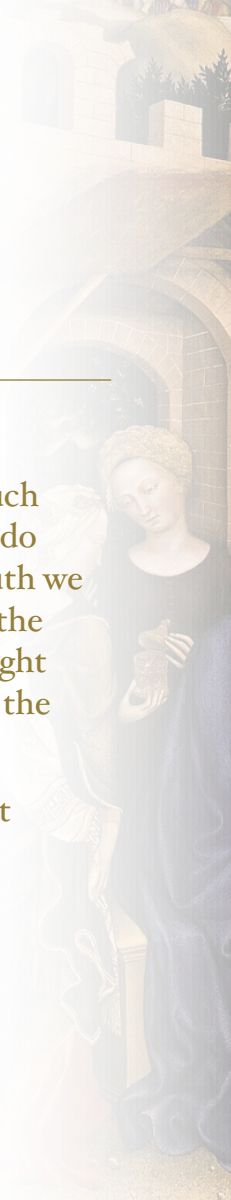
# The Epiphany of the Lord

*Matthew 2:1-12*



Sadly, we are witnessing so much darkness in our world. Yet we do not despair because of the Truth we celebrate on the Epiphany of the Lord. We are guided by the Light of Christ, who has conquered the darkness and shines upon us.

Bask in his Light and radiate it to others!





Gentile da Fabriano. *The Adoration of the Magi* (1423)

HIS EXCELLENCY MOST REVEREND  
MICHAEL F. BURBIDGE

Bishop of Arlington;  
ordained May 19, 1984;  
appointed Auxiliary  
Bishop of Philadelphia  
and Titular Bishop  
of Cluain Iraird June  
21, 2002; consecrated  
September 5, 2002;  
appointed Fifth Bishop of Raleigh June 8,  
2006; installed August 4, 2006; appointed  
Fourth Bishop of Arlington, October 4,  
2016; installed December 6, 2016.



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