

ADVENT

Traditions

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

AN ADVENT PRAYER

Lord God,
during this time of Advent
may your Word illuminate
all darkness in my life.
May one flame serve as a spark
to ignite in me a fire of desire for you.
May a second flame light a lamp
by which I may find my way to you.
May a third flame warm my heart
so I may love as you love.
And may a fourth flame shine so brightly
that the world may see your Word in me.
Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Emmanuel.
Use me to shine forth Your Word
to a world seeking light in the darkness.
Amen.

The Nativity
scene helps
us to be ever
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love God
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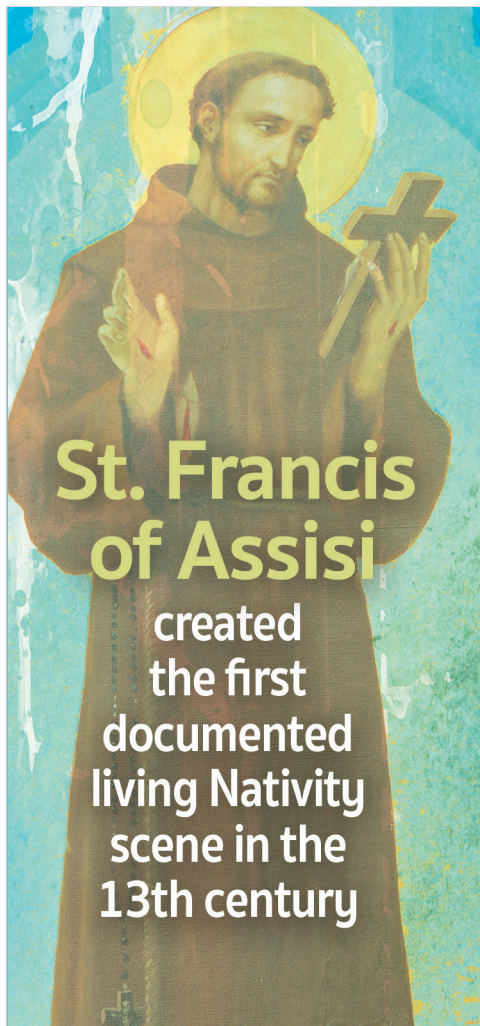


The Nativity Scene

Do you remember having a Nativity scene, or crèche, set up in your house growing up as a child? If not, perhaps you can recall visiting the crèche at church, even if it was to snatch a piece of hay to put into Mom's purse. Whatever the case, we all know that it is that time of year when we see a manger filled with animals and figures from the Bible.

It was St. Francis of Assisi that created the first documented living Nativity scene in the 13th century and then that led to stationary scenes of terracotta figures in many Italian churches. These scenes were not specifically intended for Advent or Christmas, as they were often times on display all year round.





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In the 16th century, we began seeing Nativity scenes in the homes of wealthy Italian families. As the centuries went by, the practice spread throughout Europe and beyond. Today, you can find Nativity sets made of all types of materials and in all parts of the world.

In Germany, particularly, the custom developed where the baby Jesus was withheld from the manger until Christmas. Sometimes, only animals were placed in the manger, with various human figures making their debut as the days leading up to Christmas passed. To this day, many families maintain a tradition where a child of the family will ritually place the baby Jesus into the manger on Christmas day. Oftentimes, the Magi appear on Epiphany as well.

The figures
inside the manger
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the real people
and the real
Jesus Christ

There are no steadfast rules of how to display your crèche or of what materials it should be made. We should look at it the same way we look at displaying photos of our loved ones. The figures inside the manger remind us of the real people and the real Jesus Christ. The scene helps us to be ever mindful of the great love God has for us: a love so great he would become one of us in the Incarnation.



OUR HUMAN DESTINY

Taken from the book *Everyday Stewardship* - Tracy Earl Welliver

In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory. —Ephesians 1:11-14

Saint John Paul II, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, wrote in his homily, "Sanctifying grace is, in fact, the divine life as grafted into the human soul." We begin life without this grace due to original sin, but Mary was conceived without original sin and, therefore, had this grace at her conception. Saint John Paul II points out that Mary then was able to concern herself with our redemption and say yes to being the Mother of God in a "perfect and universal manner," since she did not need to focus that energy on herself. We are then to follow her example and use the gift of grace that we receive through the sacraments and Jesus' redemptive action of his passion to bring about the kingdom of God.

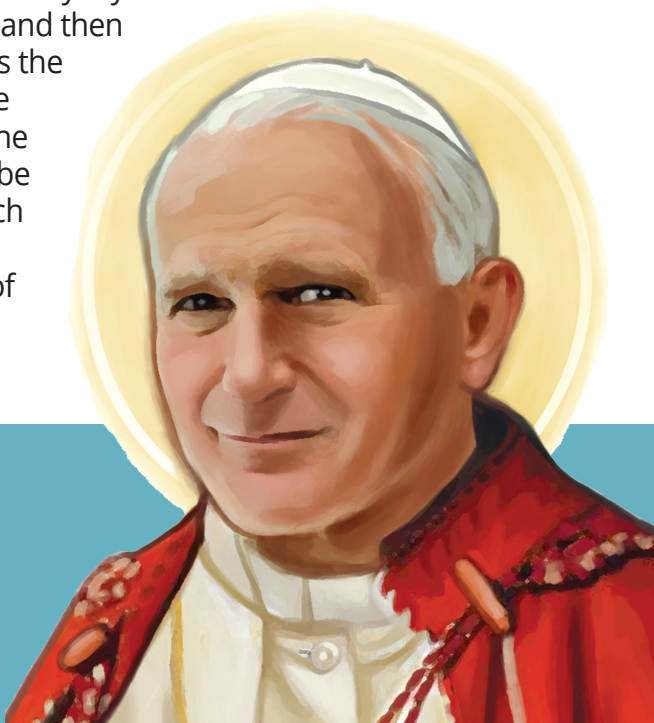
For Everyday Stewards, this is pretty heady stuff, but also very important. The modern canonized saint uses this theology to impress upon us the importance of not becoming cultural Catholics, but committed disciples instead. He wrote the quoted homily in 1959, and that warning against the relegation of faith sounds even more urgent today. Mary's existence was key to God's plan of redemption. It was her destiny. We are called to build the kingdom of God and share the good news of redemption, leading to the conversion and then salvation of souls. That is our destiny.

We must never brush off the place we have in God's plan. How will those we see in our everyday lives come to know the Lord and then find salvation? Mary was the instrument by which the Incarnation came into the world. We are called to be the instruments by which that same Jesus Christ comes into the worlds of those who do not know him.

IDEA FOR RESPONSE

Start reading regularly a good Catholic newspaper or magazine, if you aren't already doing so.

Saint John Paul II



Advent Q&A

How were the prophets able to predict the coming of Jesus, the Messiah?

The first reading for the Sundays of Advent is taken from Old Testament prophetic literature (with the exception of the reading from Samuel on the Fourth Sunday of Advent in Cycle B). These passages, along with most other prophetic literature, weren't intended as predictors of Jesus' birth, life, and mission.

It is unfortunate that prophecy is commonly understood as predicting the future. A more accurate way to understand prophetic literature is to see it as addressing social, political, and religious issues of the day. By taking on the mind and heart of God, prophets call people to more faithful covenant living. Modern-day prophets such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, or Dorothy Day do the same.

So there are no predictions of Jesus in the Jewish Scriptures; rather, what we have is the reinterpretation of prophetic texts by followers of Jesus who understood these texts in a new light as a result of their Jesus experience and belief. The original texts, written at a specific time to address specific issues, were later reinterpreted and understood to contain other meanings.

The process continues to our own day as we strive to apply the Scriptures to our twenty-first-century faith reality. This is what makes the Bible a living text through which God continues to speak. Let us listen with open minds and hearts.



KIDS' *Corner*

G R O W I N G W I T H T H E G O S P E L

Prayer:

Dear God, help
my words and my
choices to show
that I love you.

John the Baptist taught people to get ready for Jesus. He told them to change their lives. John helped many people wash away all their mistakes and bad choices. He washed away all their cheating, lying, fighting, and stealing. Once they were clean, John wanted them to see that living God's way is so much better. John told the people not only to clean their bodies, but to show that they love God by the way that they live.



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Mission for the Week: Write a prayer to God, asking him to help you stop doing bad things, and start being honest, giving, and kind.