

# Second Sunday of Advent



## Prayer for God's Work in Us

Good and gracious God,  
source of all light and joy,  
in the beginning, you created us to be  
your own.

You filled us with grace at our Baptism,  
calling us to love and know you.

You helped us to discern what is of value  
in this life  
and to seek out our good in your light.

Continue your work in us, O Lord,  
so that we might be renewed in faith  
and prepare the way of your Son.  
Every day, Lord, continue your work in us,  
so that at the coming of Christ Jesus,  
we can show forth the glory of your name  
and be a sign of your presence on this earth.  
We ask this through the same Christ our  
Lord. Amen.

## December 6, 2009 Discerning What Is of Value

During their long exile from the land of their ancestors, the people of Israel had hopes and dreams of deliverance. In the midst of his lament for the destruction of Jerusalem, Baruch, a scribe for Jeremiah, put words to these hopes and dreams, seeing the glory of God in Israel's return. In his vision, the restored Israel is clothed with splendor—a reflection of the peace, justice, and mercy of God. His words are a wonderful description of the presence of God in us and in the world.

As we move closer to Christmas, it is good to hear Paul's words in the Second Reading and examine how well we are discerning what is of value. Paul refers to the Philippians as partners in the living of the Gospel, and so are we. Because

of this, our life in Christ is marked by our love and knowledge of God. But how deep is that love and knowledge? In a season of giving and receiving presents, we might consider our relationship with material things. What do we need to have around us? What can we let go of? The world is full of false claims on our time, our money, and our allegiance. In these weeks before Christmas, have we fallen into a consumer mentality, taking in more and more of everything and failing to see what God wants of us and where God needs us to be? Advent calls us to remember that our Baptism claims us for Christ.

# This Week at Home



## Monday, December 7

### Saint Ambrose

Saint Ambrose was the first, and probably the only, Bishop to be elected by acclaim before he was baptized or trained in theology. Once he acquiesced to the request, he was immediately baptized and ordained and began a life of devoted preaching and teaching. In today's passage from Isaiah (35:1-10), God tells us that a garden will bloom in a desert and that God will come with healing grace for all. Saint Ambrose, and other men and women who teach, have brought this message of hope and justice to many throughout the Church.

## Tuesday, December 8

### Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

In the days ahead, we will be thinking, praying, and singing about the breathtaking truth that our God became a human being, Jesus Christ, in order to come closer to us and to save us from sin. Today we focus on Mary, the mother of Jesus. We thank God for giving her a special grace: from the moment of her conception in her mother's womb, she was kept free of any sin. Mary would still have to choose to be open to God's will, and happily for us, she did. God's special grace to Mary insured that having been chosen, she would be a very pure and fitting person through which to bring Jesus into the world. Thanks be to God!

## Wednesday, December 9

### Saint Juan Diego

Saint Juan Diego (canonized in 2002) was the Mexican Indian who, in the sixteenth century, experienced visions of the Virgin Mary. These led to a reconciliation between the Indians and the Spaniards and a large influx of converts and Catholic immigrants in Mexico. According to legend, Diego himself was a convert to Catholicism. After the appearances of the Virgin, Juan Diego, who was a widower, lived out the

rest of his life caring for pilgrims in a hermitage near the spot where Mary appeared to him.

## Thursday, December 10

### Preparing

During the four weeks of Advent, many people put up Christmas decorations. We might also prepare by thinking about what we could let go of as we anticipate more presents than we really need. Weeding out a toy basket or a clothes closet is a good start. And some people, instead of buying gifts, donate money to the favorite charities of the people on their list. However you prepare for the season, allow its spiritual abundance to overshadow the material.

## Friday, December 11

### Saint Damasus I

The scriptures today present a picture from two points of view. In Isaiah (48:17-19), God expresses the desire to teach his people what is good and lead them on the right path. In the Gospel (Matthew 11:16-19), Jesus expresses frustration that nothing seems to please the people, and they cannot see the gift that is right in front of them. The Advent season gives us time to see the gift of God that is always in front of us and to renew the promise to walk on God's path.

## Saturday, December 12

### Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac near Mexico City in 1531. The image she left on Juan Diego's cloak shows her wearing a belt that is a sign of pregnancy and a cross-shaped image, thought by some to symbolize the cosmos. Many miracles are attributed to her, and today the cloak bearing her image can be found at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. She is the patron of the Americas.

