

Thursday 12/31/09 Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice! 1 Jn 2:18-21 96:1-2, 11-12, 13 96:1-2, 11-12, 13

1. You have come to know "Him Who is from the beginning". How fitting to recollect this on the last day of our calendar year. There is one, only one, Christ. All others are antichrists, and they are legions! But you know Him, there is no confusion. He makes himself very available. He is there in anyone in need and in anyone who serves. Beware of the rule makers and enforcers. He is here too, but seldom where they think He is. It is really very simple. Where there is love, there is God. The love of God joins us together, Alleluia! Walk in the light.

Wednesday 12/30/09 Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice! 1 Jn 2:12-17 96:7-8a, 8b-9, 10 Lk 2:36-40

Age has its blessings. The apostle writes to the children because their sins are forgiven and they know the Father, to the youth because they are strong and have conquered the evil one, but to the elders because they know Him Who is from the beginning. Friendship may sprout at any age, but it takes time to blossom, to mature and bear fruit. Learning that I am forgiven and that I really can overcome the demons that drag me down is important, very important, but if I stop there??? If I stop with that I am missing so very, very much. If I stop there, even if I spend sixty plus years like Anna, day and night in the temple, I have missed the deep, deep joy of knowing Him Who is from the beginning. I have missed friendship with Jesus. Let me suggest that if you got a package in the mail from the bank with your mortgage stamped paid in full, you would probably stop sending in the house payments! You would certainly count it as good news!!! You would rejoice in your freedom. The Good News of Jesus is the proclamation of such a much greater freedom. Turn to Him, embrace Him, get to know Him in the joy that only knowing Him can bring, knowing Him Who is from the beginning.

Tuesday 12/29/09 Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice! 1 Jn 2:3-11 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6 Lk 2:22-35

I am very, very partial to the mother of my children. Though she sometimes finds it hard to believe I try to do what I can to make her life easier. In all His love for her the Father knows that there are many sorrows and burdens in store for Mary the mother of Jesus. Burdens He cannot remove. They exist precisely because of her role as Jesus' mother. Jesus is the light that reveals the "thoughts of many hearts". As Christians our hearts may be filled with love, but there is still a lot of other stuff in there. As we continue to turn to Jesus in love for one another the darkness is truly passing away, but it seldom goes without a fight! And that is always painful. The trick is to never get discouraged, persevere in prayer, in service, and always in building up the community.

Monday 12/28/09 Our soul has been rescued like a bird from the fowler's snare. 1 Jn 1:5—2:2 124:2-3, 4-5, 7cd-8 Mt 2:13-18

How should I say this? Life in the Spirit does not mean smooth sailing in this world. Truth is not one of us is really, totally there yet, and some are actually going the opposite direction. Bottom line, even the best of us hurt each other, and there are those who would do all in their power to kill us and the life in the Spirit we do have. Yet our hope is there. We must stop, look, and listen. Stop trying to be God for the others. Look at what He is doing in our lives. Listen to Him in prayer together as to what He is asking of us right now. Is it time to move to Egypt, or time to come back home? Is it time to correct or time to be corrected? It is always time to walk in the light, so long as we are keenly aware that we are not the bulb. At best we are the reflector behind it. Our job, with the help of our brothers, is to try to keep the reflector clean and shiny.

Saturday 12/26/09 Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59 31:3cd-4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 17 Mt 10:17-22

Gloom and doom!!! What the heck is the matter with the guys who made these selections for the lectionary. And who chose St Stevens Day for 12/26!!! This is the second day of the Christmas season. Don't we even get one day to play with our toys before we have to come back down to earth??? Of course not! Life in the Spirit is serious business. It is not child's play. It is real true

joy. Not the silly pleasures of idleness, but the deep lasting joy of mission, and mission accomplished. That little baby born on the first Christmas was not an ordinary child, and neither are you. He comes not to please but to free us. He comes not to play with us but call us to work with Him. He comes not to fill us with good things and good times, but to fill us with His Holy Spirit of goodness to announce that He is very, very near to each person in this world that He loves. So we must be reminded that working with Him in freedom and filled with his Spirit always means turning from the pleasure and idleness and standing firm in faith and trust in Him, even to the laying down of our life itself. Merry Christmas! Lord, into your hands I commend my spirit.

Friday 12/25/09 At Midnight Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord. Is 9:1-6 Ps 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13 Ti 2:11-14 Lk 2:1-14

At Dawn A light will shine on us this day: the Lord is born for us Is 62:11-12 Ps 97:1, 6, 11-12 Ti 3:4-7 Lk 2:15-20

Later All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God. Is 52:7-10 Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6 Heb 1:1-6 Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14

Too bad this is such a busy day! Finally it all begins to make sense. Pick it up and open it. Read and pray with those three psalms, 96, 97, 98. That is why He came, and why He is still coming, to let us know, to let us see. Go ahead and shuck the war boots, and throw them into the fire with your blood stained battle gear. The victory is won. Open your eyes, wake up, live. All that is left to do now is to consolidate His conquest. All you have to do is help every other person come to know His love. That is your mission. It is so very simple. Help every other person know He loves them. And the wonder of it all is that His very Spirit is within you with every single thing you need to get the mission accomplished. Just open your eyes. Roll out of your bed. Go out rejoicing and spread His wonderful good news.

Thursday 12/24/09 For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord. 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29 Lk 1:67-79

Vigil Mass Readings Is 62:1-5 Ps 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29 ACTS 13:16-17, 22-25 Mt 1:1-25 or 1:18-25

Both this morning's readings and those of the vigil mass speak to the royalty of the Savior. I am especially struck by the images of Zechariah's Canticle as a prophecy and a call to vocation for his son, John. Could those words be meant for me also? Surely I too am unworthy to untie His sandals. And just as surely He has called me to announce to every one I can that He is very near. He has called me to do what I can to prepare His way, and I rejoice as I watch Him going to work in other's hearts, and mine. It is such a great joy to see Him at work, to witness the lame who walk, the blind who see, the captives who are freed. My joy is complete as I witness Him saving us from those who hate us, especially those who would bind us in their own names rather than point us to Him and help us turn everyday more and more to Him.

Wednesday 12/23/09 Lift up your heads and see; your redemption is near at hand. Mal 3:1-4, 23-24 Ps 25:4-5ab, 8-9, 10 and 14 Lk 1:57-66

Today's gospel contains the most inscrutable verse in scripture for me, "So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called." Zechariah was mute, there is nothing that indicates he could not hear. Why didn't the people simply ask him for the name of the baby? You might suggest that the people just did not know any better and thought he was deaf too. That seems a stretch since he had been speechless for three months. In a small town three minutes would be long enough for his condition to be accurately assessed by his friends and relatives. I do not wish to make too much of this little passage. If I had found it anywhere but Holy Scripture, I would simply write it off as an author's blooper. Perhaps someone else can more carefully study this whole passage and figure it out for me, as I am convinced that it is there for a reason.

Tuesday 12/22/09 My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior. 1 Sm 1:24-28 1 Samuel 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd Lk 1:46-56

In my book there is absolutely no better prayer for an evangelist than this one. Everyone should

know it by heart. It is the prayer of the very first and greatest of all the evangelists. Take my advice. Take some time. Commit it to memory. Pray it often.

Monday 12/21/09 Exult, you just, in the Lord! Sing to him a new song. Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21 Lk 1:39-45

Would you like to be blessed? Just say yes to the Lord.

Saturday 12/19/09 My mouth shall be filled with your praise, and I will sing your glory! Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a 71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17 Lk 1:5-25

I wonder why God made angels. Surely He doesn't need them to do all the things we hear that they have done. Perhaps He is too busy, so that He needs to send a messenger instead of speaking Himself. Maybe He just needs them to get our attention. It certainly worked on Zorah and Zechariah. Zorah remarked how terrible he looked and Zechariah was struck dumb. Why does God want to scare people like that? He may have another reason, but the only thing I can think of is that He needs to get our attention, "Look!!! this is what I'm going to do. Don't forget, when it happens, who did it!". Maybe angels are just God's exclamation points.

Friday 12/18/09 Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever. Jer 23:5-8 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19 Mt 1:18-25

Why does God always do crazy things? Is He crazy? Why doesn't He just do what He is supposed to do, like listen to the folks who say their prayers, and why doesn't He give them what they tell Him to when they want it? Why does He have to wait so long and make such a big production about everything? Maybe it is because He knows better than us. Maybe it is because He knows best! Did you ever stop to think what a big job He has? Just finding you that parking spot at Macy's this time of year would probably take a team of Nasa engineers several thousand years to accomplish! So it takes Him a few years to get that knucklehead relative back to Church. So He doesn't seem to care that our eyes are growing dim, our tummies more flabby, our minds more distracted. Every good thing we have is far more than we deserve, based on our own behavior. But in His love and mercy He pours out good on us in bucket fulls that we moan and groan and complain about! He is God. He can do anything He wants to, and do it any way He wants, but He in His wisdom and loving kindness chooses to use us to help Him do it. Just like He did for St. Joseph, God comes to us every day, many times, with little requests to think outside the box. "Do not be bound by anything but love for Me. Do not be afraid to step up to the plate when I need your hands and feet to help bring Jesus into this world I love so much. That is exactly why I have set you free!!!"

Thursday 12/17/09 Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever. Gn 49:2, 8-10 72:1-2, 3-4ab, 7-8, 17 Mt 1:1-17

The King of Glory Comes! Let there be no doubt of his lineage. He is the heir of the promise, from Abraham to Joseph, the husband of Mary, and a hundred generations later, to us. It is not a pristine ancestry. It includes many holy and righteous men and women, and plenty of godless scoundrels as well. Every single one is a sinner and far short of the Glory of God. But it paints a very compelling picture. God isn't finished yet, but, thanks be to God, He is still hard at work on the same project! Sometimes you may feel like a fatherless child, but rest assured you are not! When the time is right justice will flourish and there will be fullness of peace, and that time is coming soon and very soon.

Wednesday 12/16/09 Let the clouds rain down the Just One, and the earth bring forth a Savior. Is 45:6b-8, 18, 21b-25 85:9ab and 10, 11-12, 13-14 Lk 7:18b-23

Wow! How can one who reads or hears the words of this day's readings doubt the power of the Word of God? Yet there is a subtle message here for us men of clay. Even the great anointed prophet is still a man, still needs reassurance from God. Even the one preparing the way has doubts and misses the signs. So how does He answer those doubts? By doing some great new miracle? No!!! Jesus simply points to what He is already doing. He is the great eye doctor! When

we come to Him we begin to just get a glimpse of the powerful works He is doing all the time...God is good. God is good. Good is real good. In the end Isaiah got it so right. He is the Lord, there is no other. Every thing He does is creative. And He creates this wonderful creation not to be a waste but to be lived in. So live in it!!!

Tuesday 12/15/09 The Lord hears the cry of the poor. Zep 3:1-2, 9-13 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19 and 23 Mt 21:28-32

I have a little suggestion for you today. Why not change your mind? All these years you have been crying out to God for all sorts of favors. You have not stopped moaning and groaning about this problem or that one, complaining about this person or that one, stressing over what to do or what to say. Maybe it is time. Maybe it is time to change your mind and just start believing and trusting in Him. After all, no one incurs guilt who takes refuge in Him. Believe it!

Monday 12/14/09 Teach me your ways, O Lord. Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9 Mt 21:23-27

If you would learn a little bit about prayer I really recommend you take the time to read the "rest of the story" from Numbers. Start at least at the beginning of chapter 22. Personally I really identify with this story as it is the only one in scripture where God uses a talking ass to communicate His wisdom. To me, prayer is the least understood part of life in the Spirit. So often in prayer I find myself asking, "How?" or "Why?" or "When?" All the curious questions that concern me and what I would do. How seldom do I simply rest in the petition, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." And even when I do think to say it, how very often do I seem to miss the answers. I have often wondered about Jesus' stern behavior and harsh words for the scribes and Pharisees. I think it is because He was well aware that in their hearts they knew the truth of who He was. Their lofty position, their wealth and honor, their very education and knowledge was keeping them from turning their hearts to Him. In the end it was their self-confidence and self-reliance instead of God that ruled their lives. His harsh treatment was His loving response, His way of trying to help them see the light in the only way they left open to Him. Jesus authority was plain 2,000 years ago and is just as plain, or more so, right now today. Please try not to put Him between a rock and a hard place. When you do, guess who suffers? We all do.

Saturday 12/12/09 You are the highest honor of our race. Zec 2:14-17 or Rv 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab Judith 13:18bcde, 19 Lk 1:26-38 or Lk 1:39-47

Each one of us stands like Elizabeth, pregnant with the Word of God, as our Blessed Mother comes to us to help us. She is there to help us give birth and as we welcome her that Word within us does begin to stir and quicken. May the Holy Spirit, with His awesome power, bring that Word into this needy world to prepare the way for the Lord, and may we learn from our dear Mother to always proclaim the greatness of the Lord, and always rejoice in God our Savior.

Friday 12/11/09 Those who follow you, Lord, will have the light of life. Is 48:17-19 Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6 Mt 11:16-19

Wow! All these long passages we have been reading, but today!?! No mincing of words here! If you wish you may trot right down to the seashore and spend your hours building beautiful castles in the sand. It's up to you. You know they will all be gone in the next high tide. Or you can step back, confident in the light of your life, and enjoy watching and, every now and then, lending a hand, as He uses that very same sand to build His wonderful world. The difference? He takes the dry powder of your life like a mason takes cement. He patiently mixes it with that sand and with the water of His Spirit and uses it as mortar for the beautiful edifice He is building. That structure stands on the firm foundation of Jesus the Christ and will weather storms for a very long time to come.

Thursday 12/10/09 The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger, and of great kindness. Is 41:13-20 Ps 145:1 and 9, 10-11, 12-13ab Mt 11:11-15

There is a tremendous difference between hearing and listening. I am sure my wife could explain

it to you. For years she has been concerned about my hearing, but I think it is beginning to dawn on her that listening might be the problem. How often have you spent hours or days searching for something you lost only to find it right there where you put it the last time. Or how often have you struggled for hours to remember a name only to have it pop into your mind "out of the blue". It was right there all the time. We serve, we walk with the one who is far greater than John. Can you accept it? If so just listen. He is right here, wherever you are. He will help you, help you become His instrument to communicate with all those other hard of hearing folks all around us.

Wednesday 12/9/09 O bless the Lord, my soul! Is 40:25-31 Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10 Mt 11:28-30

In the life in the Spirit there is only one thing that can hold you back, fear. It is fear that keeps a person from God, and from living in His freedom. Fear is the most insidious of adversaries. "I am afraid to turn to Him, He may ask more than I am willing to give." "I know I have fallen short of my commitments, I am afraid He is disappointed with me." "I know I have done something wrong, I am afraid of the consequences." "Do you not know or have you not heard?" He is God. Never lose hope! He is far greater than anything you fear. It is in knowing that, that one finds how truly light are His burdens and where one finds freedom to fly and to really soar. Bless the Holy Name of our redeemer!

Tuesday 12/8/09 Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds. Gn 3:9-15, 20 Ps 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4 Eph 1:3-6, 11-12 Lk 1:26-38

How sad to be a motherless child. My own holy mother was so very precious to me, and I miss her very much. Of all the things a mother does for us, perhaps the greatest is the way she helps us overcome our fears. Mother's know that we are loved by God, and they are able to communicate that truth to us in so many subtle ways. Many years ago I discovered a mark in my hands. When I look at my palms I see clearly in the creases the letter "M". It is very clear and distinct. Many years ago I came to realize that it is a sign, perhaps the mark of Cain that protects a sinner. I have come to see it as a sign of my Blessed Mother Mary. Over the years I have noticed the same sign in many other hands. Not a single hand that I have examined is without it. I take very great consolation in this observation. For me it is a sign that she is also their Blessed Mother. I can not escape the clear consequence of it. Those who have the same mother, though very different from each other, can never deny that they are brothers and sisters. Dear Mother Mary, thank you for pointing us always toward Jesus, and thank you for teaching us to never be afraid. Teach us, help us always to love and enjoy each other here and forever.

Monday 12/7/09 Our God will come to save us! Is 35:1-10 Ps 85:9ab and 10, 11-12, 13-14 Lk 5:17-26

When was the last time you saw something incredible? Open your eyes! Is there any single thing you see that isn't incredible? That doesn't show the glory of God? If you don't agree, then just try to explain one single thing to me. Take a grain of sand. Explain it to me. You can't even describe it very well! It is incredible! What is it? What does it look like? Where does it come from? How was it made? Where is it going? Why? There is the real question. Why? Now, how can you not rejoice at everything that is?

Saturday 12/5/09 Blessed are all who wait for the Lord. Is 30:19-21, 23-26 Ps 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 Mt 9:35-10:1, 5a, 6-8

The kingdom of God is at hand! Throw away the silver! Throw away the gold! They are of no use anymore. Every thing we need, everything we want is right there for us. How can you say this? What makes you so certain? It is very simple. We are the sons and daughters of the King. We really truly are. He is a king like no other king, always gracious, self sacrificing, and powerful beyond all imagination. As His children all we need to do is behave. Behave like Him.

Friday 12/4/09 The Lord is my light and my salvation. Is 29:17-24 Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14 Mt 9:27-31

Seeing is believing? Or is it the other way 'round? I think so. Faith comes through hearing, and it is faith that opens our eyes. When our eyes are open we can begin to see. We begin to see what

God is doing, even if it is dimly. When we see what God is doing we are truly free to rejoice as we walk with Him. As he indicated to the blind men, our visual acuity depends on one thing...the measure of our faith. That's why we must listen very carefully to Him.

PS: Pray, pray, pray!!! Pray for your friends, pray for your enemies, pray for yourself.

Thursday 12/3/09 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. or: Alleluia. Is 26:1-6 Ps 118:1 and 8-9, 19-21, 25-27a Mt 7:21, 24-27

What beautiful readings for those who are doers! What should I do? Maybe the image of the wise man and the fool is so powerful that I miss the message. The only thing to do is the will of the Father. So how am I sure I am doing it? How can I be certain? It is very, very simple! Is a house going up? Is the house that is rising resting soundly on Him? If the answer is yes then what I am building will be there for me and long after I am gone. My little efforts will shelter many, many others. If not, even I will have to do it all over again. In the end God's will is never hard to discover. Jesus has shown the way. Jesus is the Way.

Wednesday 12/2/09 I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Is 25:6-10a Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 Mt 15:29-37

God can never be out-given. Why? It is really pretty simple. He can never be out-given because everything we have comes from Him. When we give we are only being channels of His grace and goodness. The very act of our giving is a gift from Him. He may be many things, but He is not a paltry, puny god. He is the God of abundance and power. Where can I find Him? Where is giving going on? That is where He is.

Tuesday 12/1/09 Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever. Is 11:1-10 Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17 Lk 10:21-24

Life in the Spirit is so different from all we are taught by the world. I came to know this world as a young man, which, by definition, generally means with very little wisdom. Early on I set about using my mind and my will to change myself and, as much as possible, the world around me in an attempt to bend all things to my desires and my will. Now as the years have piled on and wisdom has slowly begun to dawn in me I am beginning to see, dimly of course, what I never could see and hear what I never could hear. Those wonderful gifts of the Spirit are becoming real and His Spirit of peace and joy is really filling me. I am coming to know that all the important things lie far beyond learning. All the important things are right there in being and living in Him every moment. If I just let Him open my eyes and ears they are there in abundance. I am blessed.