

# TwelveTide

*A Guide for 12 Days of Christmas Feasting*

## 1st Day: Christmas Day (Dec 25)

**Reading:** “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom He favors!”

Read [Luke 2:8-20](#)

**Collect:** *Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born [this day] of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.*

**Pray:** Practice 5 minutes of Centering Prayer or choose another prayer practice.

### Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Give generously!
- Take a picture of a “glory sighting”. Share it with someone
- Watch a Christmas movie.
- Go Christmas Caroling in your neighborhood.
- Listen to Joelle Hochstedler's Christmas Song: [Do Not Be Afraid](#) on repeat.
- Make a Partridge In A Pear Tree and post it with #12TideCbus

**Ancient Text Reflection:** A sermon by Saint Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome (AD 390- 461): Sermo 1 in Nativitate Domini

Dearly beloved, today our Savior is born; let us rejoice. Sadness should have no place on the birthday of life. The fear of death has been swallowed up; life brings us joy with the promise of eternal happiness. No one is shut out from this joy; all share the same reason for rejoicing. Our Lord, victor over sin and death, finding no one free from sin, came to free us all. Let the saints rejoice as they see the palm of victory at hand. Let sinners be glad as they receive the offer of forgiveness. Let the pagans take courage as they are summoned to life. In the fullness of time, chosen in the unfathomable depths of God’s wisdom, the Son of God took for himself our common humanity in order to reconcile it with its

creator. He came to overthrow the devil, the origin of death, in that very nature by which he had overthrown humankind. And so at the birth of our Lord the angels sing in joy: Glory to God in the highest, and they proclaim peace to men of good will as they see the heavenly Jerusalem being built from all the nations of the world. When the angels on high are so exultant at this marvelous work of God's goodness, what joy should it not bring to the lowly hearts of men and women? Beloved, let us give thanks to God the Father, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit, because in his great love for us he took pity on us, and when we were dead in our sins he brought us to life with Christ, so that in him we might be a new creation. Let us throw off our old nature and all its ways and, as we have come to birth in Christ, let us renounce the works of the flesh. Christian, remember your dignity, and now that you share in God's own nature, do not return by sin to your former base condition. Bear in mind who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Do not forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of God's kingdom. Through the sacrament of baptism you have become a temple of the Holy Spirit. Do not drive away so great a guest by evil conduct and become again a slave to the devil, for your liberty was bought by the blood of Christ.

### **The Manger Is Filled With His Splendor**

"He who measures the heavens with the span of His hand  
Lies in a manger a span's breadth;  
He who's cupped hands contain the sea  
Is born in a cave;  
His glory fills the heavens  
And the manger is filled with His splendor.  
Moses wished to see His glory  
But was unable to see Him as he wished;  
Let us come and see Him today  
As He lies in the manger in swaddling clothes.

Formerly there was none who dared to see God and still live, But today all who have seen Him  
Are saved from the second death."

**St. Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373)**

## 2nd Day: Feast of Saint Stephen (Dec. 26)

**Feast Day:** Saint Stephen's Day is the second day of Christmastide during which the first Christian martyr, Saint Stephen, is honored. Stephen was stoned to death in AD 36. His story is recorded in Acts 6.

**Reading:** Say among the nations, "The LORD is king!" Read [Psalm 96](#)

**Collect:** O Glorious Lord, your servant Stephen looked up to heaven and prayed for his persecutors: Grant that in all our sufferings here upon earth we may love and forgive our enemies, looking steadfastly to Jesus Christ our Lord, who sits at your right hand and intercedes for us; and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Pray:** Take a nature walk & notice God's presence.

### Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Play a game (outside if you can!).
- Donate to a foodbank or leave a gift for your delivery person.
- Bake Cookies: Make extra and share with your neighbors.
- Make Two turtle doves and post with #12TideCbus

**Ancient Text Reflection:** *A Sermon by Saint Fulgentius of Ruspe, Bishop (468-533 AD): The Armament of Love.*

"Yesterday we celebrated the birth in time of our eternal King. Today, we celebrate the triumphant suffering of his soldier. Yesterday our king, clothed in his robe of flesh, left his place in the virgin's womb and graciously visited the world. Today his soldier leaves the tabernacle of his body and goes triumphantly to heaven.

Our King, despite his exalted majesty, came in humility for our sake; yet he did not come empty-handed. He brought his soldiers a great gift that not only enriched them but also made them unconquerable in battle, for it was the gift of love, which was to bring men to share in his divinity. He gave of his bounty, yet without any loss to himself. In a marvelous way he changed into wealth the poverty of his faithful followers while remaining in full possession of his own inexhaustible riches.

And so the love that brought Christ from heaven to earth raised Stephen from earth to heaven; shown first in the king, it later shone forth in his soldier. Love was Stephen's weapon by which he gained every battle, and so won the crown signified by his name. His love of God kept him from yielding to

the ferocious mob; his love for his neighbor made him pray for those who were stoning him. Love inspired him to reprove those who erred, to make them amend; love led him to pray for those who stoned him, to save them from punishment. Strengthened by the power of his love, he overcame the raging cruelty of Saul and won his persecutor on earth as his companion in heaven. In his holy and tireless love he longed to gain by prayer those whom he could not convert by admonition.

Now at last, Paul rejoices with Stephen, with Stephen he delights in the glory of Christ, with Stephen he exults, with Stephen he reigns. Stephen went first, slain by the stones thrown by Paul, but Paul followed after, helped by the prayer of Stephen. This, surely, is the true life, my brothers, a life in which Paul feels no shame because of Stephen's death, and Stephen delights in Paul's companionship, for love fills them both with joy. It was Stephen's love that prevailed over the cruelty of the mob, and it was Paul's love that covered the multitude of his sins; it was love that won for both of them the kingdom of heaven.

Love, indeed, is the source of all good things; it is an impregnable defense, and the way that leads to heaven. He who walks in love can neither go astray nor be afraid: love guides him, protects him, and brings him to his journey's end.

My brothers, Christ made love the stairway that would enable all Christians to climb to heaven. Hold fast to it, therefore, in all sincerity, give one another practical proof of it, and by your progress in it, make your ascent together."

## 3rd Day: Saint John the Evangelist (Dec. 27)

**Feast Day:** The first Sunday after Christmas is focused on the Incarnation and the dual nature of Christ. It is traditional to read John who illuminates the mystery of Incarnation: The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us as a light in the darkness.

**Reading:** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”  
Read [John 1:1-18](#) by candle or flashlight with the other lights turned off.

**Collect:** Shed upon your Church, O Lord, the brightness of your light; that we, being illumined by the teaching of your apostle and evangelist John, may so walk in the light of your truth, that at length we may attain to the fullness of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Pray** Practice the Jesus Prayer focusing on your breath: Lord Jesus Christ Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner. (See teaching with [John Michael Talbot](#))

### Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Make shadow puppets.
- Learn about and practice making the [sign of the cross](#) with these finger positions.
- Make Three French hens. Post a photo #12TideCbus

**Ancient Text Reflection:** *A Homily on the Nativity of Our Lord By St. Gregory Nazianzus*

Christ is born, glorify Him!

Christ from heaven, go out to meet Him!

Christ on earth, be exalted! Sing to the Lord all the whole earth; and that I may join both in one word, let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, for Him who is of heaven and then of earth. Christ in the flesh, rejoice with trembling and with joy; with trembling because of your sins, with joy because of your hope.

Again, the darkness is past; again Light is made; again Egypt is punished with darkness; again Israel is enlightened by a pillar. The people who sat in the darkness of ignorance, let them see the great Light full of knowledge.

Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new. The letter gives way, the Spirit comes to the front. The shadows flee away, the truth comes in on them. Melchizedek is concluded. He who was without Mother becomes without Father (without mother of His former state, without father of His second). The laws of nature are upset; the world above must be filled. Christ commands it, let us not set ourselves against Him.

O clap your hands together all you people, because unto us a Child is born, and a Son given unto us, whose government is upon His shoulder (for with the cross it is raised up), and His name is called The Angel of the Great Counsel of the Father. Let John cry, prepare the way of the Lord; I too will cry the power of this Day. He who is not carnal is Incarnate; the Son of God becomes the Son of Man, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Let the Jews be offended, let the Greeks deride; let heretics talk until their tongues ache. Then shall they believe, when they see Him ascending into heaven; and if not then, yet when they see Him coming out of heaven and sitting as Judge.

This is our present Festival; it is this which we are celebrating today, the Coming of God to Man, that we might go forth, or rather (for this is the more proper expression) that we might go back to God – that putting off of the old man, we might put on the new; and that as we died in Adam, so we might live in Christ, being born with Christ and crucified with Him and buried with Him and rising with Him.

For I must undergo the beautiful conversion, and as the painful succeeded the more blissful, so must the more blissful come out of the painful. For where sin abounded grace did much more abound; and if a taste condemned us, how much more does the passion of Christ justify us?

Therefore let us keep the Feast, not after the manner of a heathen festival, but after a godly sort; not after the way of the world, but in a fashion above the world; not as our own, but as belonging to Him who is ours, or rather as our master's; not as of weakness, but as of healing; not as of creation, but of re-creation.

## 4th Day: The Holy Innocents (Dec. 28)

Feast Day of the Holy Innocents is a somber and reflective day. It commemorates the innocent children who were killed by Herod in Bethlehem in his attempt to eliminate the baby who would be King (Matthew 2). On this day, we also remember all innocent people who have been subject to violence or even death. We ask God to frustrate the work of tyrants and for the grace to bring healing to all who are suffering.

Reading: “Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!” Read [Ephesians 1:3-14](#)

Collect: Almighty God, out of the mouths of children you manifest your truth, and by the death of the Holy Innocents at the hands of evil tyrants you show your strength in our weakness: We ask you to mortify all that is evil within us, and so strengthen us by your grace, that we may glorify your holy Name by the innocence of our lives and the constancy of our faith even unto death; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who died for us and now lives with you and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

Pray the Jesus Prayer for 5 minutes focusing on how Jesus is Lord or choose from another prayer practice. (See John Michael Talbot [explain the Jesus Prayer Part 2](#))

### Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Work on a puzzle.
- Read or tell stories with children.
- Donate to a charity that works with children.
- Make Four Calling Birds. Post a photo #12TideCbus

Ancient Text Reflection: *A Sermon by St. Quodvultdeus, Bishop (AD 407-450) Sermo 2 de Symbolo*

A tiny child is born, who is a great king. Magi are led to him from afar. They come to adore one who lies in a manger and yet reigns in heaven and on earth. When they tell of one who is born a king, Herod is disturbed. To save his kingdom he resolves to kill him, though if he would have faith in the child, he himself would reign in peace in this life and forever in the life to come.

Why are you afraid, Herod, when you hear of the birth of a king? He does not come to drive you out, but to conquer the devil. But because you do not understand this you are disturbed and in a rage, and to destroy one

child whom you seek, you show your cruelty in the death of so many children. You are not restrained by the love of weeping mothers or fathers mourning the deaths of their sons and daughters, nor by the cries and sobs of the children. You destroy those who are tiny in body because fear is destroying your heart. You imagine that if you accomplish your desire you can prolong your own life, though you are seeking to kill Life himself.

Yet your throne is threatened by the source of grace, so small, yet so great, who is lying in the manger. He is using you, all unaware of it, to work out his own purposes freeing souls from captivity to the devil. He has taken up the sons of the enemy into the ranks of God's adopted children. The children die for Christ, though they do not know it. The parents mourn for the death of martyrs. The child makes of those as yet unable to speak fit witnesses to himself. See the kind of kingdom that is his, coming as he did in order to be this kind of king.

See how the deliverer is already working deliverance, the savior already working salvation. But you, Herod, do not know this and are disturbed and furious. While you vent your fury against the child, you are already paying him homage, and do not know it. How great a gift of grace is here! To what merits of their own do the children owe this kind of victory? They cannot speak, yet they bear witness to Christ. They cannot use their limbs to engage in battle, yet already they bear off the palm of victory.



## 5th Day: Feast of the Thomas Becket (Dec 29)

**Feast Day:** Thomas Becket (1170) Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 until his murder in 1170. He is venerated as a saint and martyr by both the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. He engaged in conflict with Henry II, King of England, over the rights and privileges of the Church and was murdered by followers of the king in Canterbury Cathedral.

**Reading:** “O Lord, you have searched me out and known me;” Read [Psalm 139](#)

**Collect:** Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, kindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Pray** the Jesus Prayer for 5 minutes focusing on the name Jesus: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” (See John Michael Talbot [explain the Jesus Prayer Part 3](#))

### Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Write thank you cards for gifts you have received.
- Make or look at a photo album or scrapbook featuring people you love. Say a prayer of blessing on each person.
- Drive around the city to see Christmas Lights
- Make Five Golden Rings. Post a photo #12TideCbus

### Ancient Text Reflection: *Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux (AD 200-258) Sermon 1 for Epiphany*

“The goodness and humanity of God our Savior has appeared in our midst.” We thank God for the many consolations he has given us during this sad exile of our pilgrimage here on earth. Before the Son of God became human his goodness was hidden, for God’s mercy is eternal, but how could such goodness be recognized?

It was promised, but it was not experienced, and as a result few believed in it. “Often and in many ways the Lord used to speak through the prophets.” Among other things, God said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction.” But what did humans respond, thinking thoughts of affliction and knowing nothing of peace?

They said: “Peace, peace, there is no peace.” This response made the angels of peace weep bitterly saying “Lord, who has believed our message?” But now they believe because they see with their own eyes, and because God’s

testimony has not become even more credible. He has gone so far as to pitch his tent in the sun so even the dimmest eyes see him.

Notice that peace is not promised by sent to us; it is no longer deferred, it is given; peace is not prophesied by achieved. It is as if God the Father sent upon the earth a purse full of his mercy. This purse was burst open during the Lord's passion to pour forth its hidden contents - the price of our redemption. It was only a small purse, but it was very full. As the Scriptures tell us: A little child has been given to us, but in him dwells all the fullness of the divine nature. The fullness of time brought with it the fullness of divinity. God's Son came in the flesh so that mortals could see and recognize God's kindness. When God reveals his humanity, his goodness cannot possibly remain hidden. To show his kindness what more could he do beyond taking my human form?

My humanity, I say, not Adam's –that is, not such as he had before his fall. How could he have shown his mercy more clearly than by taking on himself our condition? For our sake the Word of God became as grass. What better proof could he have given of his love? Scripture says: Lord, what are we that you are mindful of us; why does your heart go out to us? The incarnation teaches us how much God cares for us and what he thinks and feels about us. We should stop thinking of our own sufferings and remember what he has suffered.

Let us think of all the Lord has done for us, and then we shall realize how his goodness appears through his humanity. The lesser he became through his human nature, the greater was his goodness; the more he lowered himself for me, the dearer he is to me. The goodness and humanity of God our Savior has appeared, says the Apostle. Truly great and manifest are the goodness and humanity of God. He has given us a most wonderful proof of his goodness by adding humanity to his own divine nature.

## 6th Day: Feast of Francis Joseph Gaudet (Dec 30)

Feast Day of Francis Joseph Gaudet (1861 – 1934). Gaudet was born to a mother of Native American descent and an enslaved father. She was a young mother who worked as a seamstress, but dedicated her life to social work and prison reform. In 1894, she began holding prayer meetings for black prisoners and worked for legislative reform. Eventually, she created a safe haven for young offenders on her farm. In 1902 Francis founded the Colored Normal and Industrial School, which eventually sprawled across 105 acres. On the property, she set up an orphanage and a boarding school for children with working mothers. Francis Joseph-Gaudet's autobiography is entitled *He Leadeth Me*.

Reading: *"Praise the Lord, O my soul; I will praise the LORD all my life."* Read [Psalm 146](#)

Collect: Grant, we pray, almighty God, that the newness of the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the yoke of sin. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Pray the Jesus Prayer for 5 minutes focusing on Jesus as the Son of God: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.* (See John Michael Talbot [explain the Jesus Prayer Part 5](#))

### Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Make music: Write a song for someone or break out your instruments! If you don't play an instrument, play your favorite album and have a dance party.
- Gather around a mirror and family resemblances. What characteristics are shared and what is unique? Use a dry erase marker and write "Image Bearer" on your mirror.
- When you look in the mirror or at others in the zoom screen, be mindful of the image of God.
- Make Six Geese a-laying. Post it with #12TideCbus

### Ancient Text Reflection: *Nativity Homily from St. Isaac the Syrian (613-700 AD)*

This Christmas night bestowed peace on the whole world;

So let no one threaten;

This is the night of the Most Gentle One -

Let no one be cruel;

This is the night of the Humble One -

Let no one be proud.

Now is the day of joy –  
Let us not seek revenge;  
Now is the day of Good Will -  
Let us not be mean.  
In this Day of Peace -  
Let us not be conquered by anger.

Today the Bountiful impoverished Himself for our sake;  
So, rich one, invite the poor to your table.  
Today we receive a Gift for which we did not ask;  
So let us give alms to those who implore and beg us.  
This present Day cast open the heavenly doors to our prayers;  
Let us open our door to those who ask our forgiveness.  
Today the Divine Being took upon Himself the seal of our humanity,  
In order for humanity to be decorated by the Seal of Divinity.

## 7th Day: New Year's Eve (Dec 31)

**Feast Day** of Saint Sylvester commemorates Pope Sylvester I, a little known saint who served as Pope from 314 to 335. Medieval legend made him responsible for the conversion of emperor Constantine. Saint Sylvester's Day celebrations are marked by a Midnight Mass or a Watchnight service, as well as fireworks, partying, and feasting to celebrate the new year.

**Reading:** *"I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from?"* Read [Psalm 121](#)

**Collect:** Almighty and everlasting God, who alone works great marvels: Send down upon our clergy and the congregations committed to their charge the life-giving Spirit of your grace, shower them with the continual dew of your blessing, and ignite in them a zealous love of your Gospel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Pray:** Practice the [Prayer of Examen](#) as a way of looking back over your year through the eyes of Jesus.

### Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Set off fireworks or sparklers to mark the beginning of the New Year.
- Feast on traditional New Year's food!
- Write a blessing for the upcoming year and share it with friends.
- Make Seven swans a-swimming. Post a photo #12TideCbus

**Ancient Text Reflection:** *St. John Chrysostom (344-407 A.D.) "On the Birth of Our Savior"*

"I behold a new and wondrous mystery. My ears resound to the shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The angels sing. The archangels blend their voice in harmony. The cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in Heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles Heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of Justice. And ask not how; for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed, He, Who had the power. He descended. He redeemed; all things move in obedience to God. This day He Who is, is born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor

yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh. His nature, because of impassability, remaining unchanged.

When He was born, the Jews denied His extraordinary birth; the Pharisees began to interpret falsely the Sacred writings; the scribes spoke in contradiction of that which they read. Herod sought Him out Who was born, not that he might adore, but to put Him to death. Today all things proclaim the opposite. For they have not been, that I may speak with the psalmist, hidden from their children, in another generations (Ps. 127:4). And so the kings have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him angels, nor archangels, nor thrones, nor dominations, nor powers, nor principalities, but treading a new and solitary path He has come forth from a spotless womb."

# 8th Day: The Circumcision and Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Jan 1)

Feast Day of the Holy Name is the day that commemorates the circumcision and naming of Jesus. According to the custom of the Jews (Luke 2), these happened on the eighth day after his birth. The name “Jesus” is the Greek form of the Hebrew “Yeshua” which means “the Lord will save.” Both Mary and Joseph were instructed by the angel to call his name Jesus – *Yeshua* – for he will save his people from their sins. On this day, we celebrate the power of God to save through the name of Jesus!

Reading: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*”

Read [John 1:1-18](#)

Collect: Almighty God, your blessed Son fulfilled the covenant of circumcision for our sake, and was given the Name that is above every name: Give us grace faithfully to bear his Name, and to worship him with pure hearts according to the New Covenant; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Pray: Join this Prayer for [New Beginnings](#)

Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Go for a walk or a hike (weather permitting).
- [Snowman Drawing Competition](#)
- Make a “hobby resolution” that makes play a priority in the new year.
- When you look in the mirror or at others in the zoom screen, be mindful of the image of God.
- Make Eight maids a-milking. Post a photo #12TideCbus

Ancient Text Reflection: A letter of Saint Athanasius, Bishop (AD 296-373) *The Word took our nature from Mary*

The Word took to himself the sons of Abraham, says the Apostle, and so had to be like his brothers in all things. He had then to take a body like ours. This explains the fact of Mary’s presence: she is to provide him with a body of his own, to be offered for our sake. Scripture records her giving birth, and says: She wrapped him in swaddling clothes. Her breasts, which fed him, were called blessed. Sacrifice

was offered because the child was her firstborn. Gabriel used careful and prudent language when he announced his birth. He did not speak of “what will be born in you” to avoid the impression that a body would be introduced into her womb from outside; he spoke of “what will be born from you,” so that we might know by faith that her child originated within her and from her.

By taking our nature and offering it in sacrifice, the Word was to destroy it completely and then invest it with his own nature, and so prompt the Apostle to say: This corruptible body must put on incorruption; this mortal body must put on immortality.

This was not done in outward show only, as some have imagined. This is not so. Our Savior truly became a man, and from this has followed the salvation of humanity as a whole. Our salvation is in no way fictitious, nor does it apply only to the body. The salvation of the whole man, that is, of soul and body, has really been achieved in the Word himself.

What was born of Mary was therefore human by nature, in accordance with the inspired Scriptures, and the body of the Lord was a true body: It was a true body because it was the same as ours. Mary, you see, is our sister, for we are all born from Adam and Eve.

The words of St John, the Word was made flesh, bear the same meaning, as we may see from a similar turn of phrase in St Paul: Christ was made a curse for our sake. Man’s body has acquired something great through its communion and union with the Word. From being mortal it has been made immortal; though it was a living body it has become a spiritual one; though it was made from the earth it has passed through the gates of heaven. Even when the Word takes a body from Mary, the Trinity remains a Trinity, with neither increase nor decrease. It is forever perfect. In the Trinity we acknowledge one Godhead, and thus one God, the Father of the Word, is proclaimed in the Church.



## 9th Day: Feast of St. Basil the Great (Jan 2)

**Feast Day** of St. Basil who was an early Church Father. He vigorously defended the orthodox faith against the Arian heresy and emphasized the doctrine of the Trinity. St Basil was taught theology from his sister Macrina and eventually became Bishop. He wrote several works on monasticism, theology, and canon law.

**Reading:** “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Read [John 1:29-51](#)

**Collect:** Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, kindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Pray:** Practice the [Welcoming Prayer](#) or another prayer practice.

### Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Play Christmas Song [Pictionary](#);
- Make a [Trinity Cookies](#) remembrance of Basil;
- Print, decorate and fold a [Trinity Pyramid](#); color the Trinity [coloring page](#).
- Make Nine Ladies Dancing. Take a Photo and post with #12TideCbus

**Ancient Text Reflection:** *Sermons of St Basil (AD 379) “On the Incarnation”; “Homily on the Generation of Christ”*

The actual, first nativity of Christ, His actual birth from all eternity in the bosom of His Father, must be venerated in silence. We should never permit our mind to investigate this mystery. Since time and space did not exist, since no form of expressions had yet been created, since there is not a single eyewitness, nor anyone who can describe this eternal birth, how can reason form any concept for reflection? How can the tongue give expression to thoughts that cannot be formulated? The Father was, and the Son was born! Do not say: “when?” but rather leave that question unasked. Do not ask “how?” for there is not answer! For the word “when” suggests time, and “how” suggests birth in the flesh...God is on earth, He is among men, not in the fire nor amid the sound of trumpets; not in the smoking mountain, or in the darkness, or in the terrible and roaring tempest giving the Law, but

manifested in the flesh, the gentle and good One dwells with those He condescends to make His equals! God is in the flesh, not operating from a distance, as did the prophets, but through Him human nature, one with ours, He seeks to bring back all mankind to Himself.

O man, know then that God becomes flesh  
And where did this incarnation take place?  
The body of a Holy Virgin!  
Let us, too, burst forth with voice of joy.  
Let us celebrate the mystery of the Salvation of the whole world,  
The birthday of mankind.  
Today the blame of Adam is revoked.  
No longer: "You are dust, and to dust you will return";  
But, closely united to the celestial world,  
You will be lifted even into Heaven.  
No longer: in pain will you bear sons;  
But, blessed is the one who has borne Emmanuel  
And blessed is the womb that nourished Him.

## 10th Day: The Second Sunday of Christmas (Jan 3)

Reading: “Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge.” Read [Psalm 16](#)

Collect: O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Pray the Jesus Prayer for 5 minutes focusing on the Mercy of Jesus: Lord Jesus Christ Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner. (Listen to John Michael Talbot talk about [Mercy in Jesus Prayer Part 7](#))

Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Play Christmas Carol [Opposites](#).
- Look at Christmas Cards you received and pray for each person or family that sent you a card.
- Go on a nature photo shoot.
- Make snow angels. If there's no snow, make [paper fan angels](#).
- Make ten lords a-leaping. Post pictures with #12TideCbus

Ancient Text Reflection: *Saint Augustine, Bishop (AD 354-430): The Double Commandment of Love*

The Lord, the teacher of love, full of love, came in person with summary judgment on the world, as had been foretold of him, and showed that the law and the prophets are summed up in two commandments of love.

Call to mind, brethren, what these two commandments are. They ought to be very familiar to you; they should not only spring to mind when I mention them, but ought never to be absent from your hearts. Keep always in mind that we must love God and our neighbor: Love God with your whole heart, your whole soul, and your whole mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

These two commandments must be always in your thoughts and in your hearts, treasured, acted on, fulfilled. Love of God is the first to be commanded, but love of neighbor is the first to be put into practice. In giving two commandments of love Christ would not commend to you first your neighbor and then God but first God and then your neighbor. Since you do not yet see God, you merit the

vision of God by loving your neighbor. By loving your neighbor you prepare your eye to see God. Saint John says clearly: If you do not love your brother or sister whom you see, how will you love God whom you do not see!

Consider what is said to you: Love God. If you say to me: Show me whom I am to love, what shall I say if not what Saint John says: No one has ever seen God! But in case you should think that you are completely cut off from the sight of God, he says: God is love, and he who remains in love remains in God. Love your neighbor, then, and see within yourself the power by which you love your neighbor; there you will see God, as far as you are able.

Begin, then, to love your neighbor. Break your bread to feed the hungry, and bring into your home the homeless poor; if you see someone naked, clothe them, and do not look down on your own flesh and blood.

What will you gain by doing this? Your light will then burst forth like the dawn. Your light is your God; he is your dawn, for he will come to you when the night of time is over. He does not rise or set but remains forever. In loving your neighbor and caring for him you are on a journey. Where are you traveling if not to the Lord God, to him whom we should love with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind? We have not yet reached his presence, but we have our neighbor at our side. Support, then, this companion of your pilgrimage if you want to come into the presence of the one with whom you desire to remain forever.

## 11th Day: Feast of St. Simeon Stylites (Jan 4)

**Feast Day:** The Feast of St. Simeon Stylites honors the Syrian shepherd boy who became a monk known for his courageous devout life of prayer. In an attempt to avoid visitors, Simeon discovered a pillar among some ruins and made his home there. Later he moved to another pillar more than 50 feet high with a platform of 1 square meter. He lived on the pillars for 37 years praying, preaching, writing letters and receiving a few visitors in the afternoons. His simple, devout and dangerous life in solitude inspired many new monks and drew others to the faith.

**Reading:** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son...” Read [John 3:1-21](#)

**Collect:** O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Pray:** Jewish Blessing for Smells: Gather fragrant items associated with Christmas (pine tree, cinnamon, cider, cloves, etc.). The fragrant spices symbolize life, love, and renewal. Smell each separately followed by this blessing.

*Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, bo're min'ei be'samim*

Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the universe, Who creates various spices.

**Make Merry:**

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Have a picnic around the Christmas tree;
- Make a snow pillar for Simeon Stylites;
- Donate and pray in solidarity with Christians in Syria.
- Make eleven pipers piping

**Ancient Text Reflection:** *Saint Maximus the Confessor, Abbot (580-662 AD) From the Five Hundred Chapters*

The Word of God, born once in the flesh (such is his kindness and his goodness), is always willing to be born spiritually in those who desire him. In them he is born as an infant as he fashions himself in them by means of their virtues. He reveals himself to the extent that he knows someone is capable of

receiving him. He diminishes the revelation of his glory not out of selfishness but because he recognizes the capacity and resources of those who desire to see him.

Yet, in the transcendence of mystery, he always remains invisible to all. For this reason the apostle Paul, reflecting on the power of the mystery, said: Jesus Christ, yesterday and today; he remains the same forever. For he understands the mystery as ever new, never growing old through our understanding of it. Christ is God, for he had given all things their being out of nothing. Yet he is born as man by taking to himself our nature, flesh endowed with intelligent spirit.

A star glitters by day in the East and leads the wise men to the place where the incarnate Word lies, to show that the Word, contained in the Law and the Prophets, surpasses in a mystical way knowledge derived from the senses, and to lead the Gentiles to the full light of knowledge. For surely the word of the Law and the Prophets when it is understood with faith is like a star which leads those who are called by the power of grace in accordance with his decree to recognize the Word incarnate. Here is the reason why God became a perfect man, changing nothing of human nature, except to take away sin (which was never natural anyway). His flesh was set before that voracious, gaping dragon as bait to provoke him: flesh that would be deadly for the dragon, for it would utterly destroy him by the power of the Godhead hidden within it.

For human nature, however, his flesh would restore human nature to its original grace. Just as the devil had poisoned the tree of knowledge and spoiled our nature by its taste, so too, in presuming to devour the Lord's flesh he himself is corrupted and is completely destroyed by the power of the Godhead hidden within it. The great mystery of the divine incarnation remains a mystery forever. How can the Word made flesh be essentially the same person that is wholly with the Father? How can he who is by nature God become by nature wholly man without lacking either nature, neither the divine by which he is God nor the human by which he became man? Faith alone grasps these mysteries. Faith alone is truly the substance and foundation of all that exceeds knowledge and understanding.

## The Twelfth Day Of Christmas (Jan 5)

Reading: “*The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.*” Read [Psalm 24](#)

Collect: O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Pray the [Be Still Prayer](#).

Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Drink Wassail (or cider)
- Make Three Kings Cake (Eat it tomorrow!)
- Reverse roles - Draw straws to find out who is going to be the "Lord/Lady of Misrule" for the day (more fun if it's a child) and waste the day following their suggestions;
- Eat breakfast for dinner
- Watch Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.
- Make twelve drummers drumming. Post it with #12TideCbus

Ancient Text Reflection: *Saint Augustine, Bishop (AD 354-430) Sermo 13 de Tempore*

Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal creator of all things, today became our Savior by being born of a mother. Of his own will he was born for us today, in time, so that he could lead us to his Father’s eternity. God became a man so that we might become God. The Lord of the angels became a man today so that we could eat the bread of angels. Today, the prophecy is fulfilled that said: Pour down, heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just one: let the earth be opened and bring forth a savior. The Lord who had created all things is himself now created, so that he who was lost would be found. Thus humanity, in the words of the psalmist confesses: Before I was humbled, I sinned. Humans sinned and became guilty; God is born a man to free us from his guild. Humanity fell, but God descended; Humanity fell miserably, but God descended mercifully; Humanity fell through pride, God descended with his grace.

My brethren, what miracles! What prodigies! The laws of nature are changed in the case of humanity. God is born. A virgin becomes pregnant with a man. The Word of God marries the woman who knows no man. She is now at the same time both mother and virgin. She becomes a mother, yet she remains a virgin. The virgin bears a son, yet she does not know a man; she remains untouched, yet she is not barren. He alone was born without sin for she bore him without the embrace of a man, not by the concupiscence of the flesh but by the obedience of the mind.

# The Epiphany:

## The Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles (Jan 6)

Feast Day of the Epiphany follows the Twelve Days. It is the feast that commemorates the coming of the Wise Men to Jesus, following the star. These men were guided by a star which led to a baby who would be king. On Epiphany, we celebrate the revelation of Jesus to the gentiles who followed the light, in recognition that all people can be drawn to Jesus. The Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the end of the birth story and opens a new season of revelation called “ordinary” time. Epiphany invites us to recognize the revelation of God in our own lives and to follow him.

Reading: “And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.” Read [Matthew 2:1-12](#)

Collect: O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### Make Merry:

- Gratitude Journal: Write 3 things for which you are grateful.
- Eat Three Kings Cake;
- [Chalk the Doors](#) and bless the homes of people close to you;
- Illuminate the way to Jesus (Place luminaria on the path to your door. Hold a candlelight/flashlight procession starting outside and ending at your nativity set or Christmas tree. Sing as you enter.
- Take Down you Christmas Tree
- Eat breakfast for dinner by candlelight
- Stargazing after dark. Consider how the Magi paid attention to the light.
- Make a Three Kings Cake! Recipe at [springsiac.org/ beholdchristmas](#). Post it with #12TideCbus

Ancient Text Reflection: *Saint Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome (AD 390- 461) Sermo 3 in Epiphania Domin*

The loving providence of God determined that in the last days he would aid the world, set on its course to destruction. He decreed that all nations should be saved in Christ. A promise had been made to the holy patriarch Abraham in regard to these nations. He was to have a countless progeny, born



not from his body but from the seed of faith. His descendants are therefore compared with the array of the stars. The father of all nations was to hope not in an earthly progeny but in a progeny from above.

Let the full number of the nations now take their place in the family of the patriarchs. Let the children of the promise now receive the blessing in the seed of Abraham, the blessing renounced by the children of his flesh. In the persons of the Magi let all people adore the Creator of the universe; let God be known, not in Judaea only, but in the whole world, so that his name may be great in all Israel.

Dear friends, now that we have received instruction in this revelation of God's grace, let us celebrate with spiritual joy the day of our first harvesting, of the first calling of the Gentiles. Let us give thanks to the merciful God, who has made us worthy, in the words of the Apostle, to share the position of the saints in light, who has rescued us from the power of darkness, and brought us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. As Isaiah prophesied: the people of the Gentiles, who sat in darkness, have seen a great light, and for those who dwelt in the region of the shadow of death a light has dawned. He spoke of them to the Lord: The Gentiles, who do not know you, will invoke you, and the peoples, who knew you not, will take refuge in you.

This is the day that Abraham saw, and rejoiced to see, when he knew that the sons born of his faith would be blessed in his seed, that is, in Christ. Believing that he would be the father of the nations, he looked into the future, giving glory to God, in full awareness that God is able to do what he has promised. This is the day that David prophesied in the psalms, when he said: All the nations that you have brought into being will come and fall down in adoration in your presence, Lord, and glorify your name. Again, the Lord has made known his salvation; in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice. This came to be fulfilled, as we know, from the time when the star beckoned the three wise men out of their distant country and led them to recognise and adore the King of heaven and earth. The obedience of the star calls us to imitate its humble service: to be servants, as best we can, of the grace that invites all men to find Christ. Dear friends, you must have the same zeal to be of help to one another; then, in the kingdom of God, to which faith and good works are the way, you will shine as children of the light: through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with God the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.