

GOSPEL FOR DECEMBER 2021

Luke 1:2-14

OTHER READINGS

Isaiah 12:2-6. Zephaniah 3:14-18



MONTHLY EXAMEN

We invite you to prayerfully reflect:

Presence

Become aware that God's presence is active at each moment of your life, looking at you with love, desirous of speaking directly to your heart. How do you feel at this moment?

Ask

Ask God for the grace to see the ways God is working in your life.

Gratitude

Be grateful. Thank God for the gifts, both big and small of the day. What are you most grateful for today?

Review

Trust that God is with you at each moment of day, during the good and challenging moments. God never abandons you. What were the good

REFLECTION

Walking with Shepherds: God's Unlikely Messengers

How often are shepherds part of a Nativity scene that we see? They can look so harmless that we tend to forget that in their time, shepherds were very much looked down upon. They were the kind of guys who people, if they didn't know them, you would cross the street to avoid. But, as the Gospel for Christmas tells us, it was to them - not to the priests, not to the wealthy - that an angel came to announce Jesus's birth. When they saw the angel, the shepherds fell down in fear - and who can blame them?!

We are in the holiday season, with all of the difficulties that can come with it. I know that I can feel alone, as though other people just do not understand. The world can become very noisy, and it may become difficult to hear God's voice. A fear similar to the fear felt by the shepherds can start to pervade our lives.

Maybe it is at these times that God is inviting us to bring all our fears, worries, and yes, even hopes, to prayer. The shepherds were told "do not be afraid" when they sought out the child Jesus. Perhaps when we are feeling overwhelmed by fear, the invitation is being extended to us to look for where Jesus is at work in our lives, and to lay all of those feelings before him. Like the shepherds, we too can be the unlikely messengers of God in a world that sees only our brokenness.

Luke L., Jesuit Scholastic at Ciszek Hall, Fordham University

moments of today? What were the greatest challenges of today?

Respond

You are not stuck. Tomorrow is a new day. Ask God to give you the grace to be the loving and generous person you were created to be. What can you do tomorrow to be more generous and loving?

Conclude with the Sign of the Cross.



THE SUM OF OUR REGRETS

I often think about the things that I regret the most when I am alone or am feeling bored. I do not know why, but it is where my mind takes me. I think about those moments when I have hurt others or was hurt by others. Unable to put my mind elsewhere, I often felt horrible about myself afterwards.



A friend of mine, Teresa, once shared with me a similar experience. She found herself doing the same thing when she was working alone. One day, she realized that she was torturing herself by going back to these moments over and over again. She told me that she decided to quit her job, which was the place that led her to go back to those dark times.

When our visits to our past lead us to depression and self-hatred, then maybe it is time that we stopped hating ourselves for what we did. In fact, God would not want us to be stuck in our past. The Evil Spirit would want us to be stuck in the past, to allow our worst mistake to define who we are. However, God encourages us not to dwell on our past mistakes. God tells us that we are loved. We are His children. Our God is telling us today that we are far more than all of our past mistakes.

Daniel P., Jesuit Scholastic at Ciszek Hall, Fordham University

THRIVE FOR LIFE WELCOMES NEW FAITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS!

As we enter the season of gratitude, Thrive For Life was happy to welcome two new parishes to our family of faith community partners. On October 17 and 21, Fr. Zach and members of our community visited the churches of St. Anne in Garden City, New York and Our Lady of the Snows in Floral Park, New York to celebrate the Eucharist. During his homilies and after Mass, Fr. Zach spoke about our important work to transform lives behind and beyond the prison walls, including our plans to expand our spiritual retreat programming for families affected by incarceration. Our team also had the opportunity to chat with parishioners about the ways to support our work, such as through spiritual mentoring and organizing care package supply drives for our retreat participants behind the walls. Reflecting on our many blessings, Fr. Zach made a point to emphasize that our faith community partners constitute a bedrock of our ministries behind and beyond the prison walls.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Fall enrichment activities at Ignacio House of Studies

- † Technological Literacy Courses
- † Personalized Writing Skills Workshop
- † Career & Professional Mentoring
- † SMART Goals Workshop
- † Ignatian Spirituality Workshop
- † Thanksgiving Celebration and Feast

BECOME A RESIDENT SCHOLAR AT IGNACIO HOUSE OF STUDIES!

If you are passionate about your education and wish to continue your academic journey post-release, we urge you to consider becoming a Resident Scholar at Thrive for Life's Ignacio House of Studies.

At Ignacio House, we offer formerly incarcerated students transitional supportive housing along with a holistic suite of services to help them find a sense of purpose and overcome barriers to employment, permanent housing, and education. If you are interested in joining us, please send us the following:

- † Full Name
- † DIN number
- † Current college you are enrolled in and/or where you will study post-release
- † Contact information for college/university where you will study.

To reach us, please see our contact information at the top of this page.