

# The Congregation at Prayer

A Guide for Daily Meditation and Prayer

For the Week of Christmas

December 25, 2022, through January 1, 2023

**Catechesis Notes for the Week — Celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord in Devotion and Prayer** — This week's Congregation at Prayer affords us the opportunity to read and mark in Holy Scripture the Church's minor feasts that follow Christmas: **St. Stephen, the First Martyr** (December 26); **St. John, Apostle and Evangelist** (December 27); and the **Holy Innocents** (December 28). **Stephen** was one of the first seven ministers ordained in the Church after the Apostles. His ministry included giving Word and Sacrament to Greek-speaking Jewish Christian widows. The account of Stephen in the book of Acts shows him to be a faithful preacher of Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures. His use of the Old Testament is an important guide to us in understanding that the Old Testament Scriptures, like the New, point to Jesus Christ. He condemned the unbelief and impenitence of the religious establishment of his day by comparing it to the unbelief and impenitence of Old Testament Israel. Stephen reminds us that the message of Christmas must also be the call to repentance from dead works to living faith in God's mercy in His Son. This feast also reminds us that the joy of Christmas exists in the context of persecution, suffering, and even death for being faithful to the Gospel. The feast of **St. John, Apostle and Evangelist**, underscores the great truth that we can have no faith in Christ apart from the Scriptures that are written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ. Faith is created and rests upon the certainty of the Apostolic and prophetic witness to Jesus. The feast of the **Holy Innocents** depicts the depth of human sin in the evil of King Herod who will stop at nothing in his attempts to kill God. This appetite of the sinful flesh is the nature of all sinners and is the reason why "the Word became flesh" for our redemption. Baptism saves us from this horrible evil and makes us children of the Child born in Bethlehem. Remembering our baptism daily makes every day a celebration of our Lord's birth and our rebirth in Christ: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior." (Titus 3 from the Catechism)

## The Order of Meditation and Prayer

Pray and confess out loud as much from the order of meditation and prayer as you are able, or as your family size and ages dictate. Learn by heart the verse, catechism, and hymn of the week.

## Theme: The Word became Flesh!

### Invocation

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### Apostles' Creed

#### Verse: Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

#### Psalm 98 and/or the appointed daily psalms listed below.

**Prayer on the Psalm:** O Lord God, our heavenly Father, who of Your great goodness and mercy has caused Your only-begotten Son to become incarnate, that we through Him might be redeemed from sin and everlasting death; we pray You, enlighten our hearts that we may be truly thankful for His gracious incarnation and birth, that we may be comforted by the same in all time of tribulation and temptation, and in the end receive Your everlasting salvation; through Your dear Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Daily Psalms	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning	2	116	34	2	96	93	98	97
Evening	98, 96	119:1-24, 27	19, 121	110, 111	132, 97	89:1-18, 19-52	45, 96	99, 8

### Bible Readings for the Week:

	Bible Narrative	Second Reading
Sunday	<b>Christmas Day:</b> John 1:1-18	Titus 3:4-7
Monday	<b>St. Stephen, Martyr:</b> Acts 6:8—7:60	Matthew 23:34-39
Tuesday	<b>St. John, Apostle and Evangelist:</b> John 21:20-25	1 John 1:1—2:2
Wednesday	<b>The Holy Innocents, Martyrs:</b> Matthew 2:13-18	Jeremiah 31:15-17
Thursday	David's Son Will Build the House of the Lord—2 Samuel 7:1-16	Galatians 4:1-7
Friday	The Ark of the Covenant into the Temple—1 Kings 8:6-13	Galatians 3:23-29
Saturday	<b>New Year's Eve:</b> Luke 12:35-40	Romans 8:31b-39

## The Catechism: The Third Article

What is the Third Article of the Creed? <b>I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.</b>	Preschool +
What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.	First Grade +
In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.	Second Grade +

## Prayers: Catechism Prayers, In Our Prayers at Peace, and the Collect for the Week

### In Our Prayers this Week (include the petitions below followed by the Lord's Prayer)

**Baptismal Anniversaries:** Marc Schneider, Maggie Gehlbach ((12/25), Angie Clark, Lee Neujahr (12/27), Dave Steinhilb, Eunice Neujahr (12/28), Andrew Schneider (12/30), Brian and Rachel Galles (12/31).

**Wedding Anniversaries:** Paul and Judy Woehrmann (12/27).

**The Sick:** David Steinhilb recovering from hospitalization; Rev. Jon Leider hospitalized with pneumonia; Bob Piper hospitalized with a head injury; Nicola Giordano's paternal grandmother who is hospitalized; Cyndi Ruhnau recovering from hip replacement; Mary Boehringer, suffering the effects of cancer treatment; Bob Rothe, Peyton Locklair, Jamilyn Martin, Kathy Miller, Heather Peters, and Josiah Boehringer in cancer treatment.

**Hospice Care:** Rev. DuWayne Schneider (friend of the Koplings).

### Collect for the Week of Christmas:

O God, You make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that as we joyfully receive Him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold Him when He comes to be our Judge; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### Collect for St. Stephen, Martyr (December 26)

Heavenly Father, in the midst of our sufferings for the sake of Christ grant us grace to follow the example of the first martyr, Stephen, that we also may look to the One who suffered and was crucified on our behalf and pray for those who do us wrong; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

### Collect for St. John, Apostle and Evangelist (December 27):

Merciful Lord, cast the bright beams of Your light upon Your Church that we, being instructed in the doctrine of Your blessed apostle and evangelist John, may come to the light of everlasting life; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### Collect for the Holy Innocents, Martyrs (December 28):

Almighty God, the martyred innocents of Bethlehem showed forth Your praise not by speaking but by dying. Put to death in us all that is in conflict with Your will that our lives may bear witness to the faith we profess with our lips; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### Collect for the New Year (December 31):

Eternal God, we commit to Your mercy and forgiveness the year now ending and commend to Your blessing and love the times yet to come. In the new year, abide among us with Your Holy Spirit that we may always trust in the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Lord's Prayer and Morning or Evening Prayer from the Catechism.

### Hymn of the Week

**"O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is My Paradise"**

**TLH 81**

**Looking forward to the Circumcision of Our Lord and Naming of Jesus**

**January 1, 2023**

**Hymns: 590, 403, 546, 529, 896, 621, 390**

**Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 2:21**

Eight days after Jesus was born, He was circumcised and given the name Jesus. In His circumcision He begins to fulfill the Law for us by aligning Himself with our humanity in every way. He became flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone to bear our sin as the innocent Lamb of God. He is the Promised Seed of Abraham. At His circumcision He is manifest as the One through whom all the nations would be blessed as He begins to shed His blood for us at eight days of age. His name is Jesus, the name given by the angel before His birth. It is a confession of faith and means: "The Lord is salvation!"