DECEMBER 16TH – AUTHORITY OF GOD THE FATHER IN JOSEPH

OPENING PRAYER: (USE THIS PRAYER AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH DAY)

Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,  
send Your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.  
We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces  
to hear Your voice each day.  
We who are anxious over many things  
look forward to Your coming among us.  
We who are blessed in so many ways  
long for the complete joy of Your Kingdom  
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of Your Presence.  
We are Your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.  
To You we say, “Come, Lord Jesus! Come among us!”  
(From The Lord Is Near booklet)

SONG: COME THOU LONG EXPECTED SAVIOR

GOSPEL: (Mt. 21, 23-27)

“And what authority do you do these things? And who gave You this authority?’  
Jesus answered them, ‘I also will ask you a question; and if you tell Me the answer,  
them I also will tell you by what authority  
I do these things. The baptism of John,  
from where did it come? From Heaven  
or from men?’ And they argued with one another, ‘If we say, “From Heaven” He will  
say, “Why then did you not believe him?”  
But if we say, “From men”, we are afraid of  
the crowd, for all hold John a prophet.’
So they answered, ‘We do not know.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“The virgin of Nazareth was a descendant of David’s lineage, yet she was a very poor woman, with no special difference from the common, poor folks. She had to work from morning until evening, day after day. Her spouse, Joseph, who also was of the lineage of the same King David, was not better off: he earned his living by the sweat of his brow.”

(Writings, vol.5, p. 213, In the Month of Flowers)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

Joseph was given authority, as head of the Holy Family, of both the Blessed Virgin and the very Son of God, Jesus. Yet, like Jesus and unlike the Pharisees, he did not wield his authority, lording it over others, nor did he use it to make his life easy. He exercised it with great humility. Today, as we place the statue of St. Joseph in the manger scene, let us pray for the humility of St. Joseph, the silent Saint and especially let us pray for the humility of those in positions of authority.

CLOSING PRAYER: (USE THIS PRAYER AT THE END OF EACH DAY)

Lord our God, help us to prepare worthily for the coming of Christ, Your Son.
May our blessed Founder, St. Guanella, help us also, so that Jesus may find us waiting and ready, in joyful prayer, in fraternal unity, in peaceful love.
We ask this through the same Christ, Your Son, who lives with the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever.

Amen.

SONG: DAGLI ASTRI OR SOME OTHER APPROPRIATE SONG

DECEMBER 17TH – WAITING FOR CHRIST WITH MARY, IN SIMPLICITY

SONG: SEE HOW THE VIRGIN WAITS

GOSPEL: (Mt.1,16)

“Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary. It was of her that Jesus, who is called the Messiah, was born.”
FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“The Messiah Savior was the most desired of all the earth: the prophets watched for Him with the liveliest anxiety; the patriarchs, after having waited for Him for many years, lamented having to descend into the tomb without first having seen Him. The Hebrews and the infidels both, the priests and the philosophers, crying out, exclaimed: ‘Come and do not delay, hurry or we will die.’ O Holiest Heart of my Jesus, I cannot love You as much as Blessed Mary, and I weep… At least, O Lord, make me love You with simplicity…”

(Writings vol. 1, p. 1161, 1164, In the Month of Fervor)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

Today we place the statue of Mary in the crèche. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and our Mother, loved her Son with a love that was exceptional! Let us reflect a moment on the love that is within each of us as children of our heavenly Mother and how that love should flow out of our hearts into the hearts of others. Let us, throughout this day, pray to Mary, that we become more like her in loving Jesus with our whole mind, heart and soul, and our neighbor for His sake.

DECEMBER 18TH – THE MESSENGERS OF GOD BRING US CONFIDENCE

SONG: PEOPLE LOOK EAST

GOSPEL: (Mt.1,18-20, 24)

“Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When His Mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with Child through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, an upright man unwilling to expose her to the law, decided to divorce her quietly… when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream and said to him: ‘Joseph, son of David, have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child’… Joseph arising from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary as his wife.”
FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“These and a thousand other examples should serve to stimulate our confidence in the mission assigned to us by God, and to increase our trust in proportion as we recognize our unworthiness. It is obvious. If God wished something from me, and I do not know how to do it, He Himself is obliged to do my part; therefore I am bound to succeed if I place all my confidence in Him.”

(Guide, p. 367)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

As we place the angel in the crèche, it should remind us of the plan that God has for each of us just as He had for Joseph and Mary. St. Joseph’s obedience to the will of God teaches us to have complete confidence in God the Father, no matter what mission He has entreated to us. Let us take a moment to reflect on our attitude towards the mission assigned to each of us at this moment, no matter what our vocation, as well as our attitude toward what may be in the future.

DECEMBER 19TH – THE LIGHT SHINING THROUGH ST. JOHN GUIDES US

SONG: ON JORDAN’S BANK

GOSPEL: (Lk.1,13-17)

“The angel said to Zechariah: ‘Do not be frightened, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth shall bear a son whom you shall name John. Joy and gladness will be yours, and many will rejoice at his birth; for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord.”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“We gain much when we admire the example of John. He was, and who does not know it, great at the side of God. Thus the angel has announced him to Zechariah… meanwhile, [the people] hailed him as prophet, they bowed to him as Messiah. John… ran from all these honors. He contented himself by saying: ‘I am a voice crying out in
the desert!’ But precisely because John confessed himself to be simply a voice, or rather because he protested humbly, God exalted him to become the true precursor of the Savior.”

(Writings vol. 1, p. 415, The Bread of the Soul II)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:
The star we now place above the crèche reminds us of the light of John the Baptist who pointed out the way of the Lord. St. John’s humility and faith won him the admiration of all people and of Jesus Himself. Let us reflect a moment on how our light shines for all to see and what our contribution is to bringing the peace and joy of Christ to all around us.

DECEMBER 20TH – THE HANDMAID PREPARES FOR HER LORD

SONG: O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

GOSPEL: (Lk. 1, 28-33, 38)

“The angel said to Mary: ‘Hail Full of Grace. The Lord is with you, Blessed are you among women… Do not fear, Mary. You have found favor with God. You shall conceive and bear a Son and give Him the name Jesus. Great will be His dignity and He will be called Son of the Most High.”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“Up there in Heaven the Word of the Father, True Son of God, waited almost anxiously for the consent of Mary. As soon as He heard it, quickly the Son of the Eternal descended from Heaven to enter the womb of the Virgin. With the flesh and blood of the Immaculate, He clothed Himself with a human body, and thus, without ceasing to be True God, He began to be also true man. He is the Word Incarnate, the Savior, and Mary is His Mother and Co-Redeemer. Happy are they who recommend themselves to Mary!”

(Writings vol. I, p. 48, Oh Father! II)
Thought for the Day:

Today we put the empty crib in its place. Mary’s womb, like our little crib, was prepared for the coming Christ with humility and love. Let us take a moment to quiet our hearts and so ready them to receive the Savior who waits almost anxiously to enter them.

December 21st - Humility and Charity carry us closer to our coming Savior

Song: O Come, Divine Messiah

Gospel: (Lk.1,39-42)

“Mary set out, proceeding in haste into the hill country to a town of Judah, where she entered Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby stirred in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and cried out in a loud voice: ‘Blessed are you among women and blessed is the Fruit of your womb.’”

From Fr. Guanella:

“Observe, thus, Blessed Mary. She already had with her the Author of Grace, and, thus, of Charity… But as soon as the voice of the Lord speaks to her she hurries to help her cousin Elizabeth, who would receive much good from a visit from her. And look, Mary rises and hurries. She doesn’t worry about the discomfort of the voyage nor of the concerns of her family. She walks and with the wings of charity soon finds herself near Hebron and the house of Elizabeth.

O how her heart beat within Blessed Mary!… ‘Jesus, You have loved me greatly, now how could I live without doing at least what good I can to others?”

(Writings vol. I p. 946, In the Month of Flowers)

Thought for the Day:

As we bring up the donkey, we recall Mary’s journey to Elizabeth’s home. Let us reflect on the love that spurred her on to the aid of her older cousin and ask for the grace to also come to the aid of our neighbors in need, especially those who may be older.
DECEMBER 22ND – THE LOVE OF GOD LIFTS UP THE LOWLY

SONG: CREATOR OF THE STARS

GOSPEL: (Lk.1,46-47, 49-51)

“My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit finds joy in God my Savior… God who is mighty has done great things for me, holy is His name; His mercy is from age to age on those who fear Him. He has shown might with His arm; He has confused the proud in their inmost thoughts.”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“O Mary, O Mary! We cannot think of anyone greater than you. We read that in making the heavens and the earth God used the strength of one finger, in making the soul of Mary He employed the power of His arm. What shall we say of you, O Virgin? The measure of love that God carries for you is the same [as that for] Christ. Jesus Christ, immense and infinite, works in your heart all the accumulation of goodness that He could, using the arm of the Most High.”

(Writings vol. I, p. 43-44, Oh Father! I)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

Now, as the sheep enter our nativity scene, we pause to reflect on the power of God who cares for the small and humble. Today, let us think often of the tenderness of our almighty Father and let us beg Him to grant us a strong, yet tender, love for all.

DECEMBER 23RD – JOHN’S BIRTH ANTICIPATES THE JOY TO COME

SONG: HE WILL COME

GOSPEL: (Lk.1,59-64)

“When they assembled for the circumcision of the child on the eighth day, they intended to name him after his father Zechariah. At this his mother intervened, saying, ‘No, he is to be called John.’ They pointed out to her, ‘None of your relatives has this name.’ Then, using signs, they asked the father what he wished him to be called. He...
signaled for a writing tablet and wrote the words, ‘His name is John.’ This astonished them all. At that moment his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God.”

**FROM FR. GUANELLA:**

“Jesus, a Child still enclosed in the womb, saluting His brother, blesses John in the encounter they had through Blessed Mary and St. Elizabeth. Thus, the child exults. He responds then with lively accents: ‘Your presence has won my heart. I will not leave You ever, O my Beloved and my Savior.’ The child whom Elizabeth bore, and who then was called John, is sanctified before he is born. Zechariah, her husband, who was deaf and mute, in one moment acquires the gift of being able to hear, the favor of being able to speak. And together with the spirit of Elizabeth, they rejoiced as in a sea of ineffable sweetness.

(Writings vol. 1, p. 1250, In the Month of Fervor)

**THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:**

As we bring up the shepherds, let us ponder the ineffable love of Jesus. Let us pray today, that, like John, Zechariah and Elizabeth, we may be grateful for the love of Christ for each of us, and that, like the shepherds, we may not fear to approach Him with our humble songs of praise.

**DECEMBER 24TH – WAITING WITH PATIENCE FOR HIS FINAL COMING**

**SONG: COME THOU ALMIGHTY KING**

**GOSPEL: (Lk.1,68-70, 72-73)**

“Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, He has come to His people and set them free. He has raised a horn of saving strength for us in the house of David His servant, as He
promised through the mouths of His holy ones, the prophets of ancient times… He has
dealt mercifully with our fathers and remembered the holy covenant He made, the oath
He swore to Abraham our father He would grant us.”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“The time will come, and is perhaps not far off, when Jesus, no longer a poor baby but
a benevolent Judge and loving Father, will come to meet you. What joy then! Then
you will exclaim: ‘I have waited for my God and now He is present!’… How fortunate
are you if you do not lose time in following Jesus humble in the crèche. If you are not
ashamed to stand by Him in the humility of Bethlehem, you will rejoice one day to be
near Him in the glory of Paradise.”

(Writings vol. I, p. 4-5, Oh Father! II)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

The final day before we celebrate the long awaited coming of our Savior, we bring
forward the ox and place him in the manger scene. Let us reflect on the patience of this
beast of burden as he, day by day, labors, all the while waiting for the day of liberation.
We wait the day of the coming of the Liberator, Jesus Christ. Let us pray for the virtues
of patience and zeal in our labors as we too work for the second coming of Christ and
His Kingdom on earth.