Gifts of Gratitude



Advent with G.K. Chesterton

Daily Reflections to Grow in Gratefulness Throughout the Season



GIFTS OF GRATITUDE

Advent with G.K. Chesterton

"THERE ARE FEW THINGS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN GRATITUDE."
- G.K. CHESTERTON

For G.K. Chesterton, gratitude was "the first virtue of living things," the beginning of his entire spirituality. From earliest childhood, he "felt grateful," though he "hardly knew to whom" (*Orthodoxy, 1908)*. His gratitude for the gift of life, and for life's everyday gifts, culminated in his faith in the one infinitely good Giver of all good gifts.

During this holy season of Advent, the Society of G.K. Chesterton invites you to gather and bring your own Gifts of Gratitude to Our Lord in the Manger. Chestertonian gratitude means giving thanks for big things as well as small: Christmas stockings and the gifts therein, but also the legs we put into our everyday stockings!

How to Use This E-Book:

- **Read** each daily reflection and meditate on God's many good gifts.
  - Begin with the First Sunday of Advent (*page 1*).
  - At the back of the book (*page 30 ff.*), a handful of special Saints' feast days are included. You can use these in place of the daily reading on the appropriate dates, if you prefer.
  - On Christmas Eve, regardless of the day, skip to *page 28* for the final two reflections.
- **Write down** a gift each day you wish to thank God for:
  - You can write these in a simple notepad, or download our Advent Calendar and Litany of Gratitude resources from our website! Visit **chesterton.org/advent**.
- Get the **whole family** involved! Discuss the meditations, share your gratitudes, pray together in thanksgiving, and thank one another as well for gifts great and small!

This Christmas, when you meet Christ in the Manger, Himself the greatest Gift of all, come ready with your gifts of gratitude: thanks for the good things God gives, each and every day!

Daily reflections authored by Jen Finke.
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First Sunday of Advent



Wit of Chesterton

"There are few things more beautiful than gratitude."

"A Crazy Tale," The Quarto (1896)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Give thanks always for all things."

Ephesians 5:20

Wonder...

"There are few things more beautiful than gratitude." When we show our appreciation to others, or when they show appreciation towards us, it lights a little supernatural fire in our hearts, and we begin to glow.

That glowing gratitude is our goal this Advent season. We're going to take time each day to recognize one gift we've received, reflect on it, give thanks for it, and then offer it back to God as a gift of gratitude. Saint Paul tells us to "give thanks always for all things." So *nothing* is off the table this season: we're thankful for the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the enormous and the tiny, for the joyful and magnificent and the hurtful and tiresome. We'll accept it all with a heart of thanks and give it back to Our Lord with humble gratitude as we prepare to receive the Ultimate Gift this Christmas.

Take a few minutes to reflect on your life so far. What is the one thing, event, or person in your life that makes your heart the most grateful? Think about how much this gift means to you, how it has impacted your life and drawn you closer to God, and give thanks for it today.

... and Praise

Lord God, today I thank you for giving me [mention your gift]. It has made a profound impact on me because [...]. I recognize that your plan for me is for my good and benefit. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

First Monday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"The simple man sees good suddenly. That grace we call gratitude."

"The Monomaniac," The Daily News (June 1, 1907)

Wisdom from Scripture

"It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praise to your name, Most High, to proclaim your love at daybreak, your faithfulness in the night."

Psalm 92:2-3

Wonder...

What simple, small things in your life cause the greatest glow of gratitude in your heart? Now is the time of year when nature becomes silent, simple, and bare. We can notice the small things suddenly because they stand out more amidst the silence of the season. But simplicity is something that the world cannot understand. While nature is settling down into silence, the secular world becomes much more noisy in the weeks leading up to Christmas. This can distract us, making us overlook these simple gifts.

Reflect on your day today. Think of one simple and good thing that you noticed. How did it make you grateful? Give that gratefulness to God.

... and Praise

God, today I thank you for giving me [mention your gift]. I'm especially grateful for such simple things in my life that bring me joy: those small surprises that no one else can see but me and you. Help me always to seek your simplicity and silence, and to avoid the noise and chaos of the world. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

First Tuesday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"Ordinary life is an admirable thing in itself, just as imagination is an admirable thing in itself."

St. Francis of Assisi (1923)

Wisdom from Scripture

"How good to sing praise to our God; how pleasant to give fitting praise."

Psalm 147:1

Wonder...

"Use your imagination" is a phrase often associated with small children. We all know these mighty mites absolutely excel at it—dragons and castles, princesses and goblins, flying cars and unicorns. When was the last time *you* were imaginative like a child? Has it been a long time?

Today, think back to your childhood—to a time when you went absolutely wild with imagination, during play, daydreaming, writing, drawing, or in the course of some other project. Think back to a time when your mind created something and your little-child heart went right along with it. Sit and soak in the memories and reflect on how your imagination impacted you back then, and thank God for what his gift of imagination brought.

... and Praise

Lord, today I thank you for giving me the grace in my childhood to imagine [mention your gift]. Thank you for giving me the capacity to reason, but also for the ability to delight in the fantastic and unreasonable. Help me always to view the world with wonder and imagination like a child. Bless me this Advent season with an imaginatively grateful heart and mind. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

First Wednesday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"Children are grateful when Santa Claus puts in their stockings gifts of toys or sweets. Could I not be grateful to Santa Claus when he put in my stockings the gift of two miraculous legs?"

Orthodoxy (1908)

Wisdom from Scripture

"I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall be always in my mouth. My soul will glory in the LORD; let the poor hear and be glad. Magnify the LORD with me; and let us exalt his name together."

Psalm 34:1-4

Wonder...

If it is not today, the feast of St. Nicholas *(December 6)* will soon be here! Stockings or shoes are usually stuffed with small trinkets to celebrate this beloved saint. However, Chesterton reminds us of the original intended purpose of those stockings or shoes: to clothe a living, breathing miracle made in the image and likeness of God!

Think about your own living, breathing body for a minute. Many of us have some kind of insecurity about our bodies, thanks in part to body shaming, diet fads, photoshop, or gym-bro culture. Think about one feature of your body you dislike the most. Now turn that around and think about ways to be grateful for that feature. If you have suffered because of it, how can you begin to see even that suffering as a gift? Has some good has come of it?

God delights in you—your insecurities and all—because he made you for communion with him. Thank God for even your imperfections, and seek his grace to become perfect, through suffering, in the ways that matter most.

... and Praise

Lord, today I'm grateful for [mention your unique bodily feature]. I know I'm insecure about it, but I need help remembering that I'm beautifully and wonderfully made in your image. My imperfections do not define me. You define me: as a beloved son or daughter called only to be perfect in the manner of your Divine Son. I have suffered over this imperfection, Lord. Grant me the grace to unite it to Christ's suffering and to give it back to you as a gift of gratitude.

First Thursday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"I thank thee, O Lord, for the stones in the street.
I thank thee for the hay-carts yonder and for the houses built and half-built
That fly past me as I stride.
But most of all for the great wind in my nostrils
As if thine own nostrils were close."

"Prayer of a Man Walking", The Notebook (ca. 1894)

Wisdom from Scripture

"I love you, Lord, my strength, my rock, my fortress, my savior. My God is the rock where I take refuge; my shield, my mighty help, my stronghold. The Lord is worthy of all praise, when I call I am saved from my foes."

Psalm 18:2-4

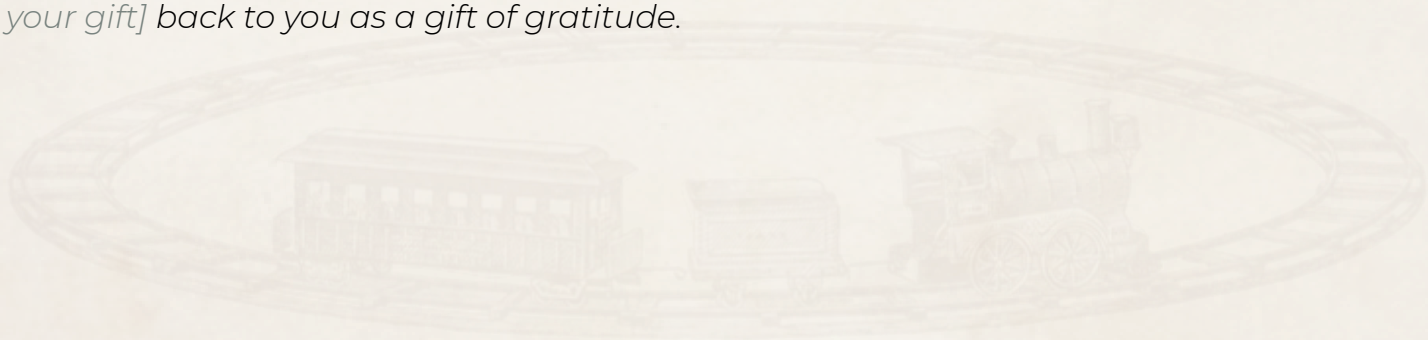
Wonder...

We have focused on the imaginative parts of our lives. Today, Chesterton presents us with a little litany of ordinary, everyday things. These little things led him to realize the closeness he shared with Our Lord in his every breath.

What ordinary things pass by you every day unnoticed? Sometimes we're too buried in business or focused on our phones to look up and notice. Take some time to really look at and note those things you pass on the way to school, work, church, the gym, or wherever you have to go today. What is one thing that catches your eye? Have you ever noticed it before? How is God using it to bring you closer to him? Think about how God is giving it to you as a gift, and thank him for it.

... and Praise

Gracious Lord, I thank you for the little gift of [mention your gift]. Thank you for helping me to notice the ordinary things in my life and how they draw me closer to you. I pray that I never lose sight of the admirably ordinary things in my life. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.



First Friday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"I have always believed [...] in the Simple Life. Only it is a simplicity of the heart and not of the dress or diet, and the essence of it is thanks."

"My Silver Anniversary with the ILN", Illustrated London News (September 27, 1930)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Blessed be the LORD, who has heard the sound of my pleading. The LORD is my strength and my shield, in whom my heart trusts. I am helped, so my heart rejoices; with my song I praise him."

Psalm 28:6-7

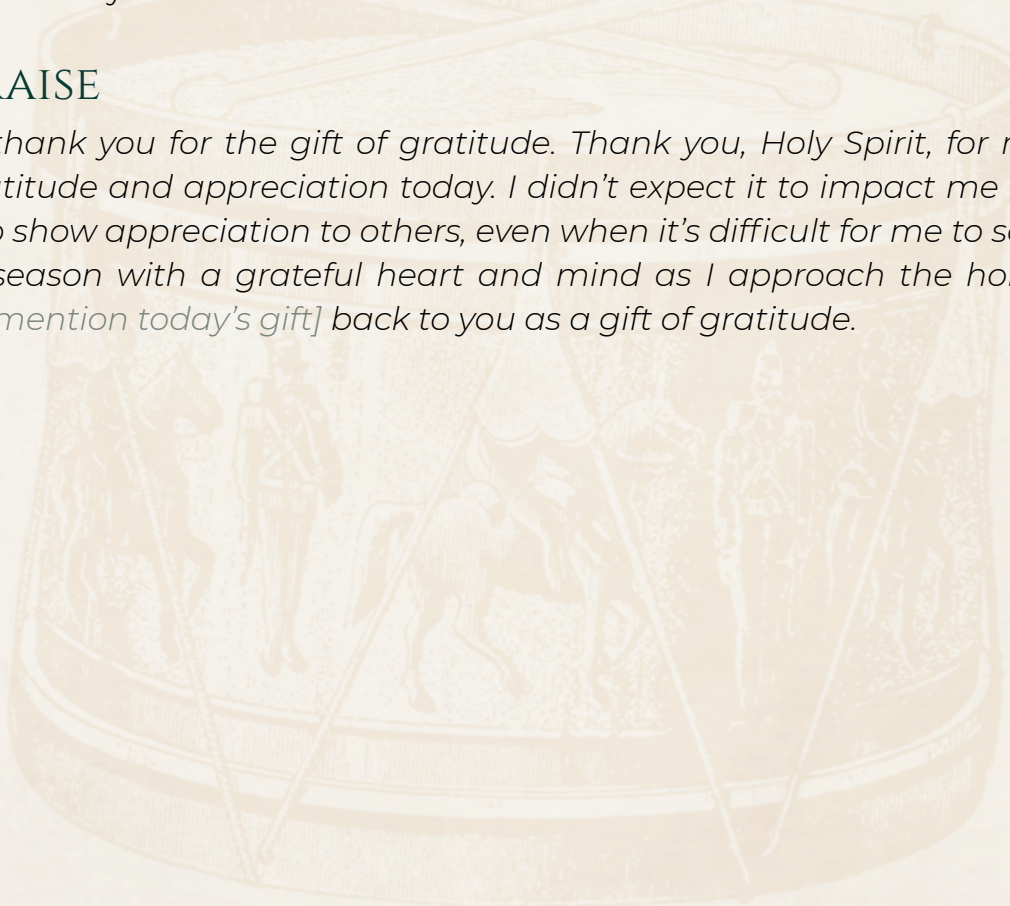
Wonder...

It is so difficult to have a constant "attitude of gratitude." But this is the very disposition that can make our hearts and lives simple, peaceful, joyful, and free from the cares of the world. Do you have an easy time being grateful, or is it hard for you even to mutter the word, "thanks"? We can always begin again with our attitude.

If it's been difficult for you to show appreciation or thanks—or even if it hasn't—take every opportunity you can to say it today. Reflect at the end of your day and see if you notice anything different about yourself, and then try to express the difference it made. Be thankful for that very difference itself!

... and Praise

Dear Jesus, thank you for the gift of gratitude. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for moving me to show my gratitude and appreciation today. I didn't expect it to impact me like that. Help me always to show appreciation to others, even when it's difficult for me to say it. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention today's gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.



First Saturday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"An expression of infinite attachment to some part of our earthly surroundings is always a kind of gratitude."

"Homer and Mr. Stephen Phillips," The Daily News (February 10, 1902)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Praise the God of gods; for his mercy endures forever;
Praise the Lord of lords; for his mercy endures forever;
Who alone has done great wonders, for his mercy endures forever;
Who skillfully made the heavens, for his mercy endures forever;
Who spread the earth upon the waters, for his mercy endures forever;
Who made the great lights, for his mercy endures forever;
The sun to rule the day, for his mercy endures forever;
The moon and stars to rule the night, for his mercy endures forever."

Psalm 136:2-9

Wonder...

We learned previously from Chesterton that the essence of the simple life is thanks. When we want what we have, we already have what we want. This is probably one of the most countercultural sentiments that faith demands—to be satisfied with "enough" or even with "less." It's difficult for us to avoid keeping score or acquiring more things. We can quench those urges when we realize God has given us what we need, and he continually gives us himself, which is all we need to be satisfied. When we realize that everything is a gift, we stop grasping at everything as if it were a prize and start receiving it as a gift.

Take a few moments today to reflect on your "stuff" (your "earthly possessions"). If you had to get rid of everything and keep *only one* object, what would you choose and why? How does that thing bring you closer to God? Are you satisfied with what you have, or do you crave more? Resolve today to focus less on getting more stuff and instead embrace simplicity by being grateful for what you already have. Record the one object you'd keep and reflect on how it brings you closer to God.

... and Praise

Sweet Savior, today I'm grateful for the gift of [mention your gift] and how it brings me closer to you. Help me to be satisfied with what I have and with all you have given to me. Help me to cling to you as my most valued gift when I have the urge to acquire more and more. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

Second Sunday of Advent



Wit of Chesterton

"Civilisation has run on ahead of the soul of man, and is producing faster than he can think and give thanks."

"The Agreeable Savage," The Daily News (February 21, 1902)

Wisdom from Scripture

"So that my glory may praise you and not be silent O LORD, my God, forever will I give you thanks."

Psalm 30:13

Wonder...

Technology. A luxury for some. A necessary hindrance for many. The level of technology that our civilization has achieved is absolutely mind-blowing. We keep mini-computers in our pockets that are a million times faster than the supercomputer that landed man on the moon. Come to think of it: *we landed a man on the moon!* Technology has become so commonplace that it's usually just taken for granted or becomes a distraction—and we certainly have a difficult time keeping up with it. But each and every one of those inventions was thought of by a human brain, formed (mostly) by human hands, and used today by millions of people worldwide.

Let's take a minute today to consider how far we've come because of technology. Sometimes, it seems like we've come so far that we're starting to go backwards. But technology is just like anything else in our lives: we don't appreciate it until we consider it. Think about one aspect of technology in your life and how you use it for the greater good or to improve your relationship with God, and then make your thanksgiving.

... and Praise

God, creator of all things good, today I'm grateful for the gift of [mention your gift]. I appreciate the way it makes my life easier or helps me connect with others. Help me to always recognize things in my life as gifts and never take them for granted. Thank you, Lord, for all those who improve our world by promoting science and technology for the glory of your Name. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

Second Monday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"The whole object of real art, of real romance—and, above all, of real religion—is to prevent people from losing the humility and gratitude which are thankful for daylight and daily bread."

"The Leopold-Loeb Case," Illustrated London News (September 20, 1924)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you."

James 4:10

Wonder...

Humility is such a paradoxical virtue. It is the essence of lowliness, and yet is it the greatest of virtues. Humility quells pride. Pride is all about *me* and what *I* can do. Humility is all about *God* and what *he* can do through me. When we start to realize that God is God and we are not, we begin to see that everything is a gift from him. We really did nothing to merit our status, possessions, or holiness. We just put in the work; God does the rest.

Battling pride is really difficult (for some more than others), and we all battle with it in our own ways. If you struggle a great deal with pride, start giving credit where credit is due: to God. Think of one of your greatest accomplishments in life. That is a gift from God. If, at the time, you did it for your own glory and not his, turn that around today: offer it in thanks to him and for his glory.

... and Praise

My humble Lord, thank you for the gift of [mention your gift]. I claim it in your Holy Name and acknowledge it as a gift from you. Help me to conquer my pride with humility and thanksgiving. May all I do with your help redound to your greater glory, and not to my own credit. Bless me this Advent season with a humble and grateful heart. Please accept [mention your gift] as a gift of gratitude.

Second Tuesday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"People forget how to be grateful unless they learn how to be humble."

"The Sentimentalism of Zarathustra," The Daily News (December 15, 1906)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your mercy."

Psalm 31:17

Wonder...

We're still in the infancy of winter, but soon the days will be darker and colder. In just a few months, some of us will have forgotten "the sound of trees, the softness of the wind" (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*). Most of us will long for the sweet sunshine tingling our skin and warming our hearts.

But we need to be attentive in our daily lives. It's difficult for some of us to be really present in the moment. Many of us like to plan ahead and daydream about the future. There's nothing wrong with that. But there is something humble about staying fully present in our day-to-day lives. What is one ray of sunshine that lit up your day *today*?

... and Praise

Jesus, you are Light from Light. Thank you for sending me the gift of [mention your gift] to brighten my day and warm my heart. I appreciate the consolation and affirmation of your holy presence in my life. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

Second Wednesday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"The test of all happiness is gratitude."

Orthodoxy (1908)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; with the lyre make music to our God."

Psalm 147:7

Wonder...

This is probably one of Chesterton's most famous quotations from one of his most famous books. We've thought a lot about gratitude and how it improves our lives. Everyone is always searching for the quick-fix to happiness. Chesterton boldly tells us two things in this popular quote: that happiness is neither easy, nor is it quick. Gratitude requires humility, which is hard; and consistency, which is difficult. Gratitude also helps us live more simply—to be satisfied with less, which is challenging in a world that piles on more.

We are almost at the halfway point to Christmas. Take a moment to check-in. How are you doing? Are you noticing an increase of gratitude in your daily life? Are you recognizing more of God's gifts each day? Have you seen any increase of peace, happiness, or humility in your life? Take some time to reflect on this whole process of gratitude. How has it changed you so far? Thank God for this journey, for it too is a gift from him!

... and Praise

My joyful Lord, today I give you thanks for [mention your gift]. Help me to continue noticing the gifts you place in my life on a daily basis. Give me the grace to show gratitude, even when I don't feel like it, when it's challenging, or when I feel I've already expressed it enough. I can always express it more. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

Second Thursday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"You say grace before meals.
All right.
But I say grace before the play and the opera,
And grace before the concert and pantomime,
And grace before I open a book,
And grace before sketching, painting,
Swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing;
And grace before I dip the pen in the ink."

"A Grace", The Notebook (ca. 1894)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Wonder...

At first, Chesterton's reflections on grace today can come off sounding a little pompous and self-righteous. However, that's far from the intended word-play on "grace." Let's take a closer look at that word. Chesterton is simply using it in the way most people will recognize—as the prayer before meals. But let's take a walk down Etymology Lane here. One of the translations of "grace" is from the Latin *gratia* meaning "gratitude."

When we read it in *this* light, everything else in the poem clicks into place. Not only does Chesterton pray without ceasing, his prayer is one of gratitude for all the things he loves to do. He's given us another little litany to follow: a little litany of favorite things. What are some of your favorite things to use or to do? Make your own little Litany of Grace, and write a few of them down. More importantly, say grace before you start those things, today and as often as you can think to do so in the future.

... and Praise

My gracious Lord, I thank you for all of my favorite things, especially [mention your gift]. I'm so grateful you've given me these special interests, talents, and quiet moments. Help me to always receive them as gifts and say grace before I begin. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

Second Friday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"To let no bird fly past unnoticed, to spell patiently the stones and weeds, to have the mind a storehouse of sunset, requires a discipline in pleasure, and an education in gratitude."

"Savanarola," Varied Types (1903)

Wisdom from Scripture

"I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart; I will declare all your wondrous deeds. I will delight and rejoice in you; I will sing hymns to your name, Most High."

Psalm 9:2-3

Wonder...

Again, Chesterton reminds us that having a grateful heart and disposition takes discipline and practice. We all have to learn how to do it and make it our own. We have to learn to notice and appreciate the small things which, in turn, prepares our hearts to be grateful for everything, not just the big things. What discipline has helped you so far during our Advent journey of gratitude? Has that discipline helped you to actively notice more of the small things? Or maybe you've tried to downsize and simplify? Take a few moments to realize the specific discipline you've been using so far that have helped you grow in gratitude. Name it and give thanks for it.

... and Praise

God of Hosts, today I thank you for giving me the discipline to [mention your gift]. My heart yearns to grow closer to you, and I can only do so by being consistent and faithful. Thank you for the grace you've given me this season to try a new approach to appreciation. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

Second Saturday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"Peril and the potentiality of pain are themselves a ground for gratitude and rejoicing."

"The History of Christmas (cont'd)," G.K's Weekly (January 2, 1936)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Let the heaven and the earth praise him, the seas and whatever moves in them!"

Psalm 69:35

Wonder...

Today, Chesterton introduces the notion of redemptive suffering in his paradoxical words. We may find ourselves asking, "How can peril and pain cause us joy? Why should I be grateful for my suffering?" God doesn't want us to suffer. But he allows it to happen so that good may come of it. The hard part is realizing the good or the growth *while* we are suffering. We tend to ask ourselves, "Why is this happening to me?!" which can make us spiral into sadness, self-pity, rage, or even feeling like God isn't treating us fairly. But if we look at it another way, we can soften the sting of suffering a little by giving it purpose.

First, we give our suffering purpose by instead asking ourselves, "What does God want me to learn from this?" or "What good might come out of this?" The key is to sit and ponder those questions and allow the Holy Spirit to give you the answers. Realizing a purpose can give us the strength and courage to keep enduring the trial, and it's the most difficult step.

Next, we give further purpose to our pain when we "offer it up." Many of us are familiar with that phrase, but do we actually do it? Offering up our suffering for a specific person or intention is just like offering prayers. It tends to make the suffering a little more bearable.

Lastly, we can unite our pain to Christ on the Cross as redemptive suffering, by offering it for the conversion and salvation of souls. We have the opportunity to merit many graces —for ourselves or for others—through this unitive act of suffering. When we ponder the pain and torment of Our Lord on the Cross, we can be joyful for two reasons: one, because our pain most likely doesn't compare to His; and two, because he knows our human hearts and every emotion we can feel. Our suffering has the potential to bring us closer to God, and that is something to be thankful for.

... and Praise

My suffering Savior, you know the depths of the human heart and how I have suffered in my life. Today, I am grateful for [mention your gift]. In your almighty wisdom and mysterious plan, you have used it to bring more good to me and to the world. Thank you for using it to bring me closer to you. Bless me this Advent season with grateful patience in suffering as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude for the salvation of souls.

Third Sunday of Advent



Wit of Chesterton

"Joy comes from within and not from without."

"The History of Christmas (cont'd)," G.K's Weekly (January 2, 1936)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Shout joyfully to the LORD, all you lands; serve the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful song. Know that the LORD is God, he made us, we belong to him, we are his people, the flock he shepherds. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name; good indeed is the LORD, His mercy endures forever, his faithfulness lasts through every generation.

Psalm 100:1-5

Wonder...

Happy Gaudete Sunday! *Rejoice!*

Do you know the difference between joy and happiness? Happiness is fleeting. Joy can be constant—if only we let it. Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, persistent and unwavering like a steady heartbeat. It is an interior conviction of hope in the Resurrection, no matter our circumstances.

Yesterday, we thought about being joyful in suffering by giving it a purpose; and that purpose—our purpose—is ordered toward the Resurrection. The battle is already won! The victory is ours through Christ! All we need do is keep fighting the good fight.

It's hard to remain joyful in the midst of strife, but if we keep our eyes on the prize, the wellspring of joy will overflow in our hearts. Think of your relationship with Our Lord. What gives you the most joy in your relationship with Him? What thing remains constant and unwavering?

... and Praise

Jesus, you are my joy. I'm especially thankful today for [mention your gift]. It brings so much joy to my life. Help me to safeguard it. Hold me close to your most Sacred Heart. I pray that I may always find joy in you. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

Third Monday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"People forgot that the human soul can enjoy a thing most when there is time to think about it and be thankful for it."

"Pleasure Seeking in the Modern World," Illustrated London News (December 9, 1922)

Wisdom from Scripture

"We thank you, God, we give thanks; we call upon your name, we declare your wonderful deeds."

Psalm 75:2

Wonder...

What did you enjoy most about your day today (or yesterday, if you're reading this early in the morning)? Take a note from the Apostle of Common Sense and make time to think about that thing and be thankful for it. Remember that even that time we have to think and enjoy and give thanks for good things is a gift in itself. Thank God for whatever gift you chose, but also for the opportunity to pause and appreciate it and to give God praise for it.

... and Praise

Thank you, Jesus, for [mention your gift] and for the time and opportunities I have for pondering your gifts and for giving you thanks. Bless me this Advent season with the will to make more time for gratitude as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.



Third Tuesday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"All goods look better when they look like gifts."

St. Francis of Assisi (1923)

Wisdom from Scripture

“Bless the LORD, my soul; all my being, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, my soul; and do not forget all his gifts, who pardons all your sins, and heals all your ills, who redeems your life from the pit, and crowns you with mercy and compassion, who fills your days with good things, so your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

Psalm 103:1-5

Wonder...

Christmas is approaching fast! We’ve been working on our capacity for gratitude for over two weeks now. How are you doing? Are you noticing changes in yourself? Your attitude? Your humility? What is it?

Take a look at everything you’ve written down thus far on your calendar or in your journal. Think back to the day you began. How did you feel back then? And how do you feel now? Are Chesterton’s words helping you grow in the practice of giving thanks? Reflect today on one thing from this entire process that has helped you grow in gratitude more than any other, and thank God for that.

... and Praise

Thank you, Jesus, for [mention your gift]. Thank you for helping me as I become more aware of the countless gifts You bestow upon me every day. I’ve grown in the past few weeks because of [mention your gift]. I offer it up to you as a gift of gratitude. Please continue to bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth.

Third Wednesday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"The ideal of gratitude should not change: for gratitude is the first virtue of living things."

"The New Theology and Modern Thought," Illustrated London News (March 9, 1907)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Sing praise to the LORD, you faithful; give thanks to his holy memory."

Psalm 30:5

Wonder...

Have you ever had to wait a long time for something? It's hard to wait when we've become accustomed to instant gratification. When we receive our long-awaited gift, we thankfully exclaim "finally!" or "at last!" These are just different ways of expressing gratitude for getting what we want. But what does this have to do with Chesterton telling us that "gratitude is the first virtue of living things"?

It takes us all the way back to the book of Genesis after the creation of Adam. God gives Adam the job of naming all the creatures and brings each to him. Since none is a suitable helper, God creates Eve. Imagine the scene in Genesis 2:22 when God is bringing her to Adam. Imagine God leading her by the hand over the crest of a hill toward Adam below. They begin their descent just as the sunrise erupts in glory behind them. What does Adam say?

The first human voice in the Bible is a proclamation of thanksgiving: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." At long last! She's here! My helper! *Finally!* Adam's first and best words *are those of gratitude* while he is in a state of perfect grace and unity with his creator. His next words are full of fear and failure after the Fall. This seems to be what Chesterton is getting at when he writes about the "first virtue of living things." We echo that sentiment every time our waiting is fulfilled and we exclaim, "finally!"

When was the last time you had to wait a really long time for something? What was it? Did you have those first feelings of "at last!" or "finally!"? Take some time to recognize that gift and how much you appreciated it at the time... and hopefully still do!

... and Praise

My giving Lord, I thank you for [mention your gift]. It's so frustrating to wait sometimes, but it's worth it. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be patient. Help me to always show appreciation to you during those moments in my life when I cry out, "at last!" Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I await eagerly the holy day of your birth, and help me to be grateful when that day arrives! I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

Third Thursday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"We all go on every day, unless we are continually goading ourselves into gratitude and humility, seeing less and less of the significance of the sky or the stones."

"The Twelve Men," Tremendous Trifles (1909)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD; cry out to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with a song of praise, joyfully sing out our psalms. For the LORD is the great God, the great king over all gods, whose hand holds the depths of the earth; who owns the tops of the mountains."

Psalm 95:1-4

Wonder...

Chesterton's use of words here is masterful. He begins with this hum-drum phrase that reminds us of drudgery, like the long, slow, bent, walk into a job you hate. Then he hits us with a massive crescendo about provoking or annoying ourselves to action, and finally the decrescendo of inaction that will keep happening if we continue to do nothing.

It's an interesting way Chesterton has called us all out of our own complacency. Did you know that a "goad" is actually a sharp stick used to drive livestock? Just imagine Chesterton playfully swatting at you with his cane-sword (sheathed, of course) saying, "Come, now, there's a good chap. Eyes up! Look around! Take notice! *Be grateful!*" His words certainly have a way of waking us up!

What ordinary, hum-drum, monotonous thing can you goad yourself into appreciating today? What dull or boring thing in your life is actually a well-camouflaged gift from God? What grumble-inducing drudgery is, after all, worthy of thanks? Chesterton would say, "ALL of it!" Pick one, at least, and challenge yourself to be grateful for it.

... and Praise

Lord, today I bring you the gift of [mention your gift]. I realize that it's a gift from you because you make all things good, and you give them to me for my good. I'm sorry for those times I've focused only on myself and my drudgery instead of focusing on you and your generosity. Help me always to delight in the dull and magnify the monotonous. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

Third Friday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"Praise should be the permanent pulsation of the soul."

Orthodoxy (1908)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Praise, you servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD both now and forever."

Psalm 113:1-2

Wonder...

Chesterton has been encouraging us to have an attitude of gratitude, but today, we focus on a new word: *praise*. Praise and thanksgiving are two different things. Praise says, "God, you're awesome." Thanksgiving says, "God, thanks for being awesome *to me*."

When we remind ourselves of the awesomeness of God and continually profess it in the form of praise, we really begin to recognize God's hand in everything. When we make that realization, it opens our hearts and minds to be grateful for everything. It can get overwhelming to realize just how much God has done for us. But as soon as we feel the weight of that debt, we can turn it around and give it back in praise and thanksgiving. Think today about one way God has revealed his awesomeness to you.

... and Praise

All-powerful and everliving God, thank you for revealing your awesome power to me through [mention your gift]. Help me to continue to have a grateful heart and a soul that pulses perpetually with praise. I give [mention your gift] to you as a gift of gratitude. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth.

Third Saturday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"Gratitude, being nearly the greatest of human duties, is also nearly the most difficult."

"Christmas Thanksgiving," Illustrated London News (December 28, 1935)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Save us, LORD, our God; gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in praising you."

Psalm 106:47

Wonder...

Here we have another challenging lesson from Uncle Chestnut. It is hard to show gratitude for some people. Chesterton has called gratitude many things in the past few weeks, but today he calls it a great *duty*, a word which connotes moral obligation. Chesterton tells us that we are *morally obliged* to show how grateful we are—both to one another and most especially to God. It's hard to show gratitude, though, because gratitude requires humility, such as in acknowledging that God is God, and we are not. Honestly, most of us don't like to admit that we can't control everything: hence the struggle.

So again, think back to this past first Sunday in Advent and consider your growth in gratitude *and* humility. Was it hard for you at first to be grateful? How? What has made it easier? Did something change? Was it a sudden switch or a slow crescendo? Think on that transition for a while today and thank God for how your heart may be changing.

... and Praise

Loving Father, thank you for letting me wrestle with the difficulty of growing in gratitude and humility. You are making me a saint by sanctifying me for your Kingdom. It's hard to see the point when I'm struggling. Help me give purpose to my trials. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] to you as a gift of gratitude.

Fourth Sunday of Advent



Wit of Chesterton

"The best kind of giving... is called thanksgiving."

Saint Francis of Assisi (1923)

Wisdom from Scripture

“The heavens praise your marvels, LORD, your loyalty in the assembly of the holy ones.”

Psalm 89:6

Wonder...

We’re only a few days from Christmas now. We are getting ready to celebrate the birth of Our Lord in prayer, but we’ll celebrate as well by feasting with family and friends and by giving gifts and giving thanks. While most of us can get along just fine with our kith and kin, there’s usually at least one person who has a special gift for sanctifying us—as it were by trial. Chesterton says it best in *Heretics*: “Our father and mother do lie in wait for us and leap out on us, like brigands from a bush. Our uncle is a surprise. Our aunt is, in the beautiful common expression, a bolt from the blue. When we step into the family, by the act of being born, we do step into a world which is incalculable, into a world which has its own strange laws, into a world which could do without us, into a world that we have not made. In other words, when we step into the family we step into a fairy-tale.”

And fairy tales have villains and mean step-sisters. It can be hard to deal with someone who fits that description, but take a moment to consider such a person in your life. Make a mental list of all that person’s *good* qualities. Thank God for the goodness in that person, because it *is* there. Thank God because this person is equal in dignity with you as a child of God, made in His image and likeness. And then thank God for using this person to make you a saint, even though they are sometimes hard to bear. Write down the name of this person, along with all your reasons for being grateful for him or her, and then thank God for these things.

... and Praise

Gracious and merciful God, thank you for the gift of [mention your special person's name]. Thank you for all of [name’s] good qualities and talents. Thank you for the way [name] sanctifies me and makes me holy. In the coming days, give me the grace and patience to love this person as much as you do. Help me cling to the goodness I see there, because I know You see it, too. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I pray especially for [name] and offer our time together as a gift of gratitude.

Fourth Monday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"The repetition of gratitude grows more difficult as the reason for it grows more deep and genuine."

"Happiest of Human Fates," The New Witness (November 12, 1920)

Wisdom from Scripture

"I will thank the LORD in accordance with his justice; I will sing the name of the LORD Most High."

Psalm 7:17

Wonder...

Chesterton warns us again about the difficulty of showing gratitude in the monotonous and repetitious endeavors in our lives. We've been at this *for three weeks now*. Are you tired of it yet? Are you falling into boring patterns? Getting frustrated? That might be a spiritual attack meant to derail your path to holiness. Don't let Satan get a foothold. Begin again! Take a minute, right now, wherever you are, to let your gaze fall on the most mundane, boring thing in the room. Study it. Think about its purpose, its past, its creators, inventors, installers, owners, back and back and back.

Everything has a story and a purpose. So, the wall in your office is boring—but think of the hand that painted it, the team that built it, the person who designed it, all so you could sit here reading this reflection right now to give thanks to God. The history is mind-blowing. *Stay simple*. Notice the grand design of the mundane, and you'll never get tired of it. Record your "boring" gift today.

... and Praise

God, you are the grand architect of all things. Today, I thank you for the gift of [mention your gift]. Sometimes it's difficult to keep giving thanks when I'm focused on myself. Help me always to think about the things I take for granted, to be grateful for the people that put them there, and to understand that gratitude and humility are the best defenses against the devil. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I give [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

Fourth Tuesday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"We have gratitude, but never certainty."

"The Meaning of Dreams," The Daily News (November 15, 1901)

Wisdom from Scripture

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; prudent are all who practice it. His praise endures forever."

Psalm 111:10

Wonder...

Death is the only certainty in life. Gratitude, like many other things, is an active choice of the will. We can choose to be grateful, ungrateful, or indifferent. The more we practice gratitude, the more it becomes a permanent part of our disposition. But we aren't permanent. We can't control everything. In fact, we can lose everything in an instant. Then we have to start all over again. That's something for which we can give thanks – the ability to begin again, to rebuild after disaster, to put down the bottle for the last time, to relocate, to try something new, to walk into the Confessional and be made new. In what way has uncertainty turned your world topsy-turvy? How were you given the chance to begin again? What good came of it? Reflect on it for a while and write it down.

... and Praise

King of Kings, you make all things new. Thank you for using [mention your gift] to let me begin again. Help me to remain confident in your constancy and not the false certainty of the world. Give me the courage and willingness to begin again if you want me to. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] up to you as a gift of gratitude.



Fourth Wednesday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"The praise of God stands on its strongest ground when it stands on nothing."

Saint Francis of Assisi (1923)

Wisdom from Scripture

"The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Job 1:21

Wonder...

Yesterday, Chesterton helped us to focus on beginning again. This theme ties together with today's words which focus on "having nothing." Has there ever been a time in your life when you lost "everything"? "Everything" can mean different things to different people. But, was there ever a time in your life when you felt like you had nothing? Chesterton says, "In the struggle for existence, it is only on those who hang on for ten minutes after all is hopeless, that hope begins to dawn." The praise of God is always hopeful. We always have hope, even when we've lost everything. When we have nothing, we still have God, and God is everything. If you are struggling, and you're overcome with feelings of having nothing or that you've lost everything, give that loss back to God. Put it back in His hands where it belongs. Take note of it and pray in thanksgiving

... and Praise

God, you are my everything. You are my only hope. It pains me to thank you for [mention your loss]. I feel the weight of this loss crushing down upon me, and I feel like my life will never be the same. Things might have changed in my life, but I know, Lord, that you are constant and unwavering. My hope is in your resurrection—the joy and eternal happiness I will face because of my faithfulness to you, no matter the cost. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] up to you as a gift of gratitude.

Fourth Thursday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"Are we to have any gratitude for the positive miracles of life?"

"Some Philosophy of Gratitude," The Daily News (June 20, 1903)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Let your saving help protect me, God, that I may praise God's name in song and glorify it with thanksgiving."

Psalm 69:30-31

Wonder...

This particular tongue-in-cheek jab from Chesterton comes from one of his shorter essays wherein he tells us the worldly way of expressing gratitude is a bit backward. Instead of being grateful for a flower, we have to think of a reason to be grateful for it. We say "thank you" to the person who passes us the mustard, but forget to be grateful for the person who passes it. We've journeyed together the last several weeks with one goal in mind—to increase that glow of gratitude in our hearts. Has it worked for you? Are you able to recognize the many gifts and blessings that surround you every single day? How has this type of Chestertonian, topsy-turvy approach to appreciation impacted you? This type of perspective is also a gift from God. Take some time to recognize and write it down today.

... and Praise

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of gratitude that you have awakened in me this Advent season. Help me to always be thankful for everything—good and bad, ugly and beautiful, tiny and enormous, for the hurtful and tiresome, and for the joyful and magnificent. I want to accept it all with a heart of thanks and give it back to you with humble gratitude. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer my attitude of gratitude back to you as a gift of thanksgiving.

Fourth Friday of Advent

Wit of Chesterton

"Gifts are goods in motion; and if riches take to themselves wings and fly, it is surely better that they should be such comparatively angelic wings."

"Christmas Gifts and the Humanist, The New Witness (December 20, 1917)

Wisdom from Scripture

"All good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no alteration or shadow caused by change. He willed to give us birth by the word of truth that we may be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

James 1:17-18

Wonder...

Our talents, relationships, material possessions, faith, and even our very lives are gifts. Gratitude begins when we recognize that goodness is something we receive, not something we can make on our own. A gift that is never given (or multiplied) remains an ordinary possession, like in the parable of the talents.

God entrusts us with good things for our enjoyment. But we are also called to be instruments of his goodness in the lives of others. We are meant to receive his gifts with gratitude and give them away with charity. The more generously we share what we have received, the more goodness we introduce into the world. Who is that Goodness? God.

Perhaps we should measure the abundance of our gifts not by how much we possess, but by how much goodness we set in motion. The love we receive should become love we give. The mercy we experience should become the mercy we extend. The wisdom we have acquired should become wisdom we share. The light we have been given should become light for another.

We aren't merely the recipients of God's goodness. We are called to be his messengers. Gifts are goods in motion. And perhaps one of the greatest ways we can thank God for the gifts he has given us is to ensure that those gifts never stop at us; they keep going. What is one gift you have that is difficult for you to share with others? Write that gift down and make an effort to pass it on to someone else.

... and Praise

Good and Gracious God, thank you for blessing me with the gift of [mention your gift]. Give me the grace and courage to pass on this gift to others, no matter how difficult or inconvenient it may be. Thank you for enriching my life with all the goodness you bestow upon me. Help me, in turn, to bestow it upon others for the glory of your name. Bless me at the end of this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] up to you as a gift of gratitude.

Christmas Eve



Wit of Chesterton

"I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought; and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder."

A Short History of England (1917)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Give thanks to the LORD, who is good, whose mercy endures forever."

Psalm 106:1

Wonder...

Here we are on Christmas Eve. Hopefully, you're able to enjoy a few quiet moments to yourself today. These particular words of Chesterton are some of his most famous. Chesterton's definition is striking: "gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder." This is probably the most difficult for people past the age of adolescence to understand. After that point, we tend to lose our capacity to wonder innocently anymore. But today is the perfect day to reclaim that child-like wonder. After all, it's the most wonder-full time of the year!

As you go about your day today, consider everything with wonder and awe: the lights, the creche, the ham, the aunties, the babies, the stars, the silence, the noise, the people you miss, the breath in your own lungs. Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.

... and Praise

Wonderful Counselor, thank you for the gift of [mention your gift]. Thank you for placing it in my life so that I may experience the wonder of your majesty. Help me to regain a sense of child-like wonder as I approach the Christ Child this Christmas. Bless me with a grateful heart and mind tomorrow, the holy day of Your birth, throughout the coming new year, and throughout my whole life to come. I give [mention your gift] back to you as a gift of gratitude.

Christmas Day



Wit of Chesterton

"The aim of life is appreciation; there is no sense in not appreciating things; and there is no sense in having more of them if you have less appreciation of them."

Autobiography (1936)

Wisdom from Scripture

"From the rising of the sun to its setting, let the name of the LORD be praised."

Psalm 113:3

Wonder...

Merry Christmas! Today marks the last day of our journey, and Chesterton sums it all up quite nicely. Let's walk through his words and mull over them together one last time.

"The aim of life is appreciation."

Chesterton has taught us many things about gratitude in the past month. It is one of the greatest moral obligations. It is beautiful, good, and virtuous. It is difficult, requires discipline, and can be born from pain. Chesterton maintains that gratitude is a choice that turns into a habit, which matures into a disposition of joy and humility: in other words, a virtue. These are excellent standards on the path to holiness.

"There is no sense in not appreciating things."

We're in a constant spiritual battle of distraction and indifference. We have to take note of *everything*—the ordinary and dull as well as the imaginative and wonderful. When we notice the small things and show appreciation, we learn to be even more thankful for the big things.

"And there is no sense in having more [things] if you have less appreciation of them."

Gratitude keeps things simple, it keeps us going, and it keeps us close to Christ. It also requires reflection and conscious thought, lest we allow these precious gifts to pass us by unnoticed. Today, we celebrate the birth of our Savior with grateful hearts. Reflect today on the Divine paradox that is Our Lord: all-good, all-powerful, and all-knowing—born as a tiny and helpless infant who looks up from the manger and smiles his sweet baby-smile at you. *Above all else, are you most grateful for him?*

... and Praise

My sweet Savior, today I thank you for the gift of your being with us, Emmanuel. Thank you for bestowing countless blessings upon me over the course of my life. Help me to maintain an attitude of gratitude as I humbly consider the good you provide every day. Dearest Jesus, I bring all my thanks as my gift to you this Christmas. I love you, my Lord, my God, my All. Keep me close to you always, and let me never tire of fighting the good fight with fortitude, grace, gratitude, and humility.

December 6
Saint Nicholas of Myra

Wit of Chesterton

"Santa Claus, of course, is only St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children; but he has, in some ways, become more of a goblin than a saint. There have been many thousands of Christmas cards and Christmas books printed to depict him; and I doubt whether five of them depict him with a halo."

"This Election," Illustrated London News (December 24, 1910)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Every knee shall bend and every tongue confess that Christ is LORD."

Philippians 2:10–11

Wonder...

Think back to how you celebrated Christmas when you were a child. For many households, Mom is Santa Claus. She's the one responsible for the majority of the Christmas magic. She made it happen out of love for her children, much like Saint Nicholas served others out of love for Christ. Although some have difficult relationships with their mothers, most mothers want to see their children full of joy. Take some time today to think about your mom, whether you have (or had) a good relationship with her or not. Even the most absent of mothers often show their love at Christmastime. If you are able, find some Christmas-themed stationery and write her a thank-you letter for any and all Christmas coziness she had a hand in creating.

If your dad was the one who made the magic happen, put pen to paper for him, too. Give thanks to God for the countless gifts he's bestowed upon you in and through your parents (or parent figures). Especially if your relationship with either of your parents is strained, try to come up with something good about them to be thankful for, to them and to your Father in Heaven.

... and Praise

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for blessing me with my parents. They have been a gift to me by [mention one thing you're really grateful for about your parent(s)]. Many of the things they provided for me were unseen, without hesitation, and sometimes even without appreciation on my part. Please help me to show my gratitude and love toward them during this holiday season. Give me the patience to understand that they aren't perfect, and to act with mercy and forgiveness if my relationship with them is strained. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of Yyour birth. I offer [mention your gift] up to you as a gift of gratitude.

December 8
Immaculate Conception of Our Lady

Wit of Chesterton

"You cannot visit the child without visiting the mother; you cannot in common human life approach the child except through the mother."

The Everlasting Man (1925)

Wisdom from Scripture

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant."

Luke 1:46-48

Wonder...

Today, we celebrate the holy and Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Chesterton makes some incredible points about honoring Mary in *The Everlasting Man:*

> Omnipotence and impotence, or divinity and infancy, do definitely make a sort of epigram which a million repetitions cannot turn into a platitude. It is not unreasonable to call it unique. Bethlehem is emphatically a place where extremes meet. Here begins, it is needless to say, another mighty influence for the humanisation of Christendom. If the world wanted what is called a non-controversial aspect of Christianity, it would probably select Christmas. Yes it is obviously bound up with what is supposed to be a controversial aspect (I could never at any stage of my opinions imagine why); the respect paid to the Blessed Virgin. When I was a boy a more Puritan generation objected to a statue upon my parish church representing the Virgin and Child. After much controversy, they compromised by taking away the Child. One would think that this was even more corrupted with Mariolatry, unless the mother was counted less dangerous when deprived of a sort of weapon. But the practical difficulty is also a parable. You cannot chip away the statue of a mother from all round that of a new-born child. You cannot suspend the new-born child in midair; indeed, you cannot really have a statue of a new-born child at all. Similarly, you cannot suspend the idea of a new-born child in the void or think of him without thinking of his mother. You cannot visit the child without visiting the mother; you cannot in common human life approach the child except through the mother. If we are to think of Christ in this aspect at all, the other idea follows as it is followed in history. We must either leave Christ out of Christmas, or Christmas out of Christ, or we must admit, if only as we admit it in an old picture, that those holy heads are too near together for the haloes not to mingle and cross.

How have you honored Mary as the Mother of Our Lord? Do you have a particular devotion to her? How has her intercession impacted your life?

... and Praise

My beloved Savior, as I approach you in the manger this holy season, help me to realize that your mother is one of my best and closest intercessors. Whenever I approach you, she is near, gazing upon your face with perfect adoration and humility. Help me to grow in humility and obedience to you by looking to her as my example. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] up to you as a gift of gratitude.

December 12
Our Lady of Guadalupe

Wit of Chesterton

"Clothed with the sun or standing on the moon
Crowned with the stars or single, a morning star,
Sunlight and moonlight are thy luminous shadows,
Starlight and twilight thy refractions are,
Lights and half-lights and all lights turn about thee,
But though we dazed can neither see nor doubt thee,
Something remains. Nor can man live without it
Nor can man find it bearable without thee."

"The Black Virgin," The Queen of Seven Swords (1926)

Wisdom from Scripture

"Do whatever he tells you."

John 2:5

Wonder...

Chesterton's imagery in "The Black Virgin" is so striking. One can't help but think about the image of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, standing on the moon and clothed in a beautiful veil of stars. This gorgeous poem is about how Mary reflects the light of Christ in all that she does. This connects well with her first and final command to us: "do whatever he tells you." Mary continually leads us to Christ by showing us what obedience means. There is such spiritual freedom when we are truly obedient! Was there ever a time in your life when it was especially difficult for you to be obedient to the will of God? Think on that time for a bit. What happened because of it? Did you receive a special grace or consolation? How did things turn out?

... and Praise

Lord, thank you for the gift of [mention your gift]. It's so difficult to be obedient and do Your will in my life. Most of the time, I want my own way. Help me to always do whatever you tell me to do with courage and humility. Give me the strength to follow through when I answer "yes." Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] up to you as a gift of gratitude.

December 13
Saint Lucy

Wit of Chesterton

"The world grows terrible and white,
And blinding white the breaking day;
We walk bewildered in the light
For something is too large for sight,
And something much too plain to say."

"The Black Virgin," The Queen of Seven Swords (1926)

Wisdom from Scripture

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

Matthew 5:14-16

Wonder...

Today is the feast day of St. Lucy of Syracuse, a young woman who was martyred for her Christian faith. Her name means "bringer of light."

How are you a "bringer of the Light" for others? What are some gifts or talents that God is able to use through you in order to bring others to Him? Think of a few simple ways that you can bring the Light of Christ to others this Advent. A smile? A kind word? Maybe you can visit those who are ill, or reach out to people in your life that have lost touch with you. How can you, like St. Lucy, die to yourselves for the glory of God?

St. Lucy is also the patron of good eyesight. What can we do to see Christ in others—and even in ourselves—during this holy season? Resolve today to be a "light bearer" for someone in your life who might really need it. Pray for that person today, asking God to help keep them close to the Light, especially when they encounter you.

... and Praise

My dear Jesus, Radiant Dawn and Splendor of Glory, I thank you for the gift of [name a way you have been Christ's light]. Help me always to be a bright light that shines in the darkness. May I always have the courage to reflect your goodness, truth, and beauty. Bless me this Advent season with a grateful heart and mind as I approach the holy day of your birth. I offer [mention your gift] up to you as a gift of gratitude.



Download additional resources and sign up for Advent tips, words of encouragement, and Chestertonian insights throughout the season:

chesterton.org/advent

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