

# Scripture and Feast Day Notes

## Fourth Sunday

### From Today's Readings

**Luke 17:1-10** Jesus shares four critical teachings with his disciples (and us): 1. Sin will come – watch for those who carry it with them, 2. Be generous with your forgiveness, 3. The smallest seed of faith can empower you beyond your understanding, and 4. Doing all I tell you does not call for self-congratulations, for it is simply what you should be doing. *Discuss/reflect: Which of these four life guidelines speaks to you? Can you think of a specific experience?*

**Hebrews 1:1-14** The early readers of Hebrews might have venerated angels to such a degree that the epistle writer felt it important to stress Jesus' sovereignty over them. In doing so, he lays out a compelling series of statements about who Jesus is. *Discuss/reflect. With pen in hand, read today's epistle reading. Underline or write out the words or phrases that describe Jesus. Begin a prayer with "Lord Jesus Christ, you who...Add all these descriptions and then your personal petitions.*

**Isaiah 38:1-8** King Hezekiah, ill and at the point of death, prays for healing. God restores the King's health and pledges protection to Jerusalem. *Discuss/reflect: Hezekiah declares to God that he had "done what is good in Your eyes. (v 3)." In St. Nersess' famous "Wisdom" prayer, he asks God for the wisdom to "do what is good in Your sight." What do you do that might be god in His sight?*

### Saturday, December 25 is the Feast of St. Stephen (and Christmas!)



Ordained (in an early ritual of laying on of hands) along with six others to serve the poor at the common table, St. Stephen was renowned for his dedication and faith. Acts 6-8:2 relates his story, culminating in a martyr's death by stoning and his burial. He is acknowledged by the Church as the first to die for his faith (protomartyr). The intensity and sincerity of St. Stephen's faith deeply impressed Saul, the infamous persecutor of Christians who witnessed Stephen's martyrdom. Upon his own conversion, he became Paul, zealous apostle to the Gentiles and one of the greatest missionaries of the Church. St. Stephen is the role model for altar servers, particularly deacons. During Badarak on this feast day, it is traditional in some places for all deacons serving at the altar to wear a liturgical crown, which is worn only by priests on all other days of the year, the crown here being a symbol of martyrdom. St.

Stephen is often depicted holding a censer and a miniature church, as well as a martyr's palm branch and stones.

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