

Partners in FAITH™



Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

December 2013



Thoughtful Moments

St. Nicholas

On December 6th we celebrate St. Nicholas, bishop and defender of the faith. St. Nicholas had a generous heart and gave away most of his fortune. One story credits him with saving three girls from being sold to pay their father's debt. His frequent anonymous acts of generosity helped him become the patron saint of children. Later he is credited with defending Jesus' full divinity at the Nicene Council against Arian supporters. St. Nicholas' example helps us focus on Jesus.



Holiday hysteria antidote

"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Philippians 4:8).

Family meals

Families can help children become better socialized and more secure in as few as 60 minutes a week. Experts agree that even one weekly family meal can build a stronger family.



Make ready for something wonderful

Children spend the weeks before Christmas waiting for something wonderful to happen. In fact, that's what the Season of Advent means. It is the time when we prepare for something wonderful. Try taking Advent one week at a time and wait, hope, prepare, and rejoice over the miracle of Christ's remarkable birth ...

Week One – Wait. Decorate slowly. Start with the Nativity scene (without the Baby, of course) and scatter more decorations around the house each week to build momentum up to Christmas.

Week Two – Hope. As a family, take a break from the frenzy to volunteer for an organization that offers hope to

families without any. Soup kitchens, Catholic Charities, the Knights of Columbus, or your local parish may have ministries to help needy families in your area.

Week Three – Prepare. Look for ways to prepare your hearts for Christmas. Take the family to Confession to ready your souls for God's grace.

Resolve to use only caring words with one another to prepare for the Prince of Peace.

Week Four – Rejoice. Add the Baby to the Nativity, hug each other, and sing with joy at Mass on Christmas. Welcome our Savior with rejoicing hearts. *"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"* (1 Corinthians 2:9).



Why Do Catholics Do That ?

Why do we praise God?

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, he began with "hallowed be thy name." But God doesn't need our praise; he knows he is perfect. We praise God because he loves us and because he is



good. In fact, when we realize the gratitude and praise that we owe God, we want to give him what he is due. *"It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to thy name, O Most High"* (Psalm 92:1).

Make memories with Christmas traditions

Family Christmas traditions give children a sense of belonging and identity and make Christmases memorable. Consider adding these new traditions to your family Christmas this year:

Make "Adorements." Craft ornaments that illustrate names for Jesus, "Bread of Life," "Light of the World," "King of Kings," etc. Add to the tree one at a time.

Give Jesus the first gift. At Thanksgiving, wrap a gift box for Jesus. Cut a slot in the top. During Advent have children write down what they did for Jesus each day and drop these

offerings in the box. Unwrap this gift first on Christmas morning.



Mark a milestone. Give each child a new ornament marking an event in his or her spiritual life from the year. Celebrate the receipt of a Sacrament, learning a new prayer, or acquiring a virtue.

Celebrate cultures. Learn how to say "Merry Christmas" in different languages. Serve up new foods at dinner, such as potato latkes or pasteles.

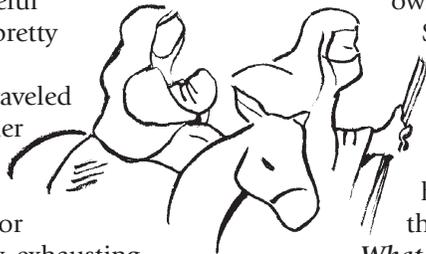
Host a Christmas party and ask friends to share international Christmas traditions.

Scripture LESSON

**Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23,
God protects those who trust him.**

Nativity scenes usually show Mary and Joseph calmly kneeling at Jesus' crib surrounded by adoring shepherds and wise men. It's a peaceful scene and probably pretty far from reality.

Mary and Joseph traveled in the last stages of her pregnancy from Nazareth to Bethlehem. On foot or donkey, it was a dirty, exhausting journey. Once there, there was nowhere to stay except a stable with animals. After a short time, they had to flee to Egypt with a newborn to escape danger, and stayed there for several



years without family or friends.

The Holy Family had a share of pain and difficulties much like our own experience. Yet

Scripture tells us that Mary and Joseph found strength from their faith in God and were guided by his Word. We can do the same.

What can a parent do? Tell your children that Jesus' birth and the Holy Family's escape to Egypt is further proof that God always keeps his promises. When we lean on him, God will always lead us to safety.

Parent TALK

I grew up in a troubled home with few happy Christmases. So I vowed to make Christmas perfect for my own children. In fact, I became obsessed. Our trees had to be perfect with color-coordinated decorations. Christmas cookies had to be baked just so. The year I found myself decorating the tree alone I realized my mistake.

The next year, I let the kids pick the tree. It was lumpy and lopsided but we thought it was gorgeous. Instead of placing color-coordinated ornaments, we piled them on and admired our handiwork.

When we baked, dough and sprinkles got everywhere, but the cookies were delicious. Tessa was delighted that we put St. Nick in the bathroom so she could see him every night before she went to bed and in the morning when she awoke. It was messy and chaotic and our best Christmas ever.



Feasts & Celebrations

December is the month we prepare for and celebrate Christ's birth and the miraculous events surrounding it.

Dec. 1 – First Day of Advent. The new Church year starts this day. We begin Year A.

Dec. 8 – Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On this day we commemorate that Mary was conceived in St. Anne's womb without original sin. In addition to attending Mass, praying a joyful rosary is a wonderful way to celebrate.

Dec. 12 - Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531). The Blessed Mother appeared

to St. Juan Diego. To prove her visitation to the bishop, she asked Juan Diego to carry roses to him as a sign. When the roses were emptied from his tilma (cape) before the bishop, it retained the image of the Blessed Mother and can still be seen today.

Dec. 13th – St. Lucy. In pagan Sicily, St. Lucy vowed to remain chaste for Jesus. A disappointed suitor betrayed her for her Christianity and she was executed for her faith.



Our Mission

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(540)662-7844 (540)662-7847 fax
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