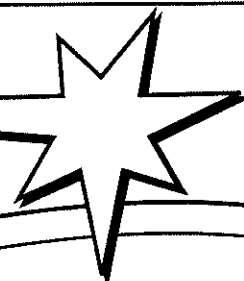


Partners in FAITH™



Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

December 2022

St. Matthew Religious Education



Thoughtful Moments

God knows us

"A God who draws near out of love walks with his people ... We could never have imagined that the same Lord would become one of us and walk with us, be present with us, present in His Church, present in the Eucharist, present in His Word, present in the poor ... And this is closeness: the shepherd close to his flock, close to his sheep, whom he knows, one by one." Pope Francis



Jesus is Peace and Joy

It is possible to feel peaceful despite the stress of current turbulent times. It's also possible to be joyful, even amidst great sorrow. Jesus is the peace and joy we long for. The saints were able to find peace and joy in trials because they knew Christ.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The Lord is my life's refuge; of who should I be afraid?"
(Psalm 27:1).



Add a Catholic tradition to your Christmas celebration

Family traditions make our Christmas celebrations unique and special to our families. Consider adding a new tradition this year:

Carols by candlelight.

To symbolize Jesus bringing light to the darkness, gather around candlelight and sing your favorite Christmas hymns. Choose classics such as "Silent Night," "Away in a Manger," "Angels, We Have Heard on High." Let the words tell the story of Jesus' birth.

Midnight Mass. This liturgy features the classic Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke, and is the most elaborate celebration of Christmas. Many families bring children to this first Mass of Christmas. Hint: pack a blanket so little ones can lie down in the pew.

Bless the nativity scene. Leave your manger empty of the main figures when

you set it up. On Christmas Eve, ceremoniously add the angels, shepherds, Mary, and Joseph. As a surprise, add Baby Jesus before the children wake up on Christmas morning. Place the three kings across the room so they can "journey" until Epiphany.

Celebrate the Festival of Lessons and Carols.

This service consists of nine Scripture lessons which recount the Fall, the promise of a Messiah, the Incarnation, and the Great

Commission. Each lesson is followed by a

song and a prayer. If the Festival of Lessons and Carols isn't offered in your area, consider performing your own:

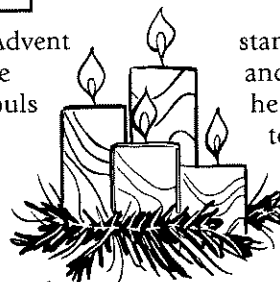
<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year-and-calendar/advnt/festival-of-lessons-and-carols>.



Why Do Catholics Do That ?

Why do Catholics light traditional Advent wreaths?

The elements of the Advent wreath remind us of the eternal nature of our souls and God's promise of everlasting life through Christ. The evergreens symbolize eternal life. The circle signifies God's unending love. Laurel



stands for Christ's victory over sin and evil. Cedar is strength and healing. Ivy stands for faithfulness to God. The holly's thorny leaves and red berries stand for Christ's Passion, recalling the Crown of Thorns and the precious blood Jesus shed to save our souls

Add peace and joy to your Christmas

To bring more peace and joy to your Christmas this year, take the first Christmas as your model.

Sweep the inn. Jesus chose lowly circumstances for his birth to encourage freedom from worldly goods. Donate or sell what you don't truly need so you can free up attention and affection for what really matters. Then limit the number and value of new gifts.

Select shepherds. Although the people watching the sheep in the fields that night weren't the most popular nor the most prosperous

in town, God chose them to spend time with his newborn Son. Children benefit from healthy, loving company.

Accept and extend only those holiday invitations that will provide precious, loving time together.

Ponder in your heart. When her remarkable Son was born, "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19) so she could savor the joy of every awesome moment. Don't forget to savor time with your own remarkable family so that you can ponder each wonderful moment in your own heart.

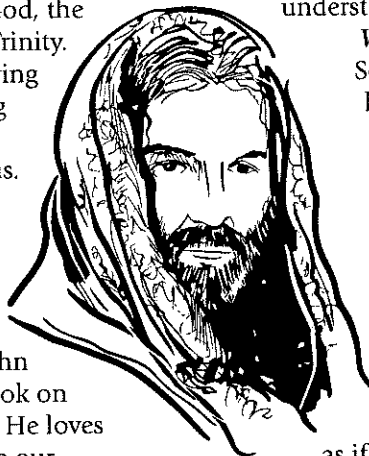


Scripture LESSON

John 1:1-18, Who is Jesus?

This month we celebrate the birth of Jesus: the Word of God, the Second Person of the Trinity. By coming to Earth, living among us and teaching us, He taught us about God and His love for us. It is now possible to share in God's divine life through Jesus's life, death and Resurrection.

In this Gospel, St. John explained that Jesus took on our humanity because He loves us and wanted to share our experience. He chose to live as we live. He experienced what we experience. Remembering that, we can also know

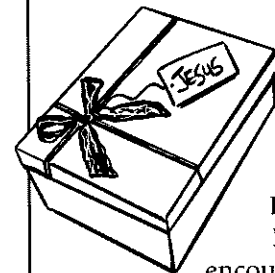


with confidence that Jesus understands us.

What can a parent do? Sooner or later, we each have to make a choice. Many who saw Jesus rejected Him, not recognizing Him as the Messiah. Help children to make a deliberate choice to recognize Jesus as their own personal Savior. Teach them to ask, "Do I live my life as if I'm a child of God?" Tell them what it means to live as a child of God and to follow Jesus. Jesus is our Lord and brother.

Parent TALK

"If Christmas is celebrating Jesus' birthday, how come He doesn't get gifts?" asked my daughter, Kara. "The Wise Men gave him gifts," I explained.



"But He didn't get them *on His birthday*," said Tessa. "Everyone else gets presents that day except Him!"

I wanted to encourage my children's generosity, so we came up with an idea. That night, each of us wrote short letters, saying, "Dear Jesus, I will give my love to You this Christmas by..." and we described specific acts of charity to be done during the Advent season. When we finished, we put the cards in a shoebox, gift-wrapped it with a nametag for Jesus, and put it under the tree. Then we did what we promised.

On Christmas morning, we opened Jesus' gift first, and revealed the charitable acts we performed in His name. The girls were pleased with their birthday gifts to the Babe.

Feasts & Celebrations

Dec. 3 – St. Francis Xavier (1552). St. Francis Xavier was born to a Spanish noble family. He taught in Paris where he met St. Ignatius of Loyola and joined the new Society of Jesus. In 1541, he was sent as a missionary to India and Japan, where he tirelessly served the poor with joy.

Dec. 8 – Feast of the Immaculate Conception (1854). This feast day commemorates that Mary was conceived in St. Anne's womb without Original Sin. Attending Mass is a wonderful way to celebrate.

Dec. 11 – Pope St. Damasus I (384). Born in early 4th century Rome, St. Damasus served as a deacon before being elected pope. He defended the faith from widespread heresies and authorized St. Jerome to translate the Vulgate.

Dec. 30 – The Holy Family (1st century). Today, we celebrate the family life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph – three people who lived for God. By their love and support of one another the Holy Family is a model for all Christian families.



Our Mission

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