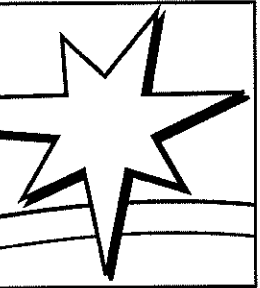


Partners in FAITH™



Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

December 2021

St. Matthew Religious Education



Thoughtful Moments

Immaculate Conception

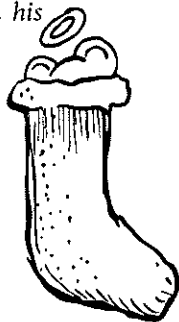
On December 8th, we celebrate the conception of Mary in St. Anne's womb without Original Sin. This is the patronal feast of the United States. In addition to attending Mass (it's a Holy Day of Obligation), pray a joyful Rosary to celebrate.

The Magi's Gifts

To help combat consumerism at Christmas, some families limit the number of gifts to three in honor of the gifts of the Magi. Consider giving children one gift that is their heart's desire, a piece of clothing that is not just sensible, and one gift that will help them grow (a book or sports accessory, for example).



"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength" (Isaiah 40:28-29).



Is Heaven worth the wait?

To many children, a day off from school or a family vacation is like heaven in itself. Sacrificing and doing penance to work toward Heaven after death is too abstract a concept to motivate them toward holiness. Yet, the season of Advent is designed to turn our eyes to Heaven so we can be ready when Jesus comes to bring us there. So how can we help youngsters understand how great Heaven really is?

All good things start there. *"Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17).* If all good things on Earth come from Heaven, imagine how great it is at the source.

Our life in Heaven will be more wonderful than the most wonderful experience on Earth.

The company is best there. When we get there, we will have joyful reunions with beloved grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends who have died before us.

We get to mingle with the saints and angels.

Best of all, we get to be with Jesus and His Father forever.

The one who loves us best is there. As much as earthly parents love their children, it's nothing compared to the love God has for each of us. He is the perfect parent – our true Father – and He is waiting for us in Heaven.



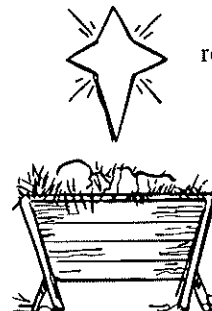
Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics celebrate Advent?

Advent is a season of waiting and preparation for the Savior who comes on Christmas. It is a reminder that there is a greater purpose to our lives. So, the Church encourages us to make our hearts

ready during Advent.

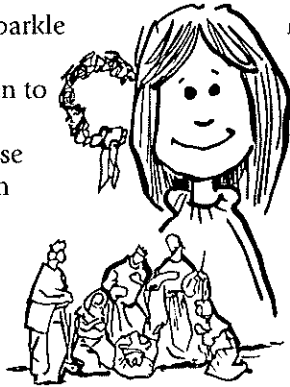
We know that Jesus will come at our death and he will come at the end of time. The season of Advent encourages us to make the necessary preparations so we can joyfully greet Jesus whenever we meet Him next.



Make your family Christmas sparkle with Jesus

What mother or father doesn't cherish the sparkle of excitement in a child's eye at Christmas? As Catholic parents, though, we want our children to have real joy, not just the anticipation of receiving gifts or getting out of school. Try these tips to help children turn their eyes to Jesus on this special day:

Focus on Jesus: On Christmas Eve, read the story of Jesus' birth from Luke 1:5 - 2:39 or Matthew 1:18 - 2:23. Sing your favorite religious Christmas carols. After attending



Mass on Christmas Day (a Holy Day of Obligation), light a candle and sing, "Happy Birthday" to remember the meaning of the day.

Make it come alive. The true joy of the holiday comes from knowing that God really came. Gather around your family nativity scene and act out the story of Jesus' birth by moving the figures. Imagine what a legion (army) of angels looks like and how the shepherds felt when they saw that God was born. Help children experience the wonder of the miraculous birth.

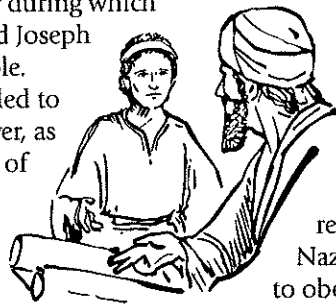
Scripture LESSON

Luke 2:41-52, Jesus led the way

On December 26th, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family during which we recall when Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the Temple.

The Holy Family traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover, as was the custom for Jews of that time. When they started the return trip in their large group, each parent thought Jesus was with the other one and traveled for a day before realizing that He had stayed behind. Upon finding Him missing, they hurried back to Jerusalem.

They found Jesus in the Temple talking with the priests who were



amazed by the boy's wisdom and understanding. But to Mary's stunned query about why He remained behind without permission, Jesus' mystifying reply was, "Did you not know I must be in my Father's house?" The boy returned with his parents to Nazareth where He continued to obey them.

What can a parent do? Explain to children that Jesus himself had a mission He was eager to begin but was obedient to his parents. He wants us all to respect our parents and those in authority over us.

Parent TALK

In early Fall one year, I got laid off and subsequently started my own business. That meant money was super tight. I wasn't sure how we would buy

Christmas gifts for the children, so we turned to St. Nicholas for help.

We learned that St. Nicholas was born in the third century in Asia Minor. His

wealthy parents died while he was a child and he subsequently used his fortune to help the needy. When he became a bishop, he was a vigorous defender of the truth and was persecuted for his faith.

Immediately, we started a family novena to St. Nicholas. During the first week of December, I received a check for unused vacation pay from a former employer - more than enough to buy some gifts and make a nice Christmas dinner. There is no doubt in our minds that St. Nicholas brought our Christmas gifts that year.



Feasts & Celebrations

December 6 - St. Nicholas of Myra (4th century). St. Nicholas had a very generous heart and always gave to the poor. He is credited with saving three girls from being sold to pay their father's debt. St. Nicholas is also the patron saint of children.

December 12 - Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531). The Blessed Mother appeared as a Native American maiden to St. Juan Diego. She had St. Juan carry roses to the bishop as proof. When the roses were emptied from his tilma it retained the

image of the Blessed Mother.

December 13 - St. Lucy (304). Amidst pagan Sicily, St. Lucy vowed to remain chaste for Jesus. A disappointed suitor turned her in for being a Christian and she was executed for her faith.

December 27 - St. John the Apostle (1st Century). An apostle and friend of Jesus, St. John was known for his fiery temper. Scholars believe he is the "beloved disciple" who sat by Jesus at the Last Supper in John's Gospel.



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