

# Partners in FAITH™

Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

December 2017

St. Nicholas Academy  
Aideen Briggs, Principal

## Thoughtful Moments

### St. John of the Cross

Mystic, reformer, and Doctor of the Church, St. John was raised by his mother, a poor silk weaver, in Spain. He entered the Carmelite Order in 1563, and was inspired by St. Teresa of Ávila to lead a much-needed reform of his Carmelites. For this, some of his brothers imprisoned him in a tower for almost a year until he escaped. He is also known for his beautiful poetry on the soul's search for God.



### Trust in the Lord

"There is a Person who can keep you going, trust in him! It is Jesus! Trust in Jesus! ...The Lord is always with us. He comes to the shores of the sea of our life; he makes himself close to our failures, our frailty, and our sins in order to transform them." Pope Francis

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).



## Open the gifts of Advent

It's hard to compete with the breathless excitement of Christmas but Advent has a beauty all its own. When families step out of the busy pace of life during Advent, the Christmas celebration at the end becomes all the more heartfelt.

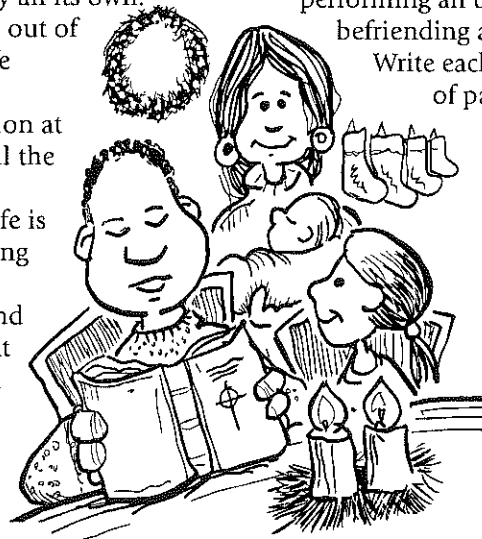
**Create rituals.** Life is to be different during Advent – quieter, more reflective – and rituals can help. Light a candle every day in an Advent wreath. Gather to read some of the Nativity story (Luke 1:5-2:40), drawing it out until Christmas. For an hour each night, turn off the lights in your home and work by candle light.

**Make small sacrifices.** The holidays can herald a season of excess. Instead, create a "Sacrifice Stocking" for Jesus.

Encourage each child to make small sacrifices – foregoing dessert, performing an unasked chore, befriending a lonely classmate.

Write each sacrifice on a slip of paper and place it in a Christmas stocking in the four weeks during Advent. On Christmas morning, read each "gift" in the stocking offered to the Babe as the first gifts of Christmas.

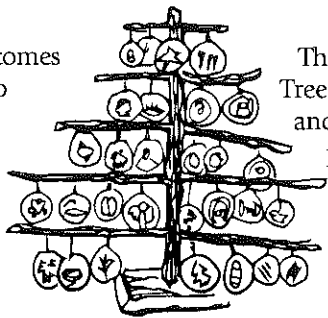
**Let music make the mood.** The right music can help create a quiet mood during the season. Pick a time each day to play only spiritual and religious carols. Choose songs that tell of God's love for us. Or, make up new words to your old favorites.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

### Why do Catholics create "Jesse Trees" for Advent?

The idea for the Jesse Tree comes from the prophet Isaiah, who said, "a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse ... the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him" (Isaiah 11:1-2). The "shoot" is Jesus, who was born from Jesse's family line.



The ornaments of the Jesse Tree represent Jesus' ancestors and the extraordinary purposes to which God put them. When we seek God and listen to him, he will do amazing things in our lives, too.

# The saints of Christmas

Our present-day Santa Claus has roots in third-century St. Nicholas. Orphaned young, he was left rich and gave money generously. A legend involving the saint concerns a desperate man who needed money to pay his debts. Nicholas secretly threw a bag of gold down his chimney. To the Church, Nicholas is a confessor of the faith, and a holy bishop.

St. Lucy lived in pagan Sicily around the year 300 during a time of great religious persecution. Lucy refused marriage to a



determined suitor, and he exposed her to authorities as a Christian – a charge resulting in her death. The courage of this young martyr is a guiding light for all young women and men.

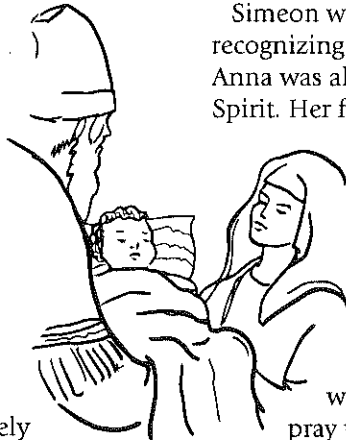
St. Boniface converted many in Germany and the surrounding area to Christianity. He is credited with taking the fir tree for a Christmas symbol. After encountering pagans about to sacrifice a child tied to a fir tree, Boniface cut down the great tree and used it to preach about the Incarnation.

## Scripture LESSON

### Luke 2:22-40, No ordinary child

Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and did what was required by their faith to celebrate the birth of their son. They couldn't afford the customary offering of a lamb and presented two pigeons instead to thank God for their son. To the uninformed observer, Jesus' birth was unremarkable and his family quite ordinary.

Yet, Simeon immediately recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he prophesied that Jesus was to be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for



your people Israel" (Luke 2:32).

Simeon was not alone in recognizing the Lord in the temple. Anna was also filled with the Holy Spirit. Her faith in God's promises gave her hope. The hope God places in our hearts gives us a desire for the kingdom of Heaven.

What can a parent do? Teach children to look for Jesus in the world. Encourage them to pray to him. Tell them that the Holy Spirit will reveal the presence of the Lord to those who want to know him, receive him, and to be with him forever.

## Feasts & Celebrations

Dec. 8 – Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1854). On this Holy Day of Obligation, 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. 9 – St. Juan Diego (1548). A simple, humble Native American who became a faithful Christian, St. Juan Diego was visited by the Blessed Virgin Mary at Tepeyac Hill in Mexico. She asked him to have the

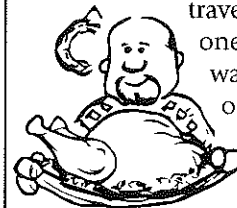
bishop of Mexico build a chapel for her, and had him carry roses to the bishop as a sign. When the roses were emptied from his tilma (cape) before the bishop, it retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

Dec. 31 – The Holy Family (1st century). On the feast of the Holy Family, 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.



## Parent TALK

Every year, we have a tradition of visiting my family for Christmas. My parents and siblings live two hours away, so visiting them is special. I was so disappointed last year when a surprise snowstorm prevented us



traveling as usual. It was one of the few times I wasn't with my family on Christmas but I couldn't let my disappointment ruin the holiday

for my own family.




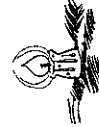




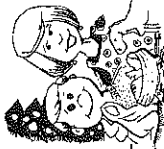


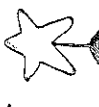


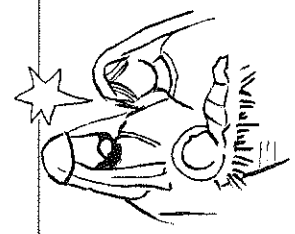
I found out that our next-door neighbors weren't traveling for Christmas, either. They recently moved to the area away from family. So, I invited them for Christmas dinner after Mass. My husband made turkey and fixings, and our guests brought their traditional dishes. We turned on Christmas music and everyone helped finish decorating the Christmas tree. The children played together while the adults chatted.

Looking back, that snowstorm turned out to be providential; we all had a wonderful time and made great friends.

### Our Mission

To help parents raise faithful Catholic children  
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 (Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible.)

# Family Advent Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><b>3</b> Make and bless an Advent wreath. Light the first purple candle each night this week.</p> 	<p><b>4</b> Set up the Nativity scene together, but leave out the Holy Family.</p> 	<p><b>5</b> Resolve to pray as a family for at least 15 minutes every night during Advent.</p>	<p><b>6</b> To honor St. Nicholas, fill an old shoe with treats and leave it outside someone's door.</p> 	<p><b>7</b> Decorate a "Jesus Candle" with symbols of Jesus. Light it at Christmas dinner.</p> 	<p><b>8</b> In honor of Mary's Immaculate Conception, attend Mass and pray a family Rosary tonight.</p> 	<p><b>9</b> Clean out your closets of unwanted clothes or toys in good condition. Donate them to a shelter or other charity.</p>
<p><b>10</b> Light two purple candles in the Advent wreath each night this week. Sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel."</p> 	<p><b>11</b> Send a thank-you note to the priests or other parish ministers who enriched your seasonal celebration.</p>	<p><b>12</b> Set out a rose tonight in honor of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.</p> 	<p><b>13</b> Today, try to go the whole day without complaining or arguing.</p> 	<p><b>14</b> Help children make a good examination of conscience and go to Confession together. Then go out for a treat afterwards to celebrate forgiveness.</p>	<p><b>15</b> Family Movie Night! Make some popcorn and watch a Christmas movie together.</p>	<p><b>16</b> Put up and decorate your family Christmas tree.</p> 
<p><b>17</b> Light two purple candles and the pink one for joy. See which of you can sing loudest at Mass today.</p> 	<p><b>18</b> Put a lamp or electric candle in a window to welcome the Christ Child. Light it each night until Christmas Day.</p> 	<p><b>19</b> Set the Mary and Joseph figures of your Nativity set across the room from the rest of the scene.</p>	<p><b>20</b> Take a drive or walk together around your home to look at the Christmas decorations or displays.</p> 	<p><b>21</b> Give each family member a chance to say "thank you" for a blessing God has given this year.</p>	<p><b>22</b> Write letters to Jesus telling him that you look forward to his coming.</p> 	<p><b>23</b> Place Mary and Joseph in the Nativity scene. Add grass or straw to the manger to get it ready.</p>
<p><b>24</b> Light all four candles in the wreath tonight. Reread today's Gospel Reading, Luke 1:26-38.</p> 	<p><b>25</b> Rejoice! Place the Baby in the manger and read the story of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:1-20.</p> 	<p><i>"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2:1-7).</i></p>				