

Partners in FAITH™

December 2011

Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

St. Anthony Religious Education



Thoughtful Moments

Mass Changes

As of November 27th, you will have noticed that some of the prayers and responses we say at Mass are different than those to which we have been accustomed. Many of the changes use more poetic and reverential language. This is an opportunity to look at the familiar Mass with new eyes and a new appreciation.



A lived faith

Enrolling children in Catholic school or sending them to parish religious education is an important first step toward raising them in the Catholic faith. But it is only the beginning. The most important part is showing children how to live their faith each and every day. That kind of education can only come from a Catholic parent.

God came

The miracle of Christmas is that the God of love came to us. Isn't that amazing? Even more incredible, he hasn't left. Look for ways you and your family can find Jesus in the world this Christmas.



Put Christ's love back into your family's Christmas

Shop the malls in October and you may see Christmas decorations. Even grocery stores play carols before Thanksgiving. Don't let the barrage of holiday selling rob you and your family of a truly joyful season. Try these suggestions for reducing stress, boosting joy, and putting Christ's love back into Christmas.

Avoid Christmas commercials. Nothing kills the spirit of Christmas like children pleading for over-priced, poorly made toys they just saw in the parade of holiday commercials. Instead, record the good Christmas shows and fast-forward through the commercials. Or, turn off commercial television and rent Christmas movies or

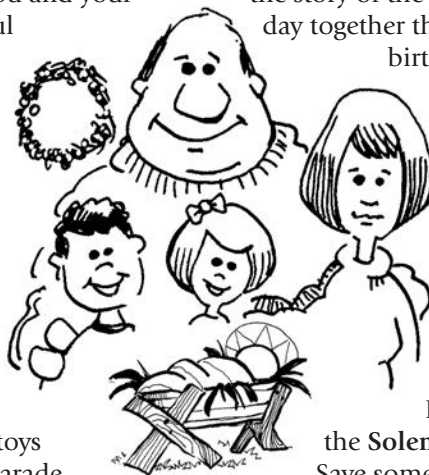
check them out of the library.

Separate your Christmas celebrations. Reserve December 25th for Christ's birth. Attend Mass, read the story of the Nativity, spend the day together throwing Jesus a happy birthday celebration. Let the 26th be the day for the secular celebration.

Make it last.

Celebrate each day of the whole Catholic Christmas Season. Gather family close for a special meal on the **Feast of the Holy Family** (Dec. 30).

Pray for world peace on the **Solemnity of Mary** (Jan. 1). Save some Christmas gifts to give on the **Epiphany** (Jan. 8) to honor the Magi's gifts. Renew your Baptismal promises on the **Feast of the Baptism of the Lord** (Jan. 9), the last official day of the Christmas Season.

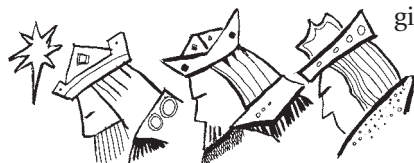


Why Do Catholics Do That



Why did the Magi give gifts to Jesus?

The Magi knew that they were traveling to greet a new king and brought gifts that were appropriate at the time for a king. Over the years, the Church has reinterpreted the gifts in terms of Jesus' life.

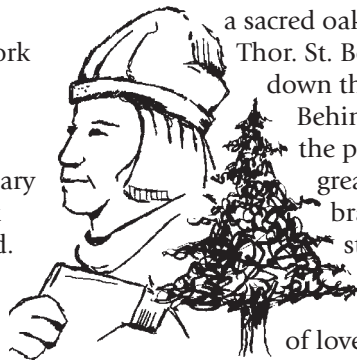


They gave him gold to recognize his royalty. The expensive gift of Frankincense, often burned to carry prayers to Heaven, was a symbol of Jesus' priesthood. His last gift, Myrrh, was used in burial preparations, a sign that Jesus would suffer and die for us.

The Christmas Tree teaches about love

Like many of our Christmas traditions, the background of the Christmas tree is a patchwork quilt of many cultures. One piece concerns St. Boniface, a missionary in the time of Pope St. Gregory II.

St. Boniface's greatest challenge as a missionary was to eliminate pagan superstitions that kept people from accepting the Gospel he preached. One Christmas Eve, St. Boniface was traveling through the woods with his companions and came upon the townspeople gathered around



a sacred oak about to offer a human sacrifice to their god, Thor. St. Boniface stopped the sacrifice and chopped down the oak.

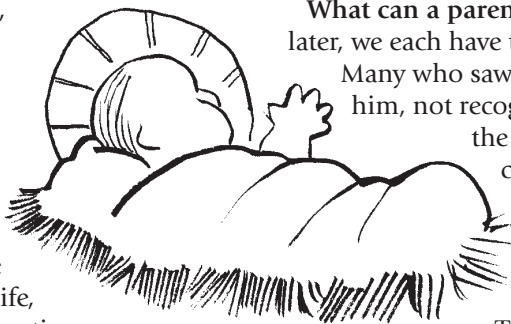
Behind the oak stood a fir tree. St. Boniface asked the people to bring it into town and set up in the great hall of the duke. They placed candles on its branches and listened while St. Boniface told the story of the Nativity and the Baby who would grow up to be the Savior and sacrifice himself for all of us. Many were captivated by the story of love and were converted.

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 nature. We are able 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.

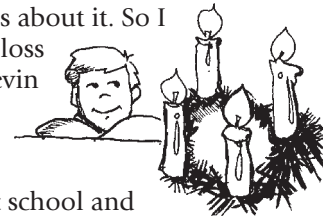
Teach them to ask,

"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 friend and brother.

Parent TALK

Growing up, my family didn't practice many Catholic devotions. I mean, we went to church, but that's about it. So I was at a loss when Kevin came home from



Catholic school and asked if we could light an Advent wreath. I had seen them in church, but we didn't own one.

I went online and read that an Advent wreath is a symbol of the four-week season before Christmas when we await the coming of the Savior. We could make our own using a Styrofoam ring, three purple candles, a pink one, and some greenery. So I got the supplies and we made a family Advent wreath.

During the busy season it was nice to take a few quiet moments to turn off the lights, light our Advent candles and say our Advent prayers.

Something else that has meant a lot to me is knowing that we joined millions of families all over the world in this beloved ancient tradition.

Feasts & Celebrations

Dec. 6 – **St. Nicholas (350).** St. Nicholas gave away most of his fortune and is credited with saving three girls from being sold into slavery to pay their father's debt. His anonymous acts of generosity helped him become the patron saint of children.

Dec. 8 – **Feast of the Immaculate Conception.** The day we celebrate Mary's conception in St. Ann's womb, free from Original Sin. A Holy Day of Obligation.

Dec. 14 – **St. John of the Cross**

(1591). As a Carmelite, St. John led a reform in the Order to encourage more prayer and simplicity. Some of his most beautiful spiritual writing came while in prison. His mystical-poetical reflections showed his love of prayer.

Dec. 27 – **St. John (1st century).** An apostle, St. John was known for his fiery temper. He once asked Jesus if he could rain fire from heaven on an inhospitable town. Later, he and St. Peter asked the Holy Spirit to descend upon the Samaritans. Friendship with Jesus really changes a person.



Our Mission

To help parents raise faithful Catholic children
Success Publishing & Media, LLC
Publishers of *Growing in Faith* and *Partners in Faith*
(540)662-7844 (540) 662-7847 fax
www.partnersinfaith.com
(Unless noted, Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and New American Bible.)