

Partners in FAITH™



Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

December 2016

Church of the Annunciation

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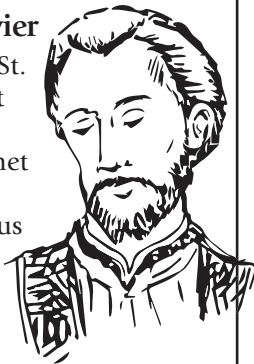


Thoughtful Moments

St. Francis Xavier

Born in Spain, St. Francis studied at the University of Paris, where he met St. Ignatius of Loyola. St. Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus with St. Francis and five friends.

After becoming a priest in 1537, St. Francis traveled to India and Japan as a missionary. He worked joyfully to serve the poor and the outcasts, and founded several congregations in both countries. He is called the "Apostle of Japan" and "Apostle of the East Indies."



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



Is there peace and joy in your Christmas?

"Last year Santa disappointed the children by not bringing all the toys on their lists," said Jeff.

"We were so busy during the holidays that we were exhausted by New Year's Day," said Jenny. If we look to the world to provide joy at Christmas, we are often disappointed. Instead, try modeling your family celebration after the first Christmas to bring more peace and joy this year.

Sweep the inn. Jesus chose lowly circumstances for his birth to encourage freedom from worldly goods. Together, 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.

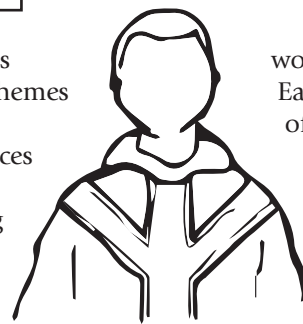
Ponder in your heart. When her

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.

Why Do Catholics Do That?

The colors of the priest's vestments highlight the themes of the Church's seasons. Violet signifies the penances we make to purify our hearts and is worn during Advent and Lent. White and gold symbolize purity and joy and are

Why does the priest wear different colored vestments?



worn during Christmas and Easter. Red recalls the shedding of blood and God's burning love for us and is worn on martyrs' feast days, Good Friday, and Pentecost. Green signifies new life and is worn during the season of Ordinary time.

Make Christmas last

For Catholics, Christmas doesn't end the day after when the lights and trees come down and unsold goods go on sale. Ours is a whole season of joy, from Christmas Day until the Baptism of Our Lord. Here are some highlights of the season:

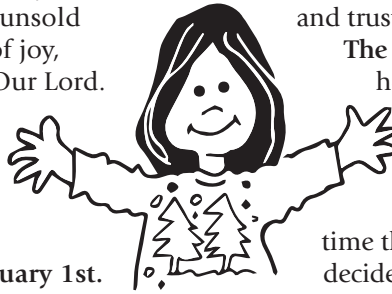
Feast of the Holy Family, December 30th. Gather for a special meal with family or make contact with out-of-town relatives.

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, January 1st. Attend Mass and dedicate a special rosary to the

Blessed Mother asking her to help you grow in love and trust.

The Epiphany, January 8th. The image of the Magi honoring Jesus has become a symbol of sharing him with the entire world. This is our opportunity to think about the way we live so that we can better reveal Christ to our world.

The Baptism of Our Lord, January 9th. Take time this day to renew your Baptismal vows and decide what you can change in your life to help you live as Christ did.

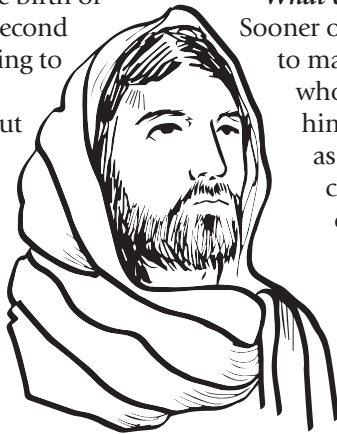


Scripture LESSON

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

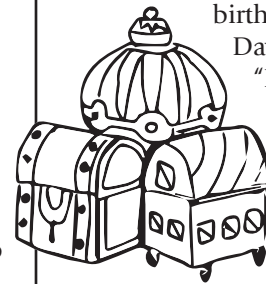
"If Christmas is celebrating Jesus' birthday, how come he doesn't get gifts?" asked my eight-year-old son, David.

"The Wise Men gave him gifts," I explained.

"But he didn't get them on his birthday," said Ava, David's younger sister.

"Everyone else gets presents that day except him!"

I wanted to encourage my children's



generosity, so I

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 kindness 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 performed the acts we promised.

On Christmas morning, we opened Jesus' gift first, singing "Happy Birthday to Jesus!" and revealed the kind acts we offered Jesus for his birthday.

Feasts & Celebrations

Dec. 6 – St. Nicholas of Myra (c.350). St. Nicholas had a generous heart and gave away most of his fortune. He 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. 9 – St. Juan Diego (1548). A humble Native American convert, St. Juan Diego was visited by the Blessed Mother at Tepeyac Hill in Mexico. She asked that a chapel be built for her and sent him to the bishop with roses as a

sign. When the roses were emptied from his tilma (cape), it retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

Dec. 23 – St. John Kanty (1473). Born in Poland, St. John studied at a university in Krakow, and became a theology professor in 1418. He was ordained a priest and sent to Olkusz, where he struggled with the responsibilities of overseeing a parish. Despite this, he was known for his humility and kindness.



Our Mission

To help parents raise faithful Catholic children
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