



Thoughtful Moments

A new year!

On the first day of Advent (Nov. 30th), we began a new year in the liturgical calendar, Year B. Happy New Year to the Church!



Pray, don't worry

"Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Not just a day

Christmas isn't one day in our Church calendar, it's a whole season. It begins Christmas Eve and ends on Jan. 11th with the Baptism of Our Lord. Celebrate family on Dec. 28th, the feast of the Holy Family. Pray a Rosary together on Jan. 1st, to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Have an Epiphany party on Jan. 4th. Renew your Baptismal promises on Jan. 11th, the feast of the Baptism of our Lord.



Share Christmas joy that lasts

It is easy to confuse the Christian holy day of Christmas with the consumer holiday of the same name. Jesus is the star of our Christmas while Santa Claus runs the consumer one. Santa gives gifts if you have been good but Jesus' love is for everyone. Gifts that Santa brings are purchased, while Jesus' gifts are priceless and last forever. Try these ideas to give Jesus' day the focus.



Tell the story on Christmas Eve. Turn on your Christmas tree lights, darken the room, and read by candlelight. Start with Mary's surprising visitor (Luke 1:26-38), follow the trip to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-5), and finish with Jesus' birth (Luke 2:6-20).

Give each person a religious gift. Giving children a religious book, medal, hat or t-shirt with Christian messages is a good way to highlight the fact that Christmas is about Christ.

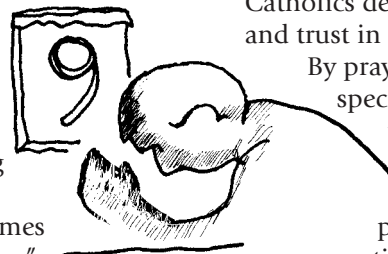
Turn off commercials. To get ready for the holy day, turn off the television and avoid the consumer hype and commercials. Instead, watch favorite Christmas movies that you rent or borrow from the library.

Gift wrap the baby and give him to someone. Whoever opens the gift of the child can set him in the empty manger in your family nativity set. Receiving the baby as a gift helps us to remember the real gift we receive at Christmas.

Why Do Catholics Do That ?

Why do Catholics pray novenas?

A novena is a centuries-old tradition involving a recitation of prayers or devotions for a special purpose during nine consecutive days. The word "novena" comes from the Latin for "nine." It's one of the ways

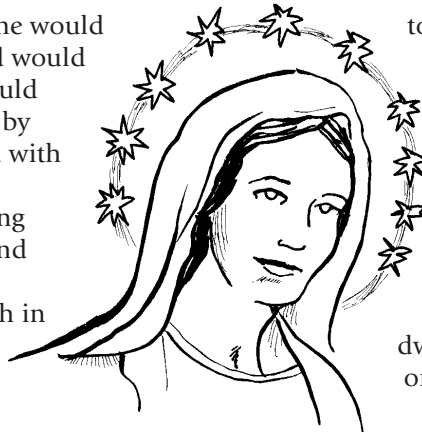


Catholics demonstrate perseverance and trust in God through prayer. By praying a novena for a special intention, we are turning to God with our needs and asking for his help and protection. It is a continual act of faith and hope in our loving God.

Mary's joy

Mary had good reason to be upset. One would think that becoming the mother of God would mean a life of ease. For example, she could have imagined giving birth surrounded by family and friends, and being showered with gifts.

Instead, Mary chose to find joy in being God's handmaid. When her new husband had to make a difficult business trip to Bethlehem, she went, too. She gave birth in a stable and her baby's first cradle was a manger animals ate from. It only got



tougher from there. Yet Scripture tells us she only rejoiced in God's goodness. How can we adopt the same beautiful attitude?

Avoid self-pity and negative thinking. Instead, teach your child to look on the bright side, just as Mary did. Banish negative thoughts with prayer.

Ignore insults or injuries. Help children learn to take people and events just as they come and to make the best of them. Instead of dwelling on perceived hurts or problems, focus on the joy of being God's child.

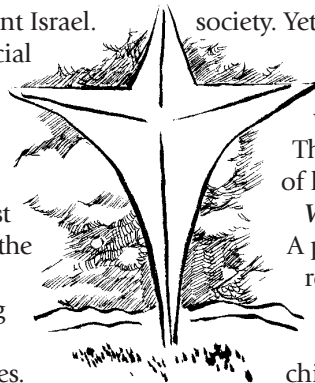
Scripture LESSON

Luke 2:6-20, God makes the ordinary extraordinary.

A young woman giving birth was fairly routine, even in ancient Israel.

And there was nothing special about shepherds protecting sheep from the dangers of the night. Yet, connecting those two ordinary events was the most momentous single event in the history of the world. God's plans often involve creating extraordinary events out of the ordinary in people's lives.

To the casual observer, all the people involved in the story of Christ's birth were ordinary. Mary was a poor and simple girl from an obscure and unremarkable village. Shepherds in Israel



were among the more humble in society. Yet God used these ordinary people to bear witness to a miracle such as the world had never known.

This was the manifestation of his extraordinary love.

What can a parent do?

A person's character is often revealed by his or her

response to the unexpected. Teach your children to look for the

extraordinary everywhere in God's creation. His best servants are often ordinary people who make themselves available to him for extraordinary things.

Parent TALK

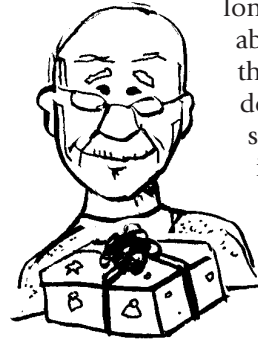
I was upset when I saw the kids' Christmas lists. Each was about a mile

long. All they talked about were the toys they expected. I decided to bring some Spirit back into the holiday.

I read in the paper about a nursing home for poor people in town. I called the director and arranged for us to make a visit.

The children called some of their friends and around 15 of us met at the nursing home carrying wrapped gifts of warm socks, soaps, and shampoo to the residents. I watched as the older people came alive when one of our children approached with a gift. The director said we brought the only gifts many of them would get for Christmas.

We served cookies, sang Christmas carols, and waved goodbye. Our visit was short and sweet and the kids asked to do it again this year. They finally got the real Christmas Spirit.



Feasts & Celebrations

December is the month in which we anticipate the coming of Christ and begin the celebration of his birth. It has become a time to reaffirm our respect for life from conception to natural death.

Dec. 3rd - St. Francis Xavier (1552). St. Francis gave up a promising career in Spain to join St. Ignatius Loyola in the Society of Jesus. As a missionary in India and Japan, St. Francis served the poorest of the poor.

Dec. 21 - St. Peter Canisius (1597). Born in Holland, he was ordained into the Society of Jesus and worked

strenuously through his writings and teachings to safeguard the Catholic faith. His work, The Catechism of the Catholic Church, is still used today.

Dec. 27 - St. John (1st century). An apostle and friend of Jesus, St. John was known for his fiery temper. Later in his life, he and St. Peter asked the Holy Spirit to come down on the Samaritans. Friendship with Jesus really changes a person.



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