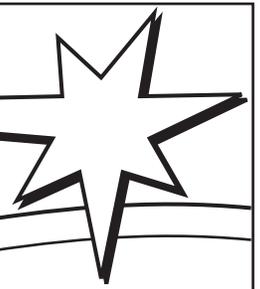


Partners in FAITH™



Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

December 2019

St. Helen Catholic School

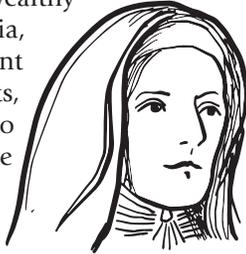
Educating the whole person to see with Christ's eyes.



Thoughtful Moments

St. Maria di Rosa

Born into a wealthy family in Brescia, Italy, Paula spent her time, talents, and resources to help others. She left school to help her father with the mill.



She helped her brother run a school for deaf and mute girls and cared for those suffering from the cholera epidemic of 1836. She founded the Handmaids of Charity in 1840—a religious order which cared for the sick. Upon entering, she took the name Sr. Maria Crucifixa.

The first Christmas gift

Find something shiny or yellow that reminds you of gold. Use something fragrant (like an air freshener) to represent frankincense. Pour a small amount of oil into a small container to represent myrrh. Put these three gifts in a box, label the present with Jesus' name, and open it first on Christmas Day.

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:14).



Have a peaceful Advent

Do you wish for an idyllic family Christmas complete with joyful music, grateful children, and tinsel-covered tree? For many parents, the weeks of Advent before Christmas mean weeks spent shopping, wrapping, and spending, and are wrought with family tensions, obligations, and overly excited children. Try these steps to keep your sanity



and your Savior in your family's observance of Advent and Christmas:

Be realistic. It isn't the goal of the season to make everyone happy. If you don't overspend and over extend before Christmas, you'll be in a better frame of mind when it arrives.

Tie gifts with heartstrings. It's okay to give fewer gifts and to keep what you give simple, meaningful, and from

the heart. For example, give a coupon for a household chore to someone who would appreciate an extra hand. Handmade ornaments make meaningful gifts that last.

Soothe the beast. Beautiful music can set a soothing tone for the season. Play your favorite hymns and carols to keep a peaceful tone in your home.

Reach out. Want to help children focus on something other than their gift lists? Do at least one good deed for someone needy.

Seek the eternal. Jesus gives us peace, purpose, and perspective. Spend time with Jesus each day of Advent and Christmas to remember what is most important about Christmas.

Why Do Catholics Do That ?

Why do Catholics display poinsettias at Christmas?

Originally from Central America, poinsettias were used by early Christians to teach the faith. The bright red leaves recalled Christ's blood which was shed for us, while their arrangement evoked the Star of Bethlehem. In one legend, a poor Mexican



girl wanted to give something to the Christ child. Having nothing, she arranged weeds into a bouquet and left them before the manger. They grew beautiful red flowers, showing that she had given the best gift of all: genuine love.

Celebrate a warm and wonderful Christmas

Telling stories, making music, demonstrating gratitude, and sharing our love and faith with one another, are warm and wonderful ways to celebrate the joy of bringing God into the human world each Christmas season. Consider these ideas:

Tell stories. The first and second chapter in Luke's Gospel tell the most remarkable true story of God coming to live among us. Read a little each night together, and try to imagine you were there.

Make music. The word "carol" means an old round dance with singing. Sing your



favorite carols or hymns and create dances to go along with them.

Count blessings. Each day during Advent, find a picture of something for which each person is grateful and put it up in a prominent place in your home. These are visible reminders of God's love.

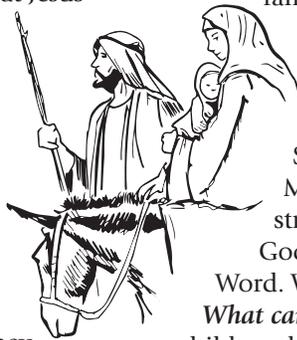
Make it last. The Catholic Christmas season lasts from the vigil Mass on Christmas Eve until the Baptism of Our Lord on January 12. Leave your tree up the entire time and celebrate with gusto!

Scripture LESSON

**Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23,
God protects those who trust him.**

Nativity scenes usually show Mary and Joseph calmly kneeling at Jesus' crib surrounded by adoring shepherds and wise men. It's a peaceful scene and probably pretty far from reality.

Mary and Joseph traveled in the last stages of her pregnancy from Nazareth to Bethlehem. On foot or donkey, it was a dirty, exhausting journey. Once there, there was nowhere to stay except a stable with animals because all the good inns were full. After a short time, they had to flee to Egypt with a newborn to escape danger, and stayed



there for several years without family or friends.

The Holy Family had a share of pain and difficulties much like our own experience. Yet Scripture tells us that Mary and Joseph found strength from their faith in God and were guided by his Word. We can do the same.

What can a parent do? Tell your children that Jesus' birth and the Holy Family's escape to Egypt is further proof that God always keeps his promises. When we lean on him, God will always lead us to safety.

Parent TALK

When she was nine years old, Kara asked the question many parents dread. "Is there really a Santa Claus?"

Without hesitation, I told her, "yes."



I grew up in a large family and my parents often lacked money for gifts at Christmas. Yet, thanks to "Santa

Claus," we never went a Christmas without a stocking to open or a gift under the tree.

I admitted that I have never met Santa Claus and I don't know if our gifts were really delivered by a chubby man in a red suit.

Still, I believe he exists in the generosity and kindness of others. Santa provides an opportunity for people to humbly reach out to others in his name. So whether we call this spirit, "Santa" or "St. Nicholas," at the core, it is a love for Christ and the joy of celebrating his birth that brings out the best in people.

Feasts & Celebrations

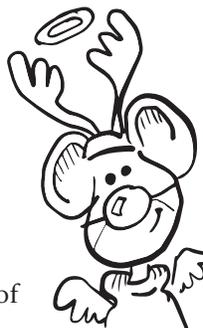
Dec. 1 – First Sunday in Advent. During this season, we anticipate Christ's birth and his coming on the last day. Catholics everywhere light candles in an Advent wreath to signal the coming of the light of Christ.

Dec. 1 – St. Edmund Campion (1581). As a young man, St. Edmund studied theology in France then became a Jesuit missionary. He returned to England to preach but was betrayed and arrested. He was martyred at Tyburn.

Dec. 7 – St. Ambrose (397). St. Ambrose was an effective pastor,

bishop and teacher, and was devoted to care of the poor in Milan. He guarded the Church against the Arians, who denied Jesus' divinity.

Dec. 12 – Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531). The Blessed Mother appeared as a Native American maiden to St. Juan Diego. She asked that the bishop of Mexico build a chapel for her, and had him carry roses as a sign. When the roses were emptied from his tilma it retained the image of the Blessed Mother.



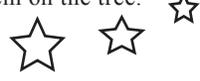
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To help parents raise faithful Catholic children
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Family Advent Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1 December Make and bless an Advent wreath. Light the first violet candle each night this week.</p> 	<p>2 Set up your family Nativity scene with the empty manger. Add other major figures gradually throughout the season.</p> 	<p>3 Consider buying a gift for a struggling family in your parish. Ask the parish office for suggestions.</p> 	<p>4 At dinner tonight, pray for troops stationed overseas and their families this season.</p> 	<p>5 Today, resolve as a family to only say kind, encouraging things to each other.</p> 	<p>6 Show love on St. Nicholas' Day by doing a secret good deed for someone else.</p> 	<p>7 Put up a Christmas tree. Have each family member put an ornament on every day until it is beautiful for Christmas.</p> 
<p>8 Light two violet candles in the Advent wreath each night this week. Sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel."</p> 	<p>9 In honor of Mary's Immaculate Conception, attend Mass and pray a family Rosary tonight.</p> 	<p>10 Cut star-shaped ornaments out of colored paper. Decorate with glitter on one side and your favorite Bible verse on the other. Hang them on the tree.</p> 	<p>11 This can be a sad time for those who have lost someone or are alone. Include anyone in your gathering who might otherwise be forgotten.</p> 	<p>12 To honor Our Lady of Guadalupe, place a rose in a vase in your home and pray a "Hail Mary" whenever you pass it.</p> 	<p>13 Make time to visit the church when Mass isn't celebrated. You can sit and pray together quietly, or just show the little ones around.</p> 	<p>14 Gather with friends and go Christmas caroling. Warm up with hot chocolate afterward.</p> 
<p>15 Light two violet candles and the rose one for joy. See which of you can sing loudest at Mass today.</p> 	<p>16 Give each family member a chance to say "thank you" for a blessing God has given this year.</p> 	<p>17 Make Christmas cookies and decorate them with symbols of the season. Bring them to a nursing home or homeless shelter.</p> 	<p>18 Christmas can be a stressful time for parishes. Send or make thank-you notes to your priests or parish staff.</p> 	<p>19 Write letters to Baby Jesus telling him that you look forward to his coming at Christmas. Read them aloud on Christmas Eve.</p> 	<p>20 Have a family story night. Reread your favorite Christmas storybooks over cookies and milk.</p> 	<p>21 Attend Confession together to ready your hearts for the Savior. Go out to dinner afterward to celebrate forgiveness.</p> 
<p>22 Light all four candles in the wreath tonight. Reread today's Gospel reading, Matthew 1:18-24.</p> 	<p>23 Resolve as a family to pray for at least 15 minutes every night during the coming year.</p> 	<p>24 Place Mary and Joseph in the Nativity scene. Add grass or straw to the manger to get it ready for the Baby.</p> 	<p>25 Rejoice! Read the story of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:1-20. Think of how joyful it will be to meet Jesus when he comes again.</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>		