

Partners in FAITH™



Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

December 2018

Academy of Our Lady of Grace

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Find the true meaning of Christmas in L-O-V-E

Children of all ages enjoy gifts on Christmas morning, but Catholic parents know that there is more to Christmas than presents. It is a celebration of hope fulfilled. God promised he would send us a Savior so we could live in Heaven with him forever. He sent his own Son. Help children to experience the true meaning of Christmas by celebrating with L-O-V-E:

L – Lower your outside activities.

More than the gifts you give, children will cherish the Christmas memories you make. Limit the number of invitations you accept, and set aside the extra time as family time.

O – Offer anticipation. Instead of focusing on gifts and lists, anticipate

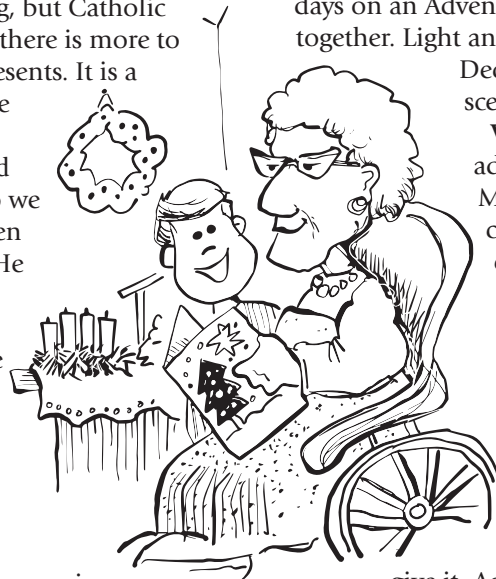
the Savior's arrival by marking the days on an Advent calendar you make together. Light an Advent wreath.

Decorate your Nativity scene gradually.

V – Visit. In addition to weekend Mass, make trips to church so children can visit Jesus. Take Christmas cards you have received and pray for the people who sent them.

E – Extend love. An effective way to experience love at the holidays is to

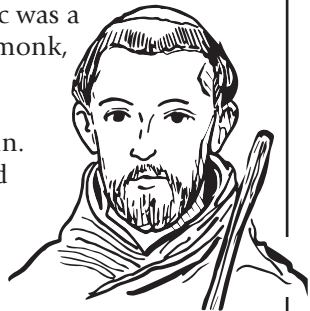
give it. Act with love, especially when dealing with family. Extending patience and kindness during the holiday season can be a challenge and a true act of love. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ..."* (John 3:16).



Thoughtful Moments

St. Dominic of Silos

St. Dominic was a Benedictine monk, born around 1000AD in Navarre, Spain. He was exiled because of a conflict with the local ruler. Recognized for his leadership abilities, St. Dominic was made abbot of St. Sebastian's monastery at Silos. He's also known for having freed hundreds of prisoners from the Moors. St. Dominic, the founder of the Dominicans, was named after him by his mother, Joan of Aza, after praying to St. Dominic for a son.



The Wait

We spend Advent waiting for something wonderful to happen. While impatient to get to that something wonderful, we can forget that the wait can be wonderful, too. Help children take it one week at a time. Wait, hope, prepare, and rejoice at the miracle of Christ's birth.

A Catholic difference

Catholics are never alone in our efforts. We are members of the Church, the body of Christ, and together we make a difference.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics refer to the family the "domestic church"?

The Church calls families "the domestic church" or "little churches" because it is the first place where young, baptized Christians learn about Faith.

We learn how to love God and become part of the



Church through our families.

Our parents had us baptized in the Church, taught us to pray, took us to Mass, and passed on the Faith

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1656). What the Church does—helps us

encounter God and his love—the family does on a smaller scale.

Faith doesn't require understanding

Throughout history, God has given people mysterious messages that defy reason but require faith. When Gabriel told Mary that she would give birth to the Son of God (Luke 1:26-38), she couldn't help but wonder how that could happen. The angel's explanation hardly clarified things. Instead of asking more, she simply said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

Children are used to trusting adults and know

that faith doesn't require understanding. In the same way, we don't have to understand what God wants from us to know that it is for the best. Very little in the angel's message was logical but Mary didn't pretend to get it. She said, "Yes," because she had complete faith in God.

This month is the perfect time to talk with children about Mary's example of faith. When we are worried or uncertain, we can do what Mary did because good things always happen to people who say, "Yes," to God.



Scripture LESSON

Luke 2:41-52, Jesus in the world

In this reading, the Holy Family went to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old. This was an important moment in Jesus' life. In the Jewish faith, a boy becomes a man around the age of twelve and is recognized in a special ceremony called a Bar Mitzvah. On this occasion, Jesus stayed behind to learn from the teachers, who were amazed by his questions.

When his parents discovered him days later, they were shocked. How could he just wander off without telling them? Jesus calmly explained that he was "about his Father's business."



This was the first recorded time Jesus referred to his identity as God's Son. Yet he knew his duties to his heavenly Father would be fulfilled in time. Meanwhile, he returned obediently to Nazareth and fulfilled his obligations to his earthly parents.

What can a parent do?

Christians live in neighborhoods, schools, and communities. We are subject to legitimate earthly authority. We can grow in holiness wherever God has placed us. Find ways to teach children to be holy while still living in the world.

Parent TALK

Growing up, my Christmases were a blur of waiting for the day and being let down when it ended. I braced myself for my children to experience the same when our pastor explained that the Catholic Church celebrates Christmas for twelve whole days. "Christmas," he explained, "is just



the beginning."

So we lit our Advent wreath and decorated slowly. We played Advent music – songs that spoke of our hope that God would be faithful to his promises.

Christmas Day began with joyful carols at Mass and receiving Jesus in the Eucharist—the best Gift of all. The next twelve days were spent visiting family and friends, enjoying our favorite Christmas music, watching Christmas movies, and eating cookies.

Someone asked why our daughter said, "Merry Christmas" on New Year's Day. I explained that for Catholics, Jesus' birth was such a joyous occasion, the Church set aside twelve days to celebrate it.

Feasts & Celebrations

Dec. 2 – First Sunday of Advent. Today begins a new liturgical year in the Church. During the season of Advent, we anticipate Christ's birth and look forward to his coming on the last day.

Dec. 8 – Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1854). A Holy Day of Obligation which commemorates that Mary was conceived in St. Anne's womb without original sin. Attending Mass together is a wonderful way to celebrate.

Dec. 9 – St. Juan Diego (1548). 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 with roses to the bishop as a sign. When the roses were emptied from his cloak before the bishop, it retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

Dec. 17 – St. Olympias (408).

Born to a wealthy family in Constantinople, this holy widow devoted her large fortune to caring for the poor and supporting her friend, St. John Chrysostom, in his work.



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