

Partners in FAITH™

Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

December 2012

Our Lady of Lourdes Church
Theresa S. Bowen, DRE



Thoughtful Moments

Immaculate Conception

On December 8th, we celebrate the conception of Mary in St. Anne's womb without Original Sin. In addition to attending Mass (it's a Holy Day of Obligation), praying a joyful Rosary is a wonderful way to celebrate.

The Magi's Gifts

To help combat consumerism at Christmas, some families limit the number of gifts to three in honor of the gifts of the Magi. Consider giving children one gift that is their heart's desire, a piece of clothing that is not just sensible, and one gift that will help them grow (a book or sports accessory, for example).



St. John Neumann

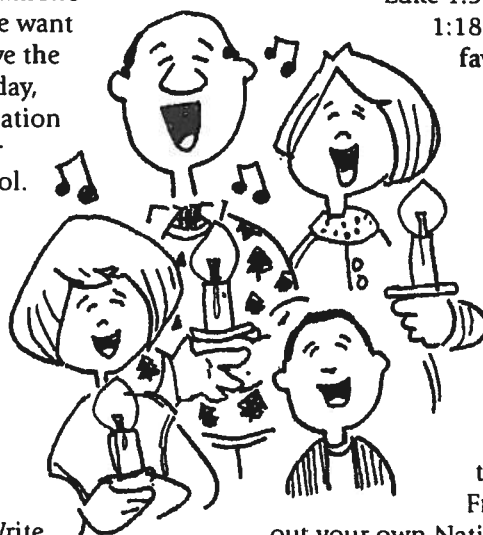
In celebrating the Year of Faith, the Church honors St. John Neumann in the month of December. The fourth bishop of Philadelphia, St. John Neumann is considered the patron of Catholic schools. He founded the first diocesan Catholic school system in the U.S., going from two schools to one hundred in his diocese.



Your family Christmas can sparkle with love

What parent doesn't cherish the sparkle of excitement in a child's eye at Christmas? As Catholic parents, though, we want our children to have the full joy of the holiday, not just the anticipation of receiving gifts or getting out of school. Small changes to your family observance can help children fully experience this holiday of love.

Help children give, not just receive. Children love to give gifts. Write up a Christmas gift list of grandparents, teachers, and siblings and take youngsters shopping so they can use their own money to buy gifts. If buying isn't an option, consider helping with handmade gifts like Christmas cookies or ornaments.



Focus on Jesus: On Christmas Eve, tell the story of Jesus' birth from Luke 1:5 - 2:39 or Matthew 1:18 - 2:23. Sing your favorite religious Christmas carols.

After attending Mass on Christmas Day (a Holy Day of Obligation), light a birthday candle and sing "Happy Birthday" to remember the real reason for the day. Come alive. In the tradition of St. Francis of Assisi, act out your own Nativity. If you don't have enough family members to play all the parts, recruit friends or neighbors for fun.

Thank you note. All good gifts come from God. Write Jesus a "thank you" note for all the blessings you have received in the last year.

Why Do Catholics Do That?

Who do Catholics believe was born on Christmas?

This month we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. We are able to share in God's divine life through Jesus's life, death and Resurrection.

In his gospel, St. John



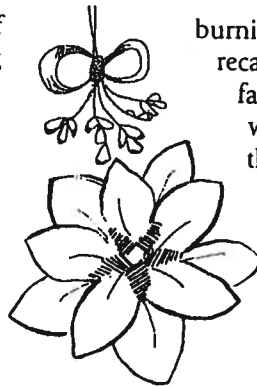
explained that the birth of Jesus fulfilled a promise God made. *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father"* (John 1:14).

"Tell me a Christmas tale ..."

Children of all ages love a good story and some of our favorite Christmas decorations make interesting ones to tell:

Mistletoe was used by Druids as a healing plant. Legend says that it was once a fine tree that was made into the Cross of Christ but withered from shame into the parasitic plant it has become. It is now a symbol of Christ's love, hence the traditional "kiss" under the mistletoe.

The Poinsettia, with its red leaves, symbolizes the



burning love our Savior has for us. The shape of the leaf recalls the star of Bethlehem that heralded his birth. A favorite legend tells of Pepita, a poor Mexican girl, who cried because she had no gift for the Infant in the manger. So she gathered weeds and laid them by the Baby. Suddenly, the weeds burst into brilliant red flowers of the poinsettia. From that day on, the flowers were known as the Flores de Noche Buena, or Flowers of the Holy Night, for they bloom each year at Christmas time.

Scripture LESSON

Luke 2:41-52; Jesus is found in the temple

On December 30th, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family during which we recall when Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the Temple.

The Holy Family traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover, as was the custom for Jews of that time. When they started the return trip in their large group, each parent thought Jesus was with the other one and traveled for a day before realizing that he had stayed behind. Upon finding him missing, they hurried back to Jerusalem.

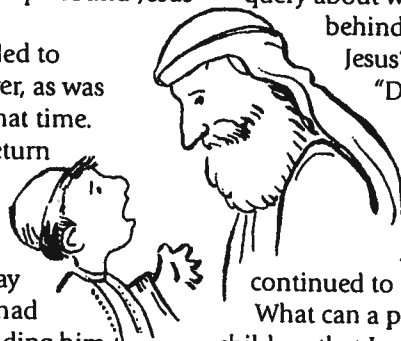
They found Jesus in the Temple talking with the priests who were

amazed by the boy's wisdom and understanding. But to Mary's stunned query about why he remained behind without permission,

Jesus' mystifying reply was, "Did you not know I must be in my Father's house?"

The boy returned with his parents to Nazareth where he continued to obey them.

What can a parent do? Explain to children that Jesus himself was obedient to his parents and wants us all to respect our parents and those in authority over us.



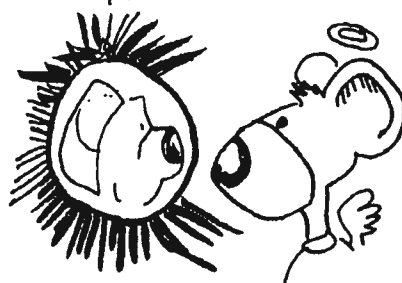
Feasts & Celebrations

Dec. 6 - St. Nicholas (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 frequent anonymous acts of generosity helped him become the patron saint of children.

Dec. 9 - St. Juan Diego (1548). A simple, humble Native American who became a faithful Christian, St. Juan Diego was visited by the Blessed Virgin at Tepeyac Hill in Mexico. She asked him to have the bishop of Mexico build a chapel for her, and had him carry roses to the bishop as a sign. When the

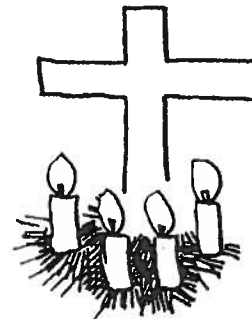
roses fell from his tilma (cape) before the bishop, it retained the Blessed Mother's image.

Dec. 12th - Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531). The Blessed Mother appeared as a young Native American maiden to St. Juan Diego, also Native American. By choosing to appear in that image, she was identifying with the poor and down-trodden of the land to give them hope.



Parent TALK

Our family Christmas last year was awkward. For no real reason my youngest brother drifted from the Church. David said he doesn't feel



"connected" to God and now that he coaches his daughter's soccer team on Sundays, Sunday Mass is out of the question. So Christmas for his

family is no longer about Christ.















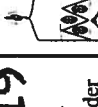








When the families met at my parents' house for Christmas dinner, David's kids were grumpy. In contrast to the rest of the happy cousins, David's three had long faces and moped. "Santa didn't come through for them," David apologized. He said each child only got a few items off long Christmas lists and were disappointed. I pointed out that without Christ as the focus, Christmas will always disappoint.

This year, I already invited David and his family to Christmas Eve caroling at our parish followed by the Vigil Mass. That will start off his family's Christmas right - with Christ.

Our Mission

To help parents raise faithful Catholic children
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 (Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible.)

Family Advent Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>2</p>  <p>Make and bless an Advent wreath. Light the first violet candle each night this week.</p>	<p>3</p>  <p>Put a lamp or electric candle in a window to welcome the Christ child. Light it each night until Christmas Day.</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>Set up your family Nativity scene, but leave out the Holy Family.</p>	<p>5</p>  <p>Read about the angel's visit to Mary in Luke 1:26-38. Talk about ways we can also say "yes" to God.</p>	<p>6</p>  <p>Show love on St. Nicholas Day by filling an old shoe with treats and leaving it outside someone's door.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Clean out your closets of unwanted clothes or toys in good condition. Donate them to a shelter or other charity.</p>	<p>8</p>  <p>In honor of Mary's Immaculate Conception, attend Mass and pray a family Rosary tonight.</p>
<p>9</p>  <p>Light two violet candles in the Advent wreath each night this week. Sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel."</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Set the Mary and Joseph figures of your Nativity set across the room from the rest of the scene.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Pick a Christmas card you've received this week and pray for the person who sent it.</p>	<p>12</p>  <p>Pick roses in honor of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.</p>	<p>13</p>  <p>In honor of St. Lucy, take a drive or walk around your home to look at the Christmas lights.</p>	<p>14</p>  <p>Make cookies to bring to a nearby hospice or nursing home.</p>	<p>15</p>  <p>Put up and decorate your family Christmas tree. Make some hot chocolate and admire your work.</p>
<p>16</p>  <p>Light two violet candles and the rose one for joy. See which of you can sing loudest at Mass today.</p>	<p>17</p>  <p>Ask a family member you have hurt in the past year for forgiveness. Offer it to one who has hurt you.</p>	<p>18</p>  <p>Gather friends and neighbors and go caroling at a nursing home or homeless shelter.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Together, write your Christmas cards. Let older kids address the envelopes and younger ones seal them.</p>	<p>20</p>  <p>Decorate a "Jesus Candle" with symbols of Jesus. Light it at Christmas dinner.</p>	<p>21</p>  <p>Place Mary and Joseph in the Nativity scene. Add grass or straw to the manger to get it ready for the Baby.</p>	<p>22</p>  <p>Attend Confession as a family and go out for ice cream afterward to celebrate the sweetness of God's forgiveness!</p>
<p>23</p>  <p>Light all four candles in the wreath tonight. Reread today's Gospel reading, Luke 1:39-45.</p>	<p>24</p>  <p>Send a thank-you note to your priests or other ministers who enriched your seasonal celebration.</p>	<p>25</p>  <p>Rejoice! Put the Baby in the manger and read the story of Jesus' birth Luke 2:1-20. (see below)</p>	<p>26</p> <p>In honor of the feast of St. Stephen, patron of soldiers, pray for the safety of all those in the armed forces today.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>In remembrance of the Holy Family's flight to Egypt, pray for all people forced to flee their homeland.</p>	<p>28</p>  <p>Give each family member a chance to say "thank you" for a blessing received this year.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Make a surprise phone call to a friend or relative who needs cheering.</p>
<p>30</p>  <p>Celebrate the feast of the Holy Family by sharing a special family meal today.</p>	<p>31</p>  <p>Resolve as a family to pray for at least 15 minutes every night during the coming year.</p>	<p>"... For (un)to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11)</p> <p>"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole 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 room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:1-7).</p>				

Our Lady of Lourdes' Young Adult Group

Advent Meet and Greet



Saturday, December 15, 2012

6:15 PM

(After 5:00 PM Mass)

Our Lady of Lourdes' Cafeteria

Please join us for food and fellowship as we celebrate Advent, introduce the new YAG leaders, and hear about upcoming events for the new year!

9 December

A message of acceptance

“See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.”

Malachi 3:1

In this prophecy, Malachi uses a bit of irony to warn the Judeans. They have been careless about keeping up their end of the covenant with the Lord and are not at all delighted to learn that His messenger is coming to judge them.

Only God can judge our worth, so why do we judge others? Sadly, this hypocrisy is all too familiar to people living with HIV. Thirty years into the epidemic, stigma and discrimination remain significant obstacles to widespread testing, care and treatment. In too many places, people live in fear of being

judged by their employers, their neighbors, even their own families. Those most in need of love and support are afraid to ask for help.

This verse challenges us to reject ignorance, fear and intolerance so that we may stand in solidarity with those in need regardless of their circumstances.

“God of compassion, help us to cast aside judgmental attitudes and accept others with a loving heart, the way You accept us.”

Karen Moul is Communication Officer for Global Health and HIV at Catholic Relief Services, the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States.