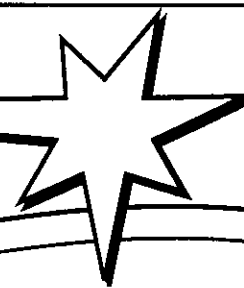


Partners in FAITH™



Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

December 2018

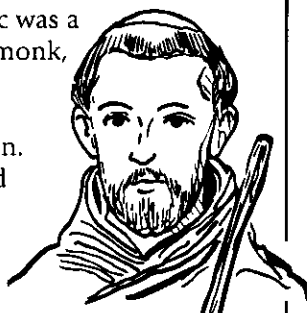
The Catholic Communities of Stapleton, Arnold & Callaway
Fr. Thomas Gudipalli



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.



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

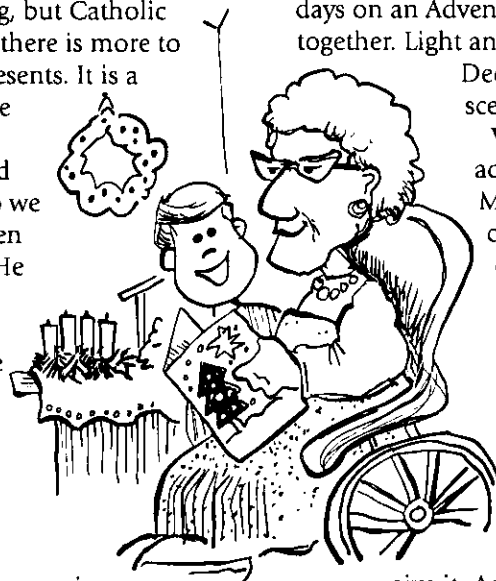
the Savior's arrival by marking the days on an Advent calendar you make together. Light an Advent wreath.

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).

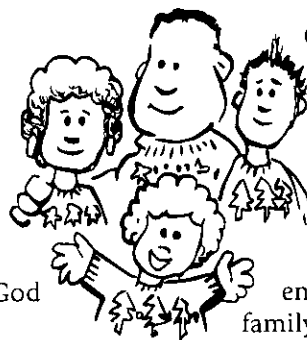


Why Do Catholics Do That?

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.

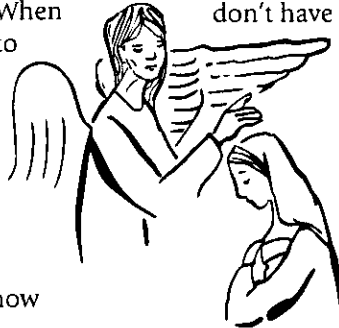
Faith doesn't require understanding

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.



Our Mission

To help parents raise faithful Catholic children
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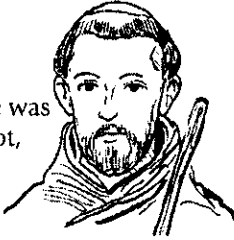
The Catholic Communities of Stapleton, Arnold and Callaway
Fr. Thomas Gudipalli

One Minute Meditations

St. Dominic of Silos

St. Dominic was a Benedictine monk, born around 1000 AD in La Rioja, Spain.

Recognized for his leadership abilities, he was made abbot, but was exiled for refusing to sell monastery lands to the local ruler. He was welcomed by King Ferdinand I of Castile and appointed abbot of St. Sebastian's monastery at Silos. Joan of Aza prayed for a child and saw a vision of St. Dominic. Her son, whom she named Dominic, founded the Dominican Order.



Anticipate Advent

A rich Advent makes a joyous Christmas. Use the four weeks before Christmas to prepare for Christ's coming. Offer extra prayers, perform penance, and receive the sacrament of Reconciliation.

"Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).



Celebrate Christmas with child-like wonder

There is no greater miracle than the gift of love Christmas represents. We didn't earn it and we can't deserve it. Yet, we get so harried with the holiday rush that we miss the wonder of it. Ever notice how children never do? This year, slow down and celebrate Christmas like a child.

Tie gifts with heartstrings. Instead of boosting credit card balances or draining your checking account, keep what you give simple, meaningful, and from the heart. For example, give a coupon for babysitting to friends with children. Prepare a meal for someone who needs a break from cooking.

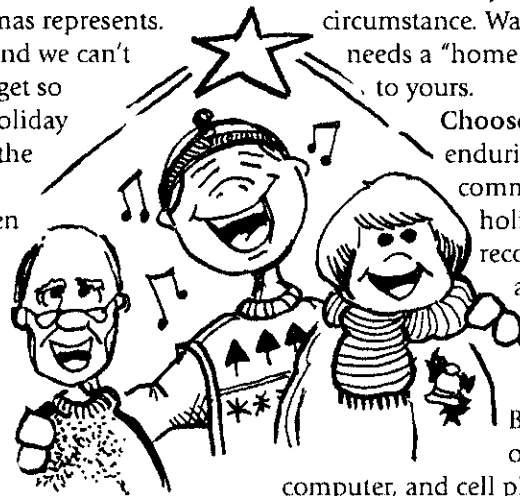
Offer your hearth. The holidays can be lonely for people separated from

their loved ones by distance, death, or circumstance. Watch for anyone who needs a "home" and invite them to yours.

Choose peace. Instead of enduring the Christmas commercials and bad holiday specials, record the good shows and watch while you relax. Or rent your favorite spiritual movies. Better still, turn off the television, computer, and cell phone, and enjoy the silence.

Greet the Babe with joy. Seek reconciliation in Confession so you can receive the Eucharist at Christmas.

Sing like an angel. Check your local listings for Christmas concerts, Messiah sing-a-longs, or other spiritual songfests. Host a caroling party in your home and sing loud with Christmas joy.

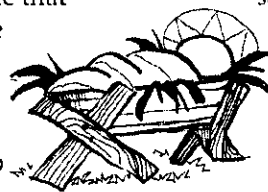


Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics celebrate Christ's birth?

Every Christmas, we celebrate that Jesus, the Son of God, became man—while retaining his divinity—and died for our sins and rose again. We believe this because God, who is Truth, revealed it.

"For to us a child is born, to us a



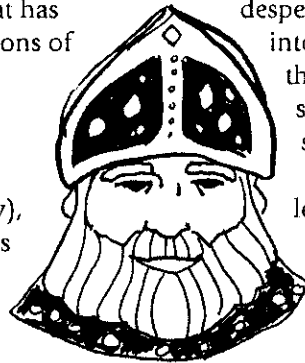
son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'" (Isaiah 9:6). God came to Earth and lived among us.

Honor the spirit of St. Nicholas

St. Nicholas is one icon of the holiday season that has meaning in both the secular and spiritual celebrations of Christmas.

We know that St. Nicholas was born at the end of the third century in Asia Minor. His parents died when he was young and left him well off. His uncle, the archbishop of Myra (southeast of Turkey), ordained him and upon his uncle's death, Nicholas served as bishop until his own death. Throughout he suffered imprisonment and persecution.

One legend involving St. Nicholas concerns a



desperate man on the verge of selling his daughters into slavery to pay his debts. Nicholas secretly threw a bag of gold into an open window (some say down the chimney) in the man's house to stop him.

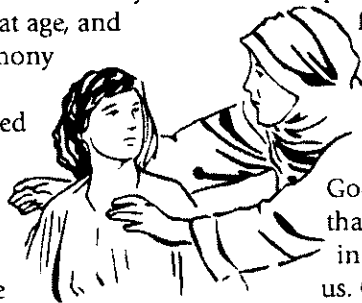
Our present-day Santa Claus stems from the legends of St. Nicholas, but in the Church he is a saint, a confessor of the faith, and a holy bishop. We can learn from his generosity to the poor, and imitate his acts of kindness to others.

from Scripture

Luke 2:41-52, Living in the world

In this reading, the Holy Family went to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old. This was an important time in Jesus' life. Back then, a Hebrew boy became a man around that age, and was recognized in a ceremony called a Bar Mitzvah. On this occasion, Jesus decided to stay behind, causing anxiety to his parents.

This was the first time Jesus spoke in the Gospels and the first time he referred to his identity as God's Son. He spoke of his unique mission of saving the world. He knew his duties to his heavenly Father but

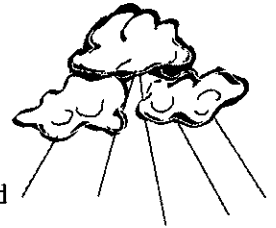


he understood the time to fulfill them would come later. Meanwhile, he returned obediently with his earthly parents to Nazareth and fulfilled his duties to them.

Jesus respected his family, yet he continued to pursue his place in God's plan. The lesson is that we can grow in holiness in wherever God has placed us. Christians can be found in neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. In all these places, we have to find ways to live a holy life in the world.

Q & A What is meant by "fear of the Lord?"

"Fear of the Lord" is more about awe—recognizing God's power and might – than about fear of the merciful creator who loves us most. Fear of the Lord is also known as "reverence," and is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in Isaiah: *"The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding...counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord"* (Isaiah 11:2). These gifts, when used, make us open to God's love.



Fear of the Lord helps us have a healthy respect for God's majesty. We fear offending God for the same reason we fear offending someone we love. If we really love someone, we wouldn't do anything (on purpose) to hurt them or damage the friendship. This is what happens when we sin. *"The [Christian] no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son"* (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1828).

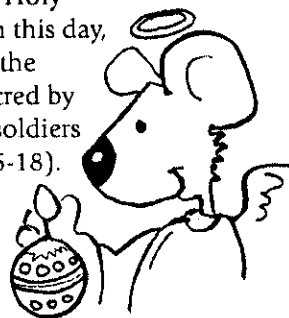
Feasts & Celebrations

Dec. 4 – St. John Damascene (749). A Doctor of the Church and the last of the Greek Fathers, St. John was born in Syria when it was under Muslim rule and was counselor to the caliph. He is known for his writings in favor of the use of sacred images for devotion. These writings brought him into serious conflict with the heretical Christian emperor. He later became a monk under the direction of St. Sabas.

Dec. 12 – Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531). The Blessed Mother appeared as a Native American maiden to St.

Juan Diego, also Native American. She asked that the bishop of Mexico build a chapel for her, and had him carry roses to the bishop as a sign. When the roses were emptied from his tilma (cape), it retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

Dec. 28-The Holy Innocents. On this day, we remember the infants massacred by King Herod's soldiers (Matthew 2:16-18). We also pray for the safety of unborn children.



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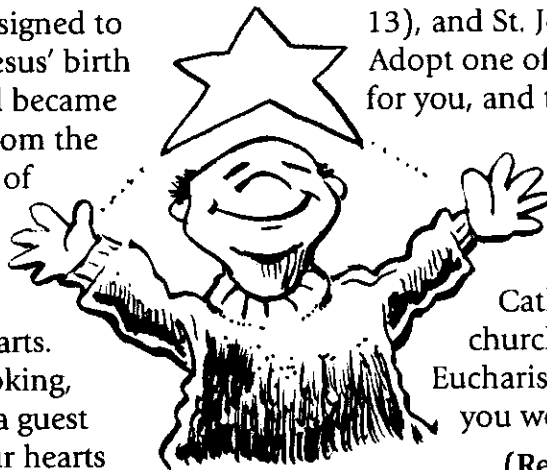
Advent 2018

The Catholic Communities of Stapleton, Arnold and Callaway
Fr. Thomas Gudipalli

Make the most of Advent

The season of Advent is designed to help us prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas. Think of it: God became man, died for our sins, rose from the dead, and now reigns as King of all creation.

Every Christmas is a chance to welcome Jesus as an honored guest into our hearts. Think of all the planning, cooking, and cleaning needed to have a guest over. In Advent we prepare our hearts to welcome the Savior. Below are some suggestions to make the most of your Advent:



13), and St. John of the Cross (December 14). Adopt one of them to be your patron to pray for you, and to protect and encourage you.

Visit the Blessed Sacrament.

The Eucharist is Jesus Christ, present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1374). All Catholic churches have a tabernacle where the Eucharist is stored. Speak with our Lord as you would a close friend.

(Re)Discover the Mass. At Mass, Heaven comes down to Earth. When we receive the Eucharist, Christ comes into our hearts and nourishes our souls. Aim to attend daily Mass once every week during the Christmas season.

Prioritize prayer.

Spend 15 minutes daily with God. The best way to prepare to welcome the Savior at Christmas is to spend time with him. Set aside 15 minutes in your day for God and protect it. Perhaps read a chapter of Scripture, pray a decade of the Rosary, or just be still in his presence.

Know the story. Read through the accounts of Jesus' birth in Matthew 1:18-2:12 and/or Luke 2:1-20. Place yourself in the scene. Internalizing the Christmas story will give you a better appreciation of the season.

Get to know the Advent saints. One way to know God is to know his friends. There are several saints' feasts that occur this Advent, including: St. Nicholas, the Bishop of Myra (December 6), St. Juan Diego (December 9), St. Lucy (December

Practice penance.

Form an "Advent habit." Advent is a great time to start a holy habit. Maybe it's replacing negative comments with positive ones, or getting up ten minutes earlier to pray. See if you can keep up your "Advent habits" through the Christmas season.

Electronic fasting. Create a space for God and the gifts he wants to give you. Consider limiting the amount of time spent on your electronic devices: no Facebook during the work day, no texting during dinner, or while someone is talking to you (unless it's an emergency), etc.

Make a nightly examination of conscience. This will help you spot any patterns of sin that

are preventing you from connecting with God. Remember to thank God for the good things about the day, too. Close prayer by choosing one sinful habit that you'd like to change and resolve to change it by the end of Advent.

Experience God's mercy. Just as we would clean and decorate the house for Christmas, we need to "clean and decorate" our souls by frequenting the sacrament of Confession. Make a heartfelt Confession to greet the Messiah this Christmas with a joyful heart.

Give alms.

Donate resources. Another way to prepare for the Savior is to help his people. Parishes often have food and clothing drives. Don't forget the basics, like socks, toiletries, and soap. Prayerfully consider donating to your parish whatever you are able, or to charities like Catholic Relief Services (<https://www.crs.org>).

Give your time. This can be anything from volunteering to work at a soup kitchen, to getting a group of friends together and caroling at a nursing home, to making handmade cards for soldiers overseas. Every little bit counts.

Welcome the lonely. To Mother Teresa, feeling unloved was a greater poverty than being hungry (though eating enough is important, too). The holidays are especially difficult for those who are alone. Extend invitations for your holiday gatherings to people who might otherwise be alone or forgotten.

Do acts of random kindness. A little kindness goes a long way. Hold the door for people and smile at them. Don't be afraid to offer a hand when you see someone in need. Jesus said, "*Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me*" (Matthew 25:40).

Practice patience. In this season of waiting, practicing this virtue is a work of mercy and way of giving alms. Practicing patience includes: being polite even when you have to wait, assuming the best about someone until they prove otherwise, being firm yet gentle when correcting someone, and seeing things from the other's point of view. If

all else fails, we can recall how patient God is with our failings and never tires of forgiving us.

Anticipate with joy

Light the Advent wreath at dinner to build anticipation for Jesus' birth. The wreath is an ancient sign of victory, in this case, Christ's victory over sin and death. The three purple candles stand for penance, sorrow, and hope. The rose candle stands for joy. One custom is to exchange the purple and rose candles for white candles during the Christmas season.

Listen to Advent music. Make a playlist of Advent music that helps you connect with the themes of the season: faith in God's promises, waiting with hope, and joyful expectation. Include hymns like, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel and traditional carols like, The Holly and the Ivy.

Set out the Nativity Scene—slowly. The custom of displaying the Nativity Scene was begun by St. Francis of Assisi to illustrate the simplicity of the Incarnation. On the first Sunday of Advent, set out the stable and the empty manger. As the weeks go by, add characters. Wait until Christmas morning to place Jesus in the manger.


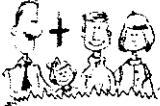













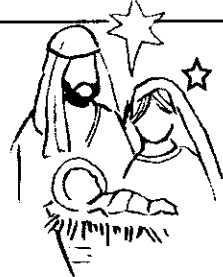





Celebrate Advent feast days. Learn about how other cultures celebrate the Advent saints' feasts. Consider adopting a custom or do something special of your own. Remember, attendance at Mass is required for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.

Build your Christmas around the Mass. Finally, at Christmas Mass, after all that waiting and preparing, we are ready to receive the greatest Gift of all: Jesus Christ, truly present in the Eucharist, under the appearances of bread and wine. Sing joyfully in Mass and welcome the King of Kings into your hearts and homes!

And lastly, keep your Advent behaviors going after Christmas. The waiting is over, but don't lose the good habits you acquired over Advent. Cultivate the "Advent attitudes" of waiting and preparing joyfully for the Lord. Every Sunday is a mini "Christmas," when we greet the Messiah under the forms of bread and wine at Mass.



Family Advent Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>2 Make and bless an Advent wreath. Light the first purple candle each night this week.</p> 	<p>3 Come up with a short prayer that you can say together as a family each morning during Advent.</p> 	<p>4 Set up the Nativity scene but leave out the Holy Family.</p> 	<p>5 In honor of St. Francis Xavier, patron of Catholic Missions, pray today for all who bring the Gospel to people overseas.</p> 	<p>6 To honor St. Nicholas, fill an old shoe with treats and leave it outside someone's door.</p> 	<p>7 Take turns playing "Name that Christmas hymn." Winner gets to pick dessert.</p> 	<p>8 In honor of Mary's conception free from Original Sin (Immaculate Conception), attend Mass and pray a family Rosary tonight.</p> 
<p>9 Light two purple candles in the Advent wreath each night this week. Sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel."</p> 	<p>10 Put up the Christmas tree. Decorate it a little each night until it's ready for Christmas.</p> 	<p>11 Find time this week to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in your church -- even if it's just for a few minutes.</p>	<p>12 Place a rose in a vase today in honor of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.</p> 	<p>13 Commit to going the whole day only speaking kindly to one another.</p> 	<p>14 Make hot chocolate and watch a Christmas movie together.</p> <p>Family Movie Night!</p>	<p>15 Decorate sugar cookies with symbols that remind you of Jesus' birth. Share them with loved ones.</p> 
<p>16 Light two purple candles and the pink one for joy. See which of you can sing loudest at Mass today.</p> 	<p>17 As a family, vote on a local charity to pray for each night this week. Bonus: Make a small donation if you can.</p> 	<p>18 Help children make an examination of conscience, then go to Confession together. Go out for a treat after to celebrate.</p> 	<p>19 Place the Mary and Joseph figures of your Nativity set across the room from the rest of the scene. Move them slowly across the room each day this week.</p> 	<p>20 At dinner tonight, have everyone take turns sharing a favorite Christmas memory.</p> 	<p>21 Christmas is a stressful time of year for parishes. Send thank-you notes to the rectory staff, showing appreciation for what they do.</p>	<p>22 Write letters to Jesus telling him that you look forward to his coming.</p> 
<p>23 Light all four candles in the wreath tonight. Reread today's Gospel Reading. <i>Luke 1:39-45.</i></p> 	<p>24 Place Mary, Joseph, and the empty manger in the Nativity scene.</p> 	<p>25 Rejoice! Place the Baby in the manger and read the story of Jesus' birth in <i>Luke 2:1-20.</i></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>			