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Growing in

FAITH™

Discovering hope and joy in the Catholic faith.

December 2022

The Catholic Communities of Stapleton, Arnold and Callaway

Fr. Thomas Gudipalli

One Minute Meditations

Begin in His presence

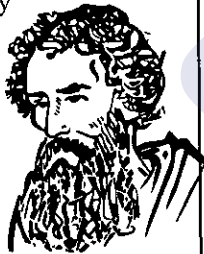
Jesus came among us to be with us. When you first wake up in the morning, but before you get out of bed, place yourself in His presence. Take a few minutes to focus on a sacred picture or an image that will help you to "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

Holiday advice

The holiday season is an exciting time but it can also be a time when money worries, family worries, and every kind of worry intrudes. Instead, try to follow this advice from St. Paul, "Finally, brethren,

whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Philippians 4:8).

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).



Encounter Christ this Christmas

God came to us in the most vulnerable human form possible so that He could draw us to Himself for all eternity. This Christmas, answer His call and come close to Him:

In song. Listen to and ponder the words of your favorite Christmas hymns. Imagine the reality of heavens filled with angels and faraway kings answering the call to pay Him homage.

In service. The newborn Jesus is the physical sign of God's love for us. When we give of our time and resources in His service, we become an instrument of that love. Share His love in your parish, in your neighborhood, in your community.



In mercy. Experience God's mercy in Confession and His loving presence in the Eucharist.

Then, like Him, offer mercy to anyone who may have hurt you. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

In prayer. Jesus came to live among us so He could be intimate with us. He wants to connect on a deep level - more than rushed prayers or perfunctory devotions.

During Advent, find quiet time to give Him your full attention and speak to Him heart to heart.

In watchfulness. Live this Advent with a new awareness of the presence of God. Be awake to who He is and how precious you are to Him.

Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics stand, sit, and kneel at Mass?

God gave us body and soul, so it makes sense actions that combine prayer and movement help us to most fully participate. During Mass, each posture means something. We stand to show respect when the priest (representing Christ) enters and

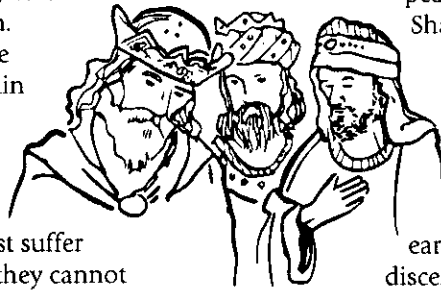


leaves, when the Gospel is read, and when we proclaim the Creed. We sit to focus on the homily, and kneel during the Consecration, showing adoration and humility. We genuflect to the tabernacle and altar to demonstrate ultimate respect.

Spread the "Good news of great joy"

After the shepherds visited Jesus, they told others who didn't yet know about Him. Pope St. John Paul II urged us to do the same: "If we truly encounter Christ again and again, we cannot keep him to ourselves." As disciples, we are required to make disciples.

Practice urgency. Those who do not have a personal relationship with Christ suffer the misery of our fallen world. Worse, they cannot enter eternal life. Our Catholic Faith holds the key to



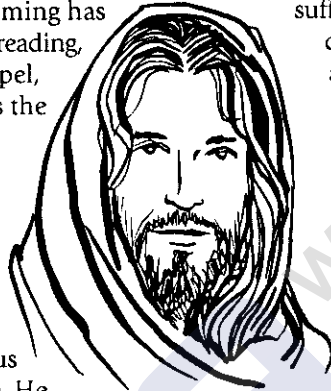
peace in this world and salvation in the next. Sharing our knowledge and love for Him is urgent. **Spend time in the Word.** The world desperately needs to know the Truth contained in the Word. Those who spend time with Scripture grow deeper in their relationship with God and can share that knowledge. **Actively listen.** It is through listening that we earn the right to be heard. Active listening helps us discern where our companion is in the faith journey. Then we learn how best to share the gospel message.

from Scripture

John 1:1-18, Who is Jesus Christ?

Our faith hinges on knowing Christ – who He is and what His coming has meant for us. This Scripture reading, the Prologue of John's Gospel, gives us the answer. Jesus is the divine Word who always existed, the Second Person of the Trinity, and the source of life. Grace and truth come to us through Christ. To know Jesus is to know God.

At the Annunciation, Jesus took on our human nature. He became like us in all things except sin. Yet even though He was God and perfect Man, He still suffered. He got tired, hungry, and thirsty. He worked,



wept, slept, and prayed. He suffered temptation in the desert, and was abandoned, rejected, and wounded by those He loved. God understands us.

Jesus Christ made a bold claim. He said that He is truly God and truly man, and that our salvation comes through Him.

Will we choose Him as our Messiah? Will we live our lives as children of God? If our answer is "yes," then Jesus is the one to whom we turn for enlightenment and grace.

Q & A What does Our Lady of Guadalupe teach us about Christmas?

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12) occurs during Advent. Almost 500 years after Our Lady appeared to St. Juan Diego, we can still learn from her miraculous image on his tilma (cloak).



God is the source of life. Viewed upside down, the flowers on Our Lady's dress take the shape of hearts with arteries coming out, representing life which originates from God. He sustains us with His grace, especially through the Sacraments.

God draws near. A four-petaled flower on Mary's dress symbolizes the Aztecs' highest deity, perceived as distant and unmoved by their concerns. The flower's placement over Mary's womb shows that the Almighty God draws close in love and humility, even becoming one of us.

Humility and joy. Aztec gods were painted looking up and ahead, yet Our Lady's head is bowed in humility and prayer. She is from Heaven, but is not God. She is a messenger of His love, modeling a humble, joyful response to Him and ready to bring His love to others.

Feasts & Celebrations

December 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 and sent him with roses as a sign. When St. Juan emptied the roses before the bishop, his cloak retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

December 16 – St. Adelaide of Burgundy (999). A Burgundian princess, St. Adelaide escaped from a murderous plot for the throne. She married King Otto I, the Holy Roman Emperor. As Queen of Germany, she was

known for charitable works, including founding and restoring monasteries.

December 20 – St. Dominic of Silos (1073). St. Dominic was a Benedictine monk, born around 1000 AD in Navarre, Spain. Recognized for his leadership abilities, he was appointed abbot of St. Sebastian's monastery at Silos.

December 28 – Feast of the Holy Innocents (1st century).

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.



Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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Partners in FAITH™

Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

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Fr. Thomas Gudipalli

Thoughtful Moments

God knows us

"A God who draws near out of love walks with his people ... We could never have imagined that the same Lord would become one of us and walk with us, be present with us, present in His Church, present in the Eucharist, present in His Word, present in the poor ... And this is closeness: the shepherd close to his flock, close to his sheep, whom he knows, one by one." Pope Francis



Jesus is Peace and Joy

It is possible to feel peaceful despite the stress of current turbulent times. It's also possible to be joyful, even amidst great sorrow. Jesus is the peace and joy we long for. The saints were able to find peace and joy in trials because they knew Christ.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The Lord is my life's refuge; of who should I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).



Add a Catholic tradition to your Christmas celebration

Family traditions make our Christmas celebrations unique and special to our families. Consider adding a new tradition this year:

Carols by candlelight.

To symbolize Jesus bringing light to the darkness, gather around candlelight and sing your favorite Christmas hymns. Choose classics such as "Silent Night," "Away in a Manger," "Angels, We Have Heard on High." Let the words tell the story of Jesus' birth.

Midnight Mass. This liturgy features the classic Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke, and is the most elaborate celebration of Christmas. Many families bring children to this first Mass of Christmas. Hint: pack a blanket so little ones can lie down in the pew.

Bless the nativity scene. Leave your manger empty of the main figures when

you set it up. On Christmas Eve, ceremoniously add the angels, shepherds, Mary, and Joseph. As a surprise, add Baby Jesus before the children wake up on Christmas

morning. Place the three kings across the room so they can "journey" until Epiphany.

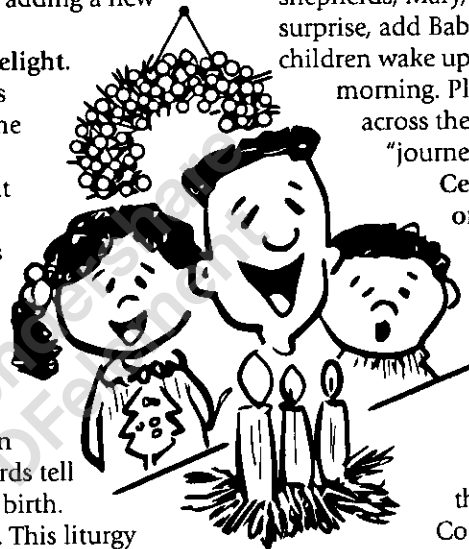
Celebrate the Festival of Lessons and Carols.

This service consists of nine Scripture lessons which recount the Fall, the promise of a Messiah, the Incarnation, and the Great

Commission. Each

lesson is followed by a song and a prayer. If the Festival of Lessons and Carols isn't offered in your area, consider performing your own:

<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year-and-calendar/advent/festival-of-lessons-and-carols>.



Why Do Catholics Do That ?

Why do Catholics light traditional Advent wreaths?

The elements of the Advent wreath remind us of the eternal nature of our souls and God's promise of everlasting life through Christ. The evergreens symbolize eternal life. The circle signifies God's unending love. Laurel



stands for Christ's victory over sin and evil. Cedar is strength and healing. Ivy stands for faithfulness to God. The holly's thorny leaves and red berries stand for Christ's Passion, recalling the Crown of Thorns and the precious blood Jesus shed to save our souls

Add peace and joy to your Christmas

To bring more peace and joy to your Christmas this year, take the first Christmas as your model.

Sweep the inn. Jesus chose lowly circumstances for his birth to encourage freedom from worldly goods. Donate or sell what you don't truly need so you can free up attention and affection for what really matters. Then limit the number and value of new gifts.

Select shepherds. Although the people watching the sheep in the fields that night weren't the most popular nor the most prosperous

in town, God chose them to spend time with his newborn Son. Children benefit from healthy, loving company.

Accept and extend only those holiday invitations that will provide precious, loving time together.

Ponder in your heart. When her remarkable Son was born, "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19) so she could savor the joy of every awesome moment. Don't forget to savor time with your own remarkable family so that you can ponder each wonderful moment in your own heart.

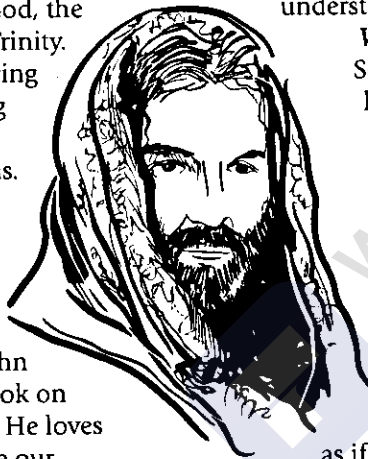


Scripture LESSON

John 1:1-18, Who is Jesus?

This month we celebrate the birth of Jesus: the Word of God, the Second Person of the Trinity. By coming to Earth, living among us and teaching us, He taught us about God and His love for us. It is now possible to share in God's divine life through Jesus's life, death and Resurrection.

In this Gospel, St. John explained that Jesus took on our humanity because He loves us and wanted to share our experience. He chose to live as we live. He experienced what we experience. Remembering that, we can also know



with confidence that Jesus understands us.

What can a parent do? Sooner or later, we each have to make a choice. Many who saw Jesus rejected Him, not recognizing Him as the Messiah. Help children to make a deliberate choice to recognize Jesus as their own personal Savior. Teach them to ask, "Do I live my life as if I'm a child of God?" Tell them what it means to live as a child of God and to follow Jesus. Jesus is our Lord and brother.

Feasts & Celebrations

Dec. 3 – St. Francis Xavier (1552). St. Francis Xavier was born to a Spanish noble family. He taught in Paris where he met St. Ignatius of Loyola and joined the new Society of Jesus. In 1541, he was sent as a missionary to India and Japan, where he tirelessly served the poor with joy.

Dec. 8 – Feast of the Immaculate Conception (1854). This feast day commemorates that Mary was conceived in St. Anne's womb without Original Sin. Attending Mass is a wonderful way to celebrate.

Dec. 11 – Pope St. Damasus I (384). Born in early 4th century Rome, St. Damasus served as a deacon before being elected pope. He defended the faith from widespread heresies and authorized St. Jerome to translate the Vulgate.

Dec. 30 – The Holy Family (1st century). Today, we celebrate the family life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph – three people who lived for God. By their love and support of one another the Holy Family is a model for all Christian families.



Parent TALK

"If Christmas is celebrating Jesus' birthday, how come He doesn't get gifts?" asked my daughter, Kara. "The Wise Men gave him gifts," I explained.



"But He didn't get them on His birthday," said Tessa. "Everyone else gets presents that day except Him!"

I wanted to encourage my children's generosity, so we came up with an idea. That night, each of us wrote short letters, saying, "Dear Jesus, I will give my love to You this Christmas by..." and we described specific acts of charity to be done during the Advent season. When we finished, we put the cards in a shoebox, gift-wrapped it with a nametag for Jesus, and put it under the tree. Then we did what we promised.

On Christmas morning, we opened Jesus' gift first, and revealed the charitable acts we performed in His name. The girls were pleased with their birthday gifts to the Babe.

Our Mission

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