Praying with Those from Other Cultures

During December, we are conscious of various cultural devotions, practices and celebrations that are integral to the Advent and Christmas season. Our prayer suggestions include Las Posadas, a tradition among Spanish-speaking that reenacts the journey of Joseph and Mary as they sought shelter in Bethlehem. We must remember that Mary and Joseph were Arab Jewish people from the poor working class of Nazareth and Bethlehem. They had no home in Bethlehem and had to look for shelter and lodging as many migrants do today.

So let us pray this **Posada Novena December 16–December 24**, mindful of all who seek shelter.

**Divine and eternal Word, who descended from the Father into the heart of the Virgin Mary, your love for humankind leads you to Bethlehem where you are born at midnight in a poor and humble stable.**

**In truth, thousands of angels accompany you on this journey, and yet we, whom you came to save and lead to that Bethlehem of eternal joy, stubbornly turn away from you.**

**Forgive us, God and Lord of the universe, and help us to walk alongside Mary and Joseph, thus giving us the courage to fight against and triumph over every adversity. Amen.**

December 12 – Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Marian title of Our Lady of Guadalupe comes from the 16th-century apparition of Mary to an indigenous, poor man by the name of Juan Diego on December 12, 1531. Our Lady appeared as an indigenous or native woman, with a black sash above or waist. The black sash means that the woman is with child. By her appearance, Mary shows that she is the mother of all God’s children, no matter their race, or ethnicity. The appearance marks God’s preferential option for the poor.

**Our Lady of Guadalupe Prayer**

Mary, wrap me in your mantle, just as you wrapped Juan Diego.

May you wrap me in your love, too, so that I might grow in the same courage and hope as Juan Diego to seek Christ and love others in this life.

May you guide me closer to your Son, so that I might more fully love Him as you do. Amen.

This month as we are aware of the gift of welcoming, may we welcome those who are different – especially those most in need. We encourage sharing your Advent/Christmas cultural traditions. May this act of welcoming make us ever aware of our implicit bias.
Las Posadas explained in English
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5T-m-e-w1yw

Our Lady of Guadalupe
Take part in a parish celebration in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12).

Let’s Have and Eco-Friendly Christmas
While we all enjoy the festiveness of the Christmas season, the reality is that Christmas produces a great deal of waste that impacts our environment. Much of our food waste, Christmas trees, unwanted presents, old cards and used plastic and wrapping paper end up going to landfills. Landfills produce methane and other toxic chemicals that contaminate air and water supplies that negatively impact public health and contribute to global warming and climate change.

Some actions steps to support an eco-friendly Christmas:
• Purchasing a tree locally will cut down on transportation costs and emissions and support local jobs. The organic farms that grow Christmas trees stabilize soil, protect water supplies and provide refuge for wildlife while creating scenic green belts.
• Buy a real growing tree, raise it in a large tub and use it over several years. Finally plant it outside where it will continue to live and support the environment by absorbing carbon dioxide and other gases and emitting fresh oxygen.
• Recycling is the best way to dispose of a real Christmas tree. Trees that are not recycled properly and sent to landfills produce methane that is a threat to both human health and the climate. Many cities offer free tree recycling services; some will pick up a tree right from your curb.
• Buy Christmas cards that are fully recyclable. Cards that include foil, glitter or plastic are impossible to recycle or compost. Consider sending e-cards: they help prevent deforestation, save on fuel used to transport and deliver and are digital, so there is no unnecessary waste disposal.
• Use LED lights on trees and other decorations; they use less energy, last longer and look just as good, and use about 25% less energy than incandescent bulbs.
• Most wrapping paper you find in card shops and supermarkets is crafted from low-quality fibers coated in plastic, dyed or decorated with glitter. Most contain poor-quality fibers or come with sticky tape attached to them – all factors that make them ineligible for recycling. Consider using baskets, newspaper, tissue paper, tins, cans, jars and reusable fabric bags.
• Sustainable gift-giving: Gifting creates millions of unwanted gifts that end up in landfills. Sustainable gifts help reduce waste and make a strong statement about values and beliefs. Look at the materials gifts are made from and keep sustainability in mind. Avoid single plastics items that can’t be recycled and look for things like organic-certified food and clothing. Avoid giving consumables and give experiences instead – or reduce the number of gifts and donate to a charity instead.
Local Parish Partnering
Join the associates and sisters in Leominster, Fitchburg, Clinton and Worcester, Massachusetts as they prepare special gifts for the women at the Women’s Recovery Center in Leominster. With cold winters in New England, they are donating gifts of new hats, scarves, gloves, socks, etc. (new and unwrapped) to keep them warm. These will be collected at their Advent/Christmas gathering, sorted and then wrapped for the 16-20 individuals who live at the center during their rehabilitation and reentry into society.

Join associates and sisters in collaborating with local parishes’ Christmas toy donation projects during Advent.

Adopting Orange County Families
Join with the sisters and associates in New York in partnering with the New Members Committee project of adopting three Orange County families for Christmas through the Big Brothers Big Sisters nonprofit Associate Mary Kate Lowe leads. The items can be dropped off at the administration center by Friday, December 16. Please email Carla Robinson (jrobinson1@hvc.rr.com) or Mary Kate Lowe (cell 845-325-4305) (marykathleen.lowe@gmail.com) telling what items you have or would like to purchase to avoid too many duplicates.

Family #1 - Washingtonville
Single mom, Marissa.
She would appreciate bed sheet sets for 4 twin beds.
Clothing size: medium.

Little Brother, Edric, male 7 years old
Clothing: 10/12 boys  Underwear: boys medium
Socks: medium (6-8)
Likes: legos, Chapter books and notebooks.

Sibling, Curtis, male 9 years old
Clothing: 12/14 boys  Underwear: boys large
Socks: boys large 8/10
Likes: Legos, chapter books, notebooks

Sibling, Ocean, male, 9 years old
Clothing: 12/14  Underwear: Large
Socks: Large (8-10)
Likes: Legos, chapter books and notebooks

Sibling, Victor, male 2 years old
Clothing: 12/14     Underwear: Large    Clothing: 3T    Underwear: Training diapers 3T
Socks: Large (8-10)         Socks: 3T
Likes: Legos, Cocomelon and Baby Shark

Family #2 – Monroe
Single mom, Mary, would like us to focus on her daughter. A gift card to a store or some small item for mom.

Little Sister Adriana, female, 14 years old
Clothing size: 14/16     Underwear size: 14     Sock size: 6-10
She loves anything related to arts and crafts, sensory toys such as pop its and squishy balls and kids bubblegum toothpaste. She would appreciate receiving mechanical pencils.

Family #3 – Newburgh
Single mom, Shalynda, would like us to focus on her son. A gift card to a store or some small item for mom.

Little Brother Jacob, male, 13 years old
Clothing size: men’s pants size 36x32     Underwear size: large briefs     Sock size: men’s size 10
He likes using Dial body wash. He likes chapter books such as the “Diary of a Whimpy Kid” series. He also enjoys playing with toy action figurines and board games, such as Monopoly and Connect 4.