

Catholic Dcing Presents

The Advent

Christmas Planner



*Helping You Schedule,
Plan, and Prioritize*



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ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Are you a part of the *inn* crowd, or one of the *stable* few?



We are going to begin these beautiful seasons with the end in mind. And what is the end? Heaven. Pray this prayer with me before beginning:

Dear God, help me to plan these beautiful seasons with *Your* will for my family in my heart. Deliver me from my desires to be the perfect mother, the craftiest mother, the most organized mother. Deliver me from the desire to impress others with my clean house, cooking skills, perfect photos, and dazzling presents. Keep me humble, and help me to lead my family towards You, even when it isn't the most popular way. Even when others don't approve of my methods. Even when I get funny looks or ridicule from people. Stay with me through this season. Help me to be patient and loving to my family, especially when tight schedules and busy hands create stress. Help my family to stay focused on You. Even though Christmas is a lot of work for mothers, keep me prayerful, and remind me to offer up my struggles and sufferings. Help me to make good decisions, and to walk the narrow path. **Amen.**

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Introduction



Annunciation, Fra Angelico

WHAT TO ACCOMPLISH



As a Catholic mother, there are basically three things I want to accomplish during the Advent/Christmas season:

1. Convey the true meaning of these seasons, staying focused on the religious aspects as much as possible.
2. Give my family a meaningful experience, full of traditions and memories.
3. Keep my sanity.

Sometimes, we as mothers overshoot the first two objectives with disregard for the third. The reality is, that's not good for us, and it's not even good for our families. When we are over-extended, we snap, cry, make big deals out of things that are small...we don't always know when to let things go because we want to "do it all." But I'm here to tell you that *no one can "do it all."*

To top it all off, sometimes budget constraints make an already stressful situation even worse. The point of this season is to welcome Jesus into the world, not to strain our family's finances.

The first thing I want you to remember is **you don't have to do every single thing every single year**. Don't choose too many things that happen every day. Don't choose more things than will fit in your own personal life and schedule. Most importantly, don't compare yourself with other mothers or families. This can only lead to one of two things: it will make you feel inadequate, or it will make you prideful. Proverbs 4:27 says, "Turn neither to the right, nor to left, keep your foot far from evil."



WHEN SAYING "NO" IS "YES"

There are always a hundred things going on this time of year, but if you can't handle bringing cookies for your kid's program, don't volunteer. I know, I know. The guilt of not volunteering. It's in my personality to sign up for everything. But sometimes, the answer just has to be "no." **Because sometimes saying "no" is actually saying "yes" to our bigger responsibilities.** Yes to having the energy to be a good wife and mother. Yes to having time to do my own dishes. Yes to having time to get enough sleep. Mostly yes to having enough energy at the end of the day to be patient and loving to my family. These things are more important than having a house covered in Christmas lights, sewing matching outfits for all eight of your kids to attend Christmas Mass in, or making six different flavors of Christmas fudge.

If you are on top of the world and raring to go, there will be plenty of ideas in this ebook to keep you busy this year!

If you are needing to take the stress out of your holiday season this year, **this ebook is going to help you zone in on and accomplish what is important to *your* family this year.**

I myself do not do every single thing every single year. This ebook is a compilation of many years worth of blog posts. Some years I whip up Lussekatter buns on St. Lucy's feast day with real yeast and saffron. Other years I pop cinnamon rolls out of a can, and some years I skip it entirely. Totally depends on the year.



A FEW IDEAS FOR SIMPLIFYING



Society places importance on a lot of things during these seasons that can be exhausting. I want to help you simplify some of these aspects so that you have energy left to do the things that are truly important. Just skip whatever doesn't seem helpful to you. Different strokes for different folks.

Buy your presents online. No driving, no lines, and they come straight to your door. I don't have to hide them because they're already in boxes. No shopping with kids and trying to hide things under coats in the cart. No going from store to store looking for something particular. Shopping online rocks! I personally love shopping on [amazon](https://www.amazon.com), but to each his own.

Decorate the living room only. Yes, it's awesome to have all your halls totally decked out. Some years I have the energy for tons of decorating, but other years I don't. You don't have to put everything out every year. Just decorate the tree, put out at least one nativity set, and the rest of it will still be in your boxes for next year.

Pare down on the light display. It is a lot of work to string up outside lights. It involves ladders, staple guns, light bulb checking, and those co-pays for the ER visits are a real bummer. However, you *don't* want to look like the neighborhood grinch with a heart that's two sizes too small. In fact, the custom of lights originally comes from Ireland, where extra candles were lit in the windows during Advent to welcome strangers as we should welcome Christ! Find some easy lights or faux candles that can be hung inside rather than outside. Also, bush nets and free-standing light displays are easier to go up and down than lights around the roof of a house. If you really want easy, skip the outside lights altogether and just make sure your tree is in front of a window that shows from the road.





Simplify, simplify, simplify. Sometimes you have to let go of some of your grand Christmas plans. Last year I wanted to make hand-made stockings for my whole family with figures from the nativity embroidered on each one. Great idea, but again, I'm only one person. In the end, I bought stockings from the Dollar Tree and wrote our names on them with fabric paint. I find that my husband and children don't mind when I cut these kinds of corners. I don't think anyone enjoyed our Christmas stockings any less. In fact, in the past we have just hung actual socks.

Remember that kids are easily impressed! This goes along with the "simplify" thing. Kids are going to be just as happy with hot chocolate straight from the microwave as they are with a fancy hot chocolate bar from [pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com) with marshmallows in the shape of snowmen.

At the end of the day, we all know what the Advent season is about: preparing for our Savior, Jesus Christ. So don't forget what's important. Slow down, take the time to pray, take the time to love, take the time to enjoy your family, and remember that you are not Martha Stewart. After all, Martha, you are worried about way too many things.

Throughout this ebook, you'll find more ideas about how to simplify, and how to make Advent and Christmas activities *doable* in your home, even with small children underfoot. The grandest plans don't mean anything if we don't pull them off.



RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS EASILY BECOME THE NORM

Before I lose too many of you, I want to encourage you a little bit. I did not grow up in a family that celebrated feast days or lived the liturgical year at home. This is a decision that I made for my family, and when I first started dabbling in it, it was overwhelming. That's why I want to help all of you.

When I decided I wanted to include these rich Catholic traditions in celebrations with my own children, I started researching, reading books, and filling in traditions and activities I'd never heard of before. And you know what? We loved it! If you really want to celebrate Advent and then Christmas, Advent is a time of waiting and preparation. But you don't want to look like a scrooge, or make your kids hate being Catholic because the Advent season is not fun and festive. What you want to do is *replace* all the empty stuff this time of year with feast day celebrations and rich traditions that the whole family can enjoy!

Within just a year or two, these things start to become the things that are associated with the holiday season for your family. It doesn't take long to make something a tradition! Now I couldn't imagine an Advent without a wreath, or a St. Lucy Day without sweet bread!

Your family will grow to love the Catholic traditions in this book, and you will too! It gets easier to let your old traditions go as you gain new ones. Before long, you'll see that your family is shifting the focus of the holiday towards its true meaning: the coming of the Christ Child!

This can be done *without* a ton of extra work! Just make the things you already do meaningful rather than adding all new things. For instance, bake Christmas cookies, but cut them out with nativity-shaped cookie cutters rather than snowman cookie cutters. Let all of your Christmas work do double duty for you! Also, many things become long-term resources, such as a Jesse tree. You make it once, and you can use it year after year. So as you start living the liturgical year, your resources will build like a library, and it gets to be less and less work each year. :-)



ON THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS MY TRUE LOVE GAVE TO ME...

...12 full days of Christmas so I wouldn't have to do it all at once!

It doesn't all have to be done before Christmas day! There are 12 days of Christmas—TWELVE! We keep celebrating for *all* of them. I use this time to do the fun-but-not-necessary things such as building gingerbread houses, making Christmas crafts, etc. When you make your list and plan out your Advent/Christmas season, be honest with yourself about what really needs to happen before, or what can wait until after.

It's not just that you *can* leave some stuff for after Christmas day, it's that you *should*. If you're trying to teach your children about living the liturgical year, the Christmas season only begins on Christmas day. If they're going to learn about keeping it going, that's got to be from you, because society is *done* on Christmas day. We want to keep the celebration going at least through the Epiphany.

Furthermore, Advent is actually a time of waiting and preparation (hence the purple liturgical color, just like Lent), so we should be anticipating the birth of our savior as much as possible and preparing our hearts for the coming of the Lord. Holding off on some celebrations is the perfect way to get this idea across to your kids.

For any generic "Christmas Stuff" that your family likes to do, (making gingerbread houses, for example) I'm going to ask you to consider doing one of two things:

1. Consider doing these things during the 12 days of Christmas that begin on Christmas day rather than during Advent.
2. Consider trying to place these things on a religious feast day to draw attention to the true meaning of the season, rather than on a random day. So in the example of the gingerbread house making, you could move it to the feast of Our Lady of Loreto (since it has to do with a house), or St. Lucy's feast day (since it has to do with sweet bread). Be creative.

Using This Book



The Census at Bethlehem, 1566

USING THIS EBOOK TO SCHEDULE YOUR CELEBRATIONS



(You need to read this *entire* page before moving on!!!)

On the next few pages I have a [printable list available](#). Go ahead and print it now so you can use it as you read this ebook. (I have a blank one available, or one that I already put *my* family's "essentials" on. Use whichever you like. You'll probably need more than one page.)

The idea of this list is to help you organize your thoughts. I want each family to be able to accomplish what is a priority for them during this special time of year without becoming overwhelmed. Each time you read something you might like to include in your family's celebrations, write it on the list. You can also write things on the list that your family likes to do that don't appear in this book.

The two columns on the right are labeled "Advent" and "Christmas," so when adding your own family traditions, be honest about where these belong. Anything you can delay until Christmas is going to be easier on you!

Once you've been through the whole ebook and made your list, I want you to star things (in the far left column) that you absolutely *do* want to happen. This will help you make these things a priority.

At the bottom of each tradition page is a "Plan It" section. Go back to every activity from your list that got a star, and see what you need to plan to make this happen. It will tell you what dates to [put on your calendar](#), and what supplies to put on your shopping list. Then take an honest look at your calendar. If there is still room, you may now add some things from your list that didn't get a star, but remember, if the season starts to get crazy, lose the things that didn't get stars first!

For additional resources for any of the topics in this ebook, click the cupcake on each page! You'll find more crafts, activities, and printables to compliment that particular feast day, and links will be updated over the years, so it will be a growing resource!



START YOUR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS PLANNING BINDER!



You're getting ready to print the lists on the next two pages (as many as you need) and start your Advent and Christmas planning! However, this isn't just a band-aid for this year. This planning is an investment for your future Christmases as well!

[All of the lists](#) that you print and fill out need to be hole-punched and placed into a binder. Also, any of the activities and recipes from this book that you want to do can be printed and placed in this binder. Definitely include the list you're making as you read the book (mentioned on the previous page).

Any of your own holiday recipes can also be added, along with any prayer devotionals you print from online, such as the blessing of a Christmas tree or Advent wreath, or an Epiphany door blessing, etc. That way, you won't have to hunt these down year after year—you'll know exactly where to find them! You want this binder to be a resource that builds year after year, making celebrating easier and easier on you. Only include things that you *actually* want to do—that way you won't be overwhelmed with ideas that didn't strike your fancy. This is going to become *your custom* celebration book. The pages have borders that are the colors of the liturgical season to help you organize them in your binder.

You are also provided with three different shopping lists. One for [generic items](#), [one for groceries](#), and [one for Catholic stuff](#). These are organized for easy shopping. Try to make a thorough list for the Catholic items you need, then make either one trip to a local Catholic shop, or order everything you need at one time so you can save on shipping by combining.

So go ahead and [print the cover](#) for your binder, then print the lists on the next two pages. You also might want to print and include a few of the [notes pages](#) so you can jot thoughts down as you go. Let the Advent and Christmas planning begin!



THINGS TO DO FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS



|  | Tradition, Activity, Etc. | Advent | Christmas |
|---|--|--------|-----------|
|  | Advent Wreath | ✓ | |
|  | Decorate Christmas Tree | ✓ | |
|  | Plan Christmas Dinner | ✓ | |
|  | Baking | ✓ | |
|  | Present Buying | ✓ | |
|  | Present Wrapping | ✓ | |
|  | Stocking Stuffers | ✓ | |
|  | Decorate | ✓ | |
|  | Planning for Christmas Mass | ✓ | |
|  | Mass on Feast of Immaculate Conception | ✓ | |
|  | Celebrate the 12 Days of Christmas | | ✓ |
|  | Attend Confession During Advent | ✓ | |
|  | Shoe Stuffing for St. Nicholas Day | ✓ | |
| | St. Juan Diego's Feast Day | ✓ | |
| | St. Lucy's Feast Day | ✓ | |
| | Jesse Tree | ✓ | |

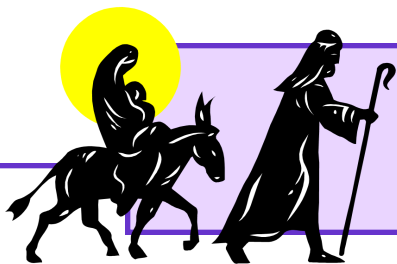
THINGS TO DO FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

[illegible]

Pre-Advent Planning



The Pregnant Virgin, 1410



ADVENT PLANNING (GET A HEAD START)

The more you plan *before* Advent, the smoother your December is going to go. However, there are a few things that are actually *vital* to plan ahead of time if you want to do them. (It's always so disappointing to miss the beginning of these things, so planning ahead will help you avoid that.)

The first Sunday of Advent can come as early as November 27th, or as late as December 3rd. Don't let this sneak up on you! Too often, I don't give Advent the first thought until after Thanksgiving. Then, all of a sudden, here it is, and you know what? I don't have any candles. I don't know where my empty manger is. Advent has started, and I didn't do any of that cool stuff that starts on the first day. "Maybe next year," I think. *sigh* Well, not this year!

Here are the things you need to plan *before* the first Sunday of Advent (if you are, indeed, planning on doing these things). If you drop the ball, though, it is ok to do these things starting a bit into the season. Better late than never, right?

NOVEMBER

Thanksgiving. Yes, I know this isn't a Catholic holiday, but it is a reality of the beginning of holiday planning for us mothers. Use the [meal planner](#) to plan it out, and make a [grocery shopping list](#).

St. Andrew's Feast Day, November 30—this is the day that the St. Andrew Christmas novena begins. You can see the [Christmas novena page](#) in this book, but I wanted to give you a heads up because this one starts so early!

Plan It: Print the meal planner and a grocery list, and plan Thanksgiving dinner. Add the first Sunday of Advent to your calendar, along with any travel plans for the holiday season, and a few days before Thanksgiving, add "defrost the turkey" to your calendar as well. Mark Nov 30 to begin St. Andrew's novena.

ADVENT — A SEASON OF WAITING

Perhaps "The Advent Song" says it best...
(tune of *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*)



Advent is a time to wait, not quite time to celebrate.
Count the candles one by one, until Advent time is done,
Day by day we work and play, to prepare for Christmas day!

It's nearly impossible (especially with kids) to wait for *everything* until Christmas day. Even the things that *do* wait until Christmas day still require prep during Advent (ex: present buying, grocery shopping, decorating, etc). While Advent and Lent are both times of waiting, Advent is a little different because it's a time of joyful anticipation. Some families do give something up during Advent, such as sweets. You can also add extra daily prayers as a family during Advent.



ADVENT ANGELS

For this tradition, you put everyone's name from the family in a bowl, and draw names (much like "Secret Santa"). You don't tell anyone who you drew—but you are their Advent Angel for the season. This means you pray for them, do little nice things for them, or even leave them small treasures. Try to do at least one thing per day. For instance, you might make their bed for them. Then you leave a little note saying, "Your bed was made by your Advent Angel," or leave a note saying, "I prayed for you!" On Christmas, you reveal who you had! Even if you figure out who your Advent Angel is, play along like you don't know. ;-) The next few pages are some printables you can use for assigning Advent Angels and leaving little notes. These are especially good for non-writers, or if you don't want your handwriting to be recognized. *In Germany, this tradition is called "Christkindl," and you are doing these things for the "Christ Child."*

Plan It: If any of these things sound interesting to you, write them down on your planning list. Print the Advent Angel pages, and slide them in the pocket of your planning binder until you need them.

Advent Angels

| | |
|--|---|
|  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |
|  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |
|  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |
|  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |
|  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |
|  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |  <p>You are _____'s Advent Angel!</p> |

Advent Angels



ADVENT WREATH



An Advent wreath is a great Catholic tradition, and a way to get across the idea of waiting to your family. You can either purchase or make a wreath. It will need to be able to hold four candles—three purple and one “rose” colored candle (represented by pink). Candles in these colors can be hard to track down this time of year, and expensive even if you find them. Check your local Hobby Lobby in the Christmas section, order them early, or [paint your own pillar candles with melted pink and purple crayons.](#) (A super cheap solution!)

It's pretty easy to find prayers that can be combined with the lighting of the Advent candles each night before dinner prayers. You can also look up an Advent wreath blessing. Light the purple candle across from the pink one first and then go around clockwise, lighting one new candle each week.

On Christmas Eve, you can add a Christ candle to the middle of your Advent wreath. Some families decorate this candle on the Feast of St. Ambrose (Dec 7) because he is the patron of candle makers. Your Christ candle can

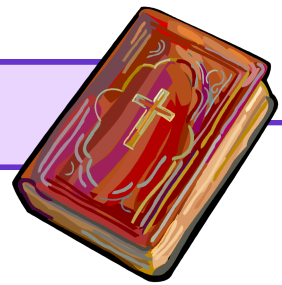


be decorated with symbols from the Jesse tree, or anything Christmas themed! You can scratch the designs into the candle with a dull pencil, then paint in the cracks and wipe off the extra paint. Or decorate with stickers and ribbons! (Use a pillar candle for decorations like this so they can't catch fire.)

Plan It: Write each Sunday of Advent on your calendar. Locate a wreath and candles, or add them to your shopping list. Print an Advent wreath blessing, along with some prayers to say when lighting the candles, and put them in your planning binder.



JESSE TREE



The Jesse Tree is something that many Christians use to prepare for Christmas. It serves as the family tree of Jesus. Through Bible readings, your kids can spend the season of Advent learning about Jesus' genealogy! It starts on December 1st with Creation, and ends with the birth of Jesus. The name comes from Isaiah 11:1: "But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom." All through Advent, we hear scripture readings at Mass that remind us of the ancestors of Jesus, so this is a great pairing for Catholics!

The Tree—The basic idea is that you start with a tree of some kind. This can be artificial, it can be a tree made out of felt, it can be magnetic, made out of sticks, or even a dead branch from the yard. Just a tree.

The Ornaments—Each ornament that goes on the Jesse tree has a symbol that represents an event or a person leading up to the foretold coming of the Messiah. Different people use different symbols and scripture, so feel free to find a version you think is a good fit for your family.

The ornaments can be hand-made or store bought. People cut them from felt, carve them from wood, mold them from clay, or make them in any other number of ways! It's a great excuse to get creative! Making all the Jesse Tree ornaments can feel overwhelming, but once you make them they can be used year after year. Some groups get together and do Jesse Tree ornament swaps, where each family makes a whole slew of just one of the ornaments, and then everyone trades. Probably the easiest (and cheapest) way to accomplish this is to print a set online.

Plan it: Decide what kind of tree and ornaments you would like to make or buy. I would also strongly suggest obtaining a book or prayer companion of some kind. Add these things to your list, and add December 1st to your calendar as your starting day.



SOFT MANGER FOR BABY JESUS

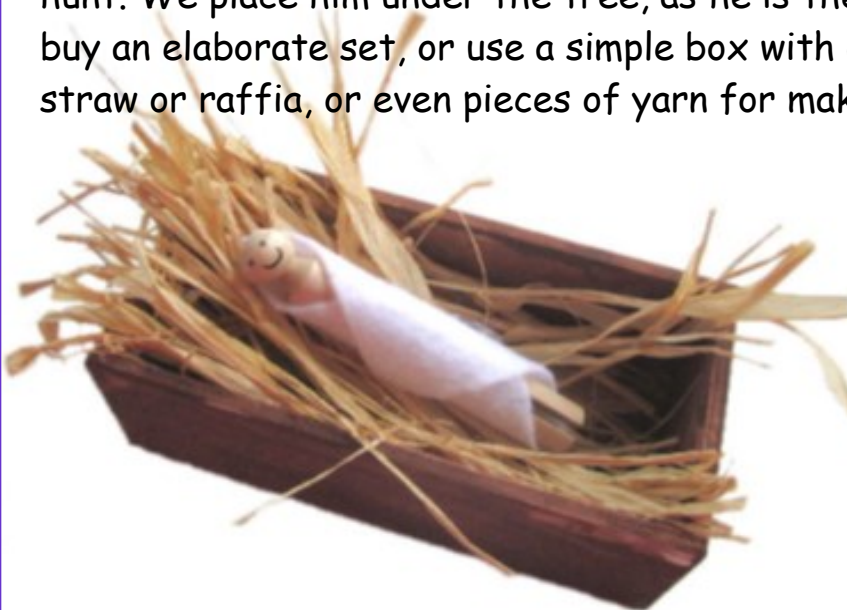


I love activities that get kids doing good deeds and making sacrifices, and what more precious way than to build a soft bed for Baby Jesus for Christmas morning?

The manger begins empty at the start of Advent. Each time someone in the family does a good deed or makes a sacrifice, he or she gets to place a piece of straw in the manger. You can either have a different manger for each child, or the family can all add their straw to the same manger. Explain that good deeds and sacrifices are the best present we can give to Jesus for his birthday! With each piece of straw added to the manger, Jesus has a softer place to lay for Christmas morning. On Christmas, you add Jesus to the manger while singing "Away in a Manger." This is a really fun and meaningful Christmas tradition!



I do also hide our large Jesus that goes in the manger for our Baby Jesus hunt. We place him under the tree, as he is the best present of all! You can buy an elaborate set, or use a simple box with a baby doll. Use straw or raffia, or even pieces of yarn for making the bed soft.



Plan it: Mark the first Sunday of Advent to begin this. Choose what kind of set you want for your family, and add the needed items to your shopping list.

INTERACTIVE NATIVITY



The point of the interactive nativity is that the pieces of the nativity are moved or added at different times to make the Christmas story a little more "real" for little kids, and to make the nativity more than just a decoration. It helps bring the story to life.

First of all, choose a prominent place to set up your nativity. It should be as central as possible. Lots of families have different traditions when it comes to setting out the nativity. Here is one example:

- 1st Sunday of Advent—stable
- 2nd Sunday of Advent—animals
- 3rd Sunday of Advent—shepherds
- 4th Sunday of Advent—Mary and Joseph



Before we leave for Christmas Mass, I hide the Jesus statues from each of our nativity sets. When we return home, we have a Baby Jesus hunt to find them all. We then sing "Away in a Manger" while we process through the house placing Baby Jesus in each scene. This is one of my favorite traditions!



The kings can be placed across the room (or even across the house) and moved a little closer each day from Christmas until they arrive on the Epiphany. Or they can just be placed in the scene on the Epiphany.



Plan It: Add the dates you want to move or place the characters in your nativity scene to your calendar. Locate your nativity set before the first date.

MORE NATIVITY ACTIVITIES

I have a [printable nativity set available online for free](#) that is tons of fun for kids to make! Just print the pieces on card stock, then color, cut, and staple them in a circle.



We have several different nativity sets for kids, and sometimes I set them up as a sensory bin for the little ones. I color some rice green, and put it in a large plastic tub with lots of nativity pieces for the kids to play with. You can see the details of my [sensory nativity bin here](#).

Also, look up a blessing of the nativity crèche and do it! It's a very cute tradition. A child's nativity set can be a great St. Nicholas day present if

you don't already have one. [Here are my favorites](#).



Plan it: If you want to craft a nativity set, schedule it on the calendar and add the needed supplies to your list. If you want to buy a nativity, add it to your list. Print a blessing of the crèche, and put it in your binder.



CHECKLIST: FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Now that we've talked about different activities and traditions that can begin on the first Sunday of Advent, here's a checklist of things to look over that day, just to make sure something you wanted to do doesn't slip between the cracks: ;-)

- Put out empty manger and hay for good deeds.
- Bless the Crèche and place the first nativity piece.
- Set up the Advent wreath.
- Bless the Advent wreath and light the first candle at dinner, saying a special prayer and blessing of the Advent wreath.
- Set out your Advent/Christmas children's books, possibly in a basket in the living room, so they can be enjoyed (and not forgotten) this time of year. If you don't have any, visit the library and bring some home.
- When you go to Mass today, point out to your child that the "Gloria" is missing from the beginning of Mass, and we won't sing it again until Christmas Mass (except for on the feasts of the Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of Guadalupe).
- Assign Advent Angels.
- Schedule on the calendar a time for your family to attend Confession this Advent.

Advent Fun and Feasts



Rieser 1869

ADVENT SAINTS AND FEASTS

Here's a quick overview of some of the fun saint days and feasts during Advent. These are all days you celebrate so that the Christmas stuff can actually wait until Christmas.

- Nov 30—St. Andrew
- Dec 4—St. Barbara
- Dec 6—St. Nicholas Day
- Dec 7—St. Ambrose *He is the patron of candle makers, so this can be a great day to decorate your Christ Candle, which will later go into the middle of your Advent wreath during the Christmas season.*
- Dec 8—Immaculate Conception
- Dec 9—San Juan Diego
- Dec 10—Our Lady of Loreto
- Dec 11—Our Lady, Queen of Angels *You can make angel food cake, or look up a Christmas angel craft for this day.*
- Dec 12—Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Dec 13—St. Lucia (aka St. Lucy)
- Dec 14—St. John of the Cross
- Dec 16—9 days before Christmas: many different Christmas Novenas begin
- Dec 17—Begin O Antiphons or "Golden Nights"
- Dec 21—St. Thomas *Traditional to bless your house with holy water to drive away demons and prepare for Christmas.*





ST. ANDREW'S CHRISTMAS NOVENA



This is a very traditional novena that is said during Advent. There are many novenas that can be said this time of year, and it's a great idea to add extra prayer to our daily lives during this season of preparation for Our Lord's coming!

St. Andrew Christmas Novena—Begins Nov 30. *This prayer is traditionally said 15 times each day until Christmas.*

St. Andrew Christmas Novena

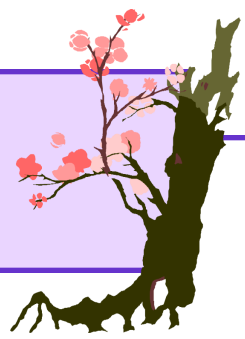
Hail and blessed be the hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in piercing cold. In that hour, vouchsafe, O my God! to hear my prayer and grant my desires, through the merits of Our Savior Jesus Christ, and of His Blessed Mother. Amen.

There are also many different novenas to the Christ Child (or the Infant of Prague) that can start on Dec 16.



ST. BARBARA'S DAY

DECEMBER 4



Legend has it that St. Barbara was held captive in a tower, and in the winter she was able to break a branch from a nearby cherry tree. She kept it in the tower with her, and watered it with some of her drinking water. The branch bloomed a few days before she was martyred for her faith, and she was consoled by its beauty.

Because of this, it is now a tradition to cut branches on her feast day, December 4th. If you do so, the forced blooms will bloom right around Christmas time, and you can use the blooms as table decorations on Christmas.

Although cherry trees are traditional, any branch that blooms early in Spring is a good choice. Find a branch with lots of buds. Cut the branch on a diagonal, and crush the end a bit with a hammer. (This helps the branch absorb water.) Place the branch in a bucket or pitcher, and start with warm water. Mist the branch frequently, and change the water every few days. It takes several weeks to force the blooms, depending on the type of branch. Branches that are thinner can be forced faster than thick branches.



Plan it: Write December 4th on your calendar as St. Barbara's feast day. Do a little research about forcing the kinds of branches you have available to you.

ST. NICHOLAS DAY — DECEMBER 6



Many Catholic children around the world celebrate St. Nicholas day. It is said that there were three poor girls who could not get married because they had no dowry, and St. Nicholas came and secretly left three purses of gold for them at night. So the tradition of leaving out shoes to be filled with gifts was born of a generous stranger leaving presents for those in need.

So, what do you put in the shoes? Here are some ideas:

- Chocolate gold coins to symbolize the gold left in the girls' shoes
- Candy canes to symbolize the crozier that a bishop carries
- An orange or tangerine
- Nuts
- Cookies or candies
- Packs of hot chocolate mix
- Small toys
- A new penny
- Child's nativity set
- Christmas ornaments
- Religious Christmas toys, books, movies, etc.
- Books or movies about St. Nicholas
- Supplies to make a St. Nicholas craft
- Chocolate Santa Claus turned St. Nick (see next page)



You can have each child [write a letter to the Christ Child](#) to leave in their shoes when you set them out. Write what sacrifices and good deeds you are going to do during Advent to prepare for His coming, and how much you are anticipating His arrival! Leave the letter (called a "Christkindl Brief") in your shoe, along with a carrot for St. Nicholas' horse. In the morning, the letter and carrot are gone, and treats are in their place! ;-)

Convert Santa Claus Into St. Nicholas



There are many, many, *many* things that are found in the shape of "Santa Claus" this time of year. Some things (like a chocolate Santa for instance) can be easily transformed into St. Nicholas. Just make a simple bishop's hat from paper, and a crozier from a pipe cleaner. Attach with tape or glue. We always find a chocolate St. Nick in our shoe!

Another Tradition for St. Nicholas Day

It's our tradition to decorate our Christmas tree on St. Nicholas Day. We put our shoes out on the porch before we start, and by the time we're finished St. Nicholas has mysteriously filled our shoes with candy! He also always brings a Christmas ornament for the tree that is some kind of reminder about the past year (for example, if we went to the beach on vacation as a family that year we might all get sand castle ornaments). We write the year on our ornament and put it on the tree. By the time I moved out of my parents' house I was ready to decorate a small Christmas tree of my own! Each of my ornaments holds a beautiful memory. I have continued this tradition with my children, and I like to make the ornaments myself when I have the time.

It is also traditional to hang your stockings on St. Nicholas day.



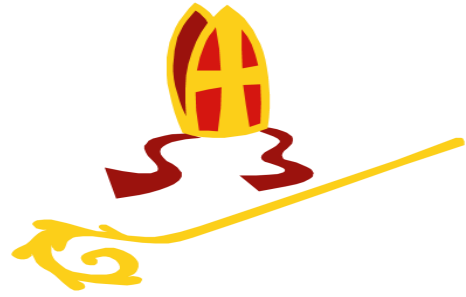
Plan it: Make a [shoe shopping list](#). Keep it to refer to each year. If you need any craft or food supplies for additional activities, add them to your list as well. Put two dates on your calendar—St. Nicholas day is December 6th, but be sure to pencil in leaving your shoes out on Dec 5th. Also, write your letters to the Christ Child on Dec 5th. Add carrots to your grocery list for St. Nick's horse!



Dear Christ Child,



ST. NICHOLAS DAY SHOPPING LIST



Shoe Stuffers

[illegible]

Other Supplies/Ingredients

[illegible]

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION — DECEMBER 8



First, be sure to plan for Mass because this is a Holy Day of Obligation! Second, this day can be a little confusing for kids (and even adults!). It's



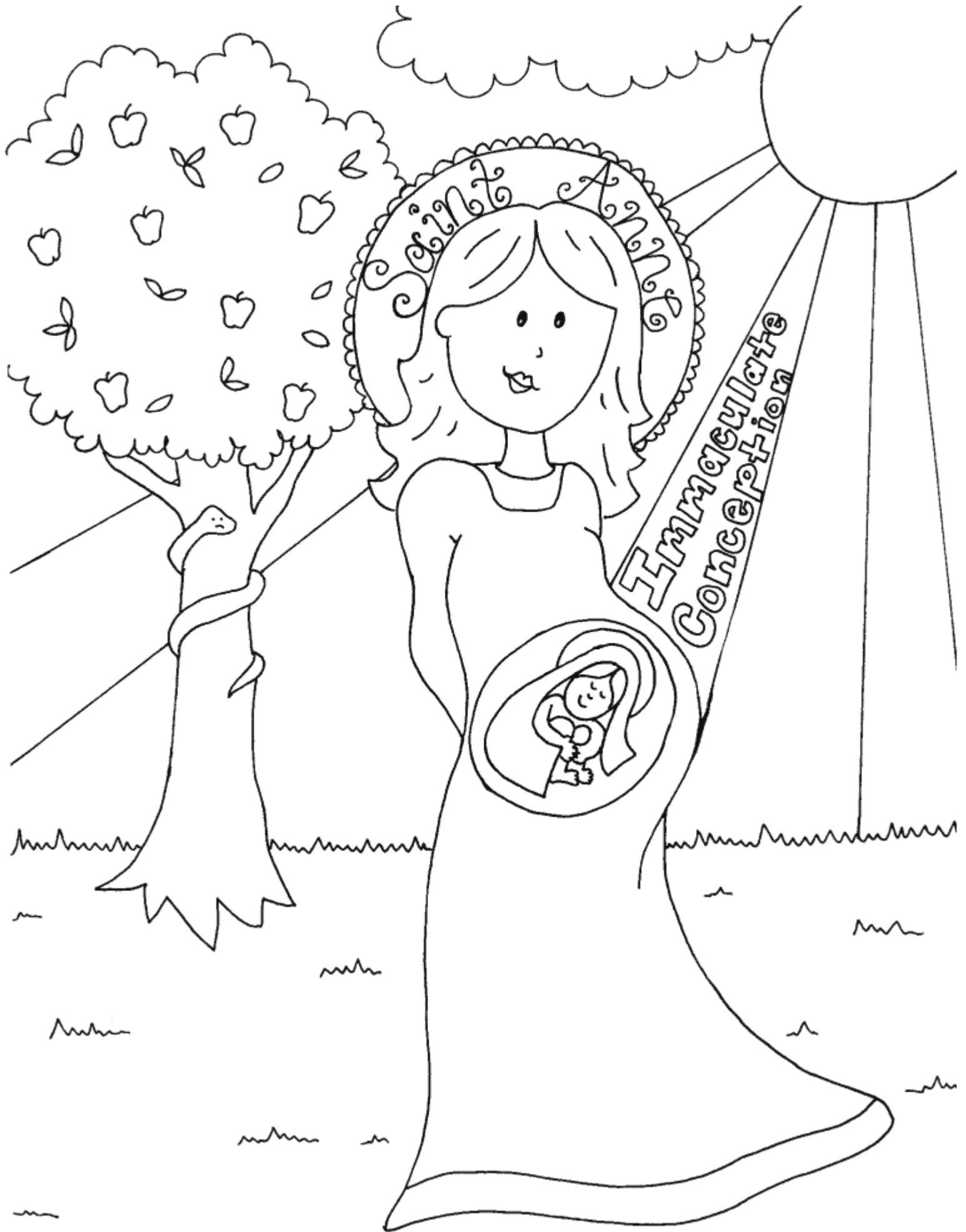
almost Christmas time, so we all have Baby Jesus on the mind. However, the Immaculate Conception is *not* talking about the conception of Baby Jesus, it's talking about the conception of Mary inside of St. Anne's womb. To get this point across to them in a way they can understand, have them color my [Immaculate Conception Coloring Page](#).

There is much symbolism for children in this coloring page. Saint Anne's name is clearly written in her halo so there can be no confusion. Mary is in the womb of St. Anne (wearing her signature veil). St. Anne and Mary both have their backs turned towards the apple tree to visually state that Mary was conceived without the original sin of Eve eating from the tree of knowledge. The three beams of light coming down from the sun stand for the Trinity. Also, the snake (Satan) is clearly unhappy about what has happened here.

This is one of those feast days that you can consider adding a fun family tradition to. Also, bring a small bottle to Mass with you, and fill it with holy water. You can bless yourself with holy water as a reminder of your own Baptism, when original sin was washed away from your soul. When you get home, bless your house as well.

Plan it: Find a Mass time for this day and write it in on your calendar. If you're doing any crafts/activities, add the supplies to your shopping list, including a small bottle for holy water. Print the Immaculate Conception coloring page and place it in the pocket of your planning binder.







FEAST OF ST. JUAN DIEGO — DEC 9 OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE — DEC 12



These two feast days are so closely related, and so close to each other on the calendar, that I generally combine them. Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to San Juan Diego many times. She wanted him to tell Bishop Zumarraga to build a church, but the bishop wanted a sign. Our Lady of Guadalupe made roses grow in the middle of Winter, and Juan Diego wrapped them in his tilma to take to the Bishop. When he released them from his tilma, a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe was on his tilma. It was a miracle!

It can be really fun on the feast of either St. Juan Diego or Our Lady of Guadalupe (or in-between) to prepare a Mexican themed dinner! You can make tacos, nachos, enchiladas—whatever your family loves and you have a good recipe for. It doesn't have to be complicated. You can also make Mexican hot chocolate!

Try dressing up as Juan Diego by making a simple tilma from a paper bag. Just cut the sides off, cut a head hole in the top, and glue on a coloring page of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We have a tilma I made for All Saints' Day that we like to bring out on this day!



Plan it: Add the ingredients you need for your Mexican meal to your shopping list. If you're making any other crafts, etc, add the supplies to your list as well. Schedule on your calendar what day you are celebrating.

ST. LUCIA DAY — DECEMBER 13



On St. Lucia's feast day in Sweden, the girls wear white dresses with red sashes, and wreaths with candles atop their heads. The white and red symbolize the martyrdom of St. Lucy. It is said that when bringing supplies to the Christians hiding in the catacombs, she put a wreath of candles on her head so she could carry more supplies rather than carrying a candle. Boys can wear "star hats" (a cone shaped hat with a star on the top).

You can craft a simple head wreath with paper, tape, and faux leaves. Girls also traditionally wear white dresses with red sashes or ribbons to symbolize St. Lucy's martyrdom.

Saffron buns, also known as "Lussekatte," are Swedish yeast buns that are traditionally made and eaten on St. Lucia's feast day.



If you're looking for something simple, you can use canned cinnamon rolls. Shape each one into a backwards "S" shape, or braid them together into a wreath like the picture below. Share these with your friends, or even hold a cookie exchange on this day, and trade them!



Lucy's name means "light," so you can make it a tradition to drive around and look at Christmas light displays on December 13, or this can be the day to put your Christmas lights or candles around your own house!



Plan it: Add the ingredients and craft supplies you will need to your shopping list, including candles. Write St. Lucy's feast day into your calendar on Dec 13.

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

DECEMBER 14

Advent Poem

By St. John of the Cross



Jan Matsys

*If you want, the Virgin will come walking
down the road
Pregnant with the holy, and say,
“I need shelter for the night,
Please take me inside your heart, my time is
so close.”*

*Then, under the roof of your soul,
You will witness the sublime intimacy,
The divine, the Christ, taking birth forever,
As she grasps your hand for help,
For each of us is the midwife of God, each of
us.*

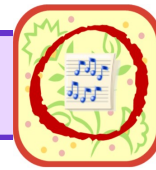
*Yes there, under the dome of your being
Does creation come into existence eternally,
Through your womb, dear pilgrim— the sacred
womb of your soul,*

*As God grasps our arms for help:
For each of us is his beloved servant, never
far.*

*If you want, the Virgin will come walking
down the street
Pregnant with light and sing...*

Plan it: Write Dec 14 on your calendar as a day to read this Advent poem.

© ANTIPHONS



(O come, O come, Emmanuel...)

The O Antiphons are rich with meaning and make a truly wonderful Catholic tradition! Each night for the octave (8 days) before Christmas, we ask Christ to come, and call him by a different name. Each of these names starts with "O," and an antiphon is a liturgical composition, so that's why they're called the "O Antiphons." The O Antiphons start on Dec 17.

The O Antiphons are taken from the Liturgy of the Hours, and their meaning is twofold: each one highlights a different title for the Messiah (listed below), and each one refers to the prophecy of the Messiah from Isaiah.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Dec 17: O Sapientia (Wisdom) | Dec 21: O Oriens (Dawn of the East) |
| Dec 18: O Adonai (Lord and Ruler) | Dec 22: O Rex Gentium (King of the Gentiles) |
| Dec 19: O Radix Jesse (Root of Jesse) | |
| Dec 20: O Clavis David (Key of David) | Dec 23: O Emmanuel (God With Us) |

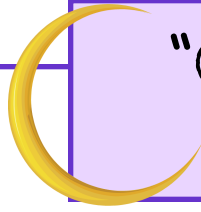
The song "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" is based on the O Antiphons, and has a verse for each day. Also, the O Antiphons *can* line up with the last seven Jesse Tree ornaments (although they don't in all versions).

There are a lot of ways to incorporate the O Antiphons into your Advent: you could make ornaments for each one to add to your tree each day, use them as special prayers at dinnertime, or sing the corresponding verse of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"—the possibilities are endless.

On the next few pages, you will find a novena to pray during the days of the O Antiphons, along with the lyrics to "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

Plan it: Decide how you will incorporate these into your Advent. If you're making or buying something, add the necessary supplies to your shopping list. Mark December 17th on your calendar as the day to begin.





"GOLDEN NIGHTS" NOVENA

This Novena begins on Dec 16 and ends on Dec 24. It does start one day before the O Antiphons, but it goes with them. I mixed it with the lyrics for "O Come O Come Emmanuel" so that you can say the novena, and then sing the correlating verse of the song.

16 December:

O Shepherd that rulest Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a sheep, come to guide and comfort us.

Pray one Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Then sing...

"Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel."

17 December:

O Wisdom that comest out of the mouth of the Most High, that reachest from one end to another, and orderest all things mightily and sweetly, come to teach us the way of prudence!

Pray one Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Then sing...

"O come, Thou Wisdom, from on high, and order all things far and nigh; to us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel."

18 December:

O Adonai, and Ruler of the house of Israel, Who didst appear unto Moses in the burning bush, and gavest him the law in Sinai, come to redeem us with an outstretched arm!

Pray one Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Then sing...

"O come, O come, Thou Lord of might, Who to thy tribes on Sinai's height,
in ancient times didst give the law, in cloud, and majesty, and awe. Rejoice!
Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel."

19 December:

*O Root of Jesse, which standest for an ensign of the people, at Whom the
kings shall shut their mouths, Whom the Gentiles shall seek, come to deliver
us, do not tarry.*

Pray one Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Then sing...

"O come, Thou Rod of Jesse's stem, from ev'ry foe deliver them, that trust
thy mighty power to save, and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. Rejoice! Re-
joice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel."

20 December:

*O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel, that openeth and no
man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, come to liberate the pris-
oner from the prison, and them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of
death.*

Pray one Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Then sing...

"O come, thou Key of David, come, and open wide our heav'nly home, make
safe the way that leads on high, that we no more have cause to sigh. Rejoice!
Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel."

21 December:

*O Dayspring, Brightness of the everlasting light, Son of justice, come to
give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death!*

Pray one Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Then sing...

"O come, Thou Dayspring from on high, and cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel."

22 December:

*O King of the Gentiles, yea, and desire thereof! O Corner-stone, that
makest of two one, come to save man, whom Thou hast made out of the dust
of the earth!*

Pray one Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Then sing...

"O come, Desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind; bid every
strife and quarrel cease and fill the world with heaven's peace. Rejoice! Re-
joice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel."

23 December:

*O Emmanuel, our King and our Law-giver, Longing of the Gentiles, yea, and
salvation thereof, come to save us, O Lord our God!*

Pray one Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Then sing...

"O Come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lone-
ly exile here, until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall
come to thee, O Israel."

24 December:

*O Thou that sittest upon the cherubim, God of hosts, come, show Thy face,
and we shall be saved.*

Pray one Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. Then sing...

"Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, shall come to thee, O Israel."

CHRISTMAS *TREE*-DITIONS



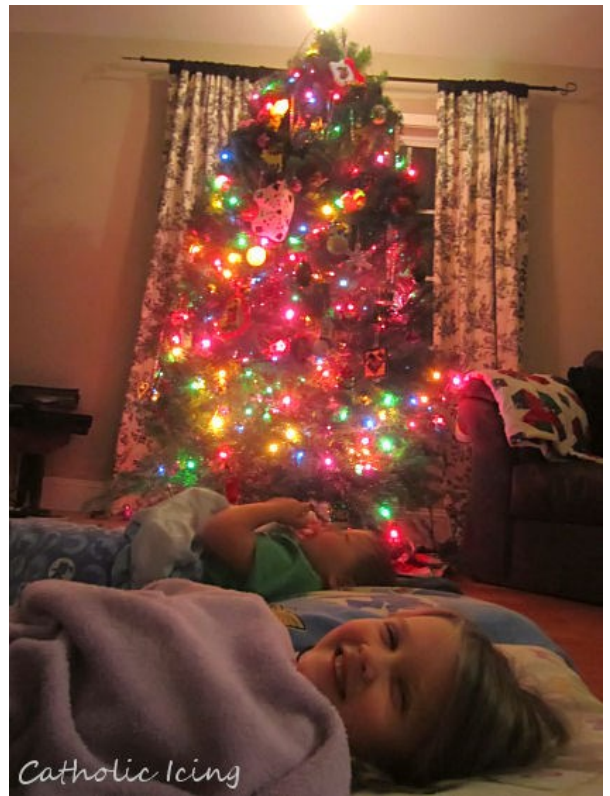
When should you put up the Christmas tree? This is a trickier question to answer than you might think, because tree traditions tend to vary so widely. There are some families who like to put their tree up the day after Thanksgiving, and other families who believe that Advent is a waiting period, so it shouldn't go up until Christmas Eve...and everywhere in between. So I'm going to share several possibilities of Catholic Christmas tree traditions with you—just chose what works for your family!

- Put up your tree during Advent, but don't decorate it. Put a big purple bow on top, and "decorate" with a few purple ribbons for Advent. Then decorate it for real on Christmas Eve.
- Put up your tree, but again, don't decorate it. Use it for hanging your Jesse Tree ornaments, O Antiphon ornaments, ornaments for different feast days, etc. Finish decorating on Christmas Eve.
- Put up your tree on St. Nicholas day. Put your shoes out when you begin, and by the time you're finished, he has filled them with goodies! Everyone gets an ornament in their shoe from St. Nick that is special to this year.
- Choose a different saint's feast day as a "traditional" day to put up your tree, or choose a date of special significance to your family.
- Put up and decorate your tree on Gaudete Sunday (or what's known in our home as "pink candle" Sunday). ;-)
- Don't even buy a tree until Christmas Eve—it will certainly be on sale! Bring it home and decorate it for a very special Christmas morning.
- Cut your own tree at a tree farm (or even from the woods) for special memories. Be sure to cut down the biggest one at the farm, even if there's no chance it will fit in your home. (Just kidding!)
- Over the years, collect or make religious themed ornaments. Each year,



decorating your tree becomes more and more religious focused. Once you have enough religious ornaments, start weeding out some of the others.

- Look up a "Blessing of the Christmas Tree" to pray when you put it up.
- Have a slumber party the night you decorate your tree and let all the kids sleep under the lights on the floor. If that sounds like too much to you, just sing "O Christmas Tree" and drink hot chocolate, or choose a Christmas movie and let everyone stay up late under the tree watching it.
- Put up the tree, string the lights, and decorate it, but don't light it during Advent. On Christmas morning, light the tree and sing "Joy to the World!"



When you should take the tree down? [Read this page](#) before deciding.

Christmas Tree Tips for Homes with Kids

- Get a five foot tree and put it on an end table. This way it can still reach the ceiling, but crawlers won't be able to put their little paws on it.
- Stop buying breakable ornaments, and retire the ones you already have.
- Bungee your Christmas tree to the wall in the back to prevent it from being tipped over, or if you have carpet, screw the tree stand directly into the floor. The screw holes disappear when you remove the screws later.
- Put only kid-safe ornaments at the bottom of the tree.
- Put a baby gate or small wall of some kind around the bottom of the tree.
- Let the kids decorate it, and *don't* rearrange everything when they go to bed. It's beautiful just the way it is (and besides, they *will* notice).

Plan it: Locate your tree stand, decorations, and tree skirt. Check your lights. Add anything you need to your shopping list. Schedule a day to cut and/or decorate your tree. Print a blessing of the tree, and put it in your binder.





CHRISTMAS COOKIES

(the case for slice and bake...)

Christmas cookies are another one of those things that can be a fun, warm holiday experience...or a big stressor to check off the to-do list. If you're starting to suffer from holiday burn-out, I'm going to suggest slice and bake cookies. *I just lost a bunch of you, didn't I?* Seriously! There are the years I can handle tons of home-made goodness, and the years that our cookies are sliced off of a tube.



Remember that your baking can continue into the 12 days of Christmas—it doesn't all have to be done right now. Some of it might have to be done before Christmas if you need the desserts, but if baking is for the "experience," then it really can be done after the big day.

If you get the kind without the picture down the middle of the tube, you can still roll them out and cut them with cookie cutters. (And that's really the best part, anyway, right?) Then, at least they will *look* homemade.

Kids love eating these just as much! Scout's honor!



Plan it: Add cookie ingredients to your shopping list, and schedule cookie making on the calendar.

SUGAR COOKIE DECORATING



Once you've either made or purchased your cookie dough (which can be our little secret—*no one needs to know*), you can roll them out and cut them with cookie cutters. Go ahead and invest in some [religious cookie cutter shapes](#) and ditch your snowmen and penguin cutters. You only have a limited amount of energy, and you're going to squeeze in the true meaning of Christmas everywhere you can. If you don't want to order them, you can probably find some religious shapes at a regular store—angel, star, candy cane, etc.

When I decorate sugar cookies with young kids, I generally skip the piped frosting because it's hard to use and very time consuming (not to mention messy). We've been using an icing recipe in my family since I was a little girl that paints right onto the cookies with a q-tip, dries shiny, and allows for stacking the cookies. It's also yummy. Here's the recipe:

Paintable Cookie Icing Recipe

- 1 cup of heavy whipping cream
- 1 Tbsp of powdered sugar
- Food coloring

That's it! Stir the whipping cream and powdered sugar together, then divide into small bowls or mini cupcake tins. Add food coloring to each one until it's the desired tone. Paint on with q-tips or small paint brushes, and allow to dry.



Plan it: Add cookie decorating ingredients to your shopping list. You already scheduled cookie making.

DECORATING WITH COLORED SUGAR

By far, the easiest way to decorate sugar cookies is with colored sugar. Besides, it's yummy and makes the cookies sparkle! You can easily make your own colored sugar. Just put white sugar in a Ziploc bag or Tupperware container, add a few drops of food color, and shake until it's mixed.

Here is an example of nativity-shaped cookies decorated only with sugar:



Just sprinkle the sugar on before baking the cookies. Even the smallest hands can do this successfully! (I put parchment paper or aluminum foil down first so the extra sugar doesn't get baked onto my cookie sheets.)

One year we took these to a cookie exchange and gave every family one full cookie nativity set. I laid each set out on a paper plate, and wrapped them up with plastic wrap. They were a huge hit, and they weren't any more work than making regular cookies.



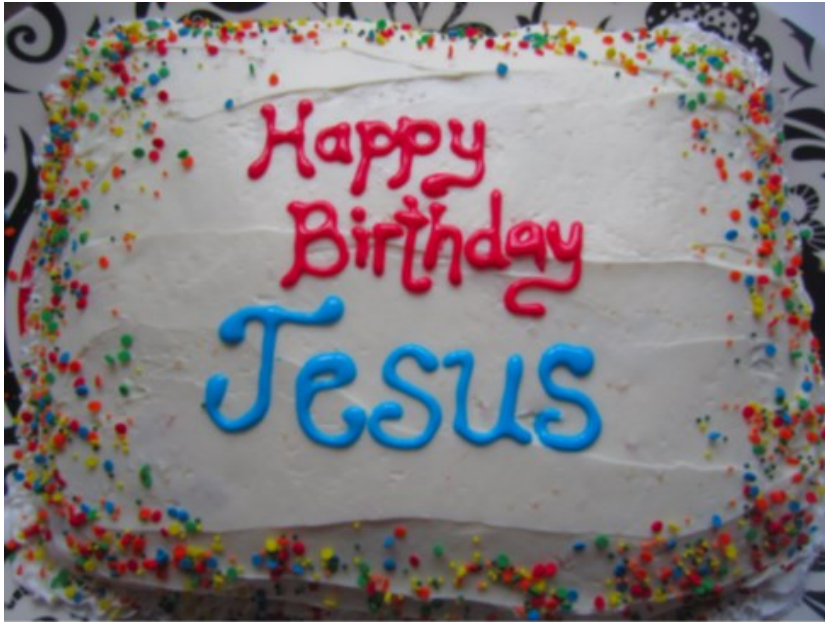
Christmas Fun and Feasts



Nicolas Poussin

BIRTHDAY CAKE FOR JESUS

Serving a Happy Birthday Jesus cake for dessert after Christmas dinner is a fun and easy tradition! If anything is going to get the point across to your kids that Christmas is Jesus' birthday, this is it. I decorate ours like a typical birthday cake at our house rather than with Christmas decorations. We put in some candles, sing Happy Birthday to Jesus, and let all the kids blow the candles out together.



We do bake this ourselves, but always from a boxed cake mix with icing from a can. I like to get the squeezable icing that's already in the tubes for writing on the cake, and put sprinkles around the edge. Trust me—you do *not* have to be a master cake decorator to pull this off!

If we are invited somewhere for Christmas dinner, I always offer to bring dessert and then show up with a Happy Birthday Jesus cake. It's one of my favorite traditions!



Plan It: Add the needed ingredients to your shopping list. Schedule when you will bake it. We bake ours on Christmas Eve.



PLANNING YOUR CHRISTMAS MEALS

[On this page](#), you'll find a simple planning sheet for Christmas dinner. You could use it to plan just about any meal, actually. I have one that I filled in with a sample menu, and one that is blank for you to fill in however you want.

Here's the reality about Christmas dinner at my house. I don't like to spend Christmas day alone in the kitchen, so unless we're going over to fam-



ily's house for dinner, we have our big dinner on Christmas Eve instead. On Christmas day, we have leftovers and/or I make a big tray of fancy meats, cheeses and crackers that people can snack on all day long.

For Christmas breakfast, I see a lot of monkey bread, french toast casserole, etc, etc. on Pin-

terest, but I'm really not a big fan. Mostly because it seems to me that people wake up, eat a bunch of candy, and need some protein. We usually stop somewhere in the midst of present opening, and cook a protein packed breakfast of sausage and eggs. It's a nice break, and it feels good to have real food in the tummy. Notice how I don't make everyone wait to open presents though—that would *not* go over well with kids.

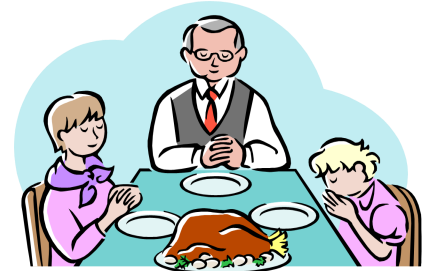
When you're planning your holiday dinner, think about things like: Do I have enough chairs? Can I make a kid's table? If we're traveling, what food can I bring with us to help out? Do I have enough dishes or should I get some disposable? Who is coming to dinner, and what is it that they traditionally eat?

LACY'S EASY HOLIDAY DINNER

Here's my confession. Sometimes when I'm particularly overwhelmed, I make a very, very simple holiday dinner. (I'm trying to help you guys out, so don't judge.)

Here's the menu for **Lacy's easy holiday dinner**:

- 1 Turkey
- Boxed stuffing
- Instant mashed potatoes
- Instant gravy
- Can of cranberry sauce
- Beverage of choice (our family drinks "holiday punch" with our fancy meals: this is 7 Up with a few maraschino cherries and some of that red syrup stuff poured in. It's a tradition!)
- Rolls from a can
- 1 "Happy Birthday Jesus" cake from boxed cake mix



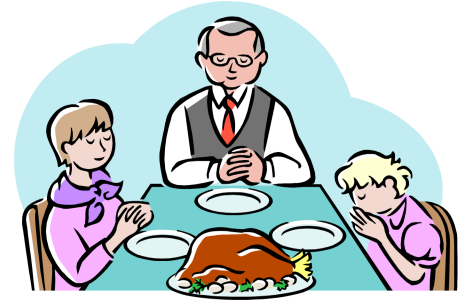
And yes, I have made almost this exact meal for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter in the past, usually around times of a new baby or moving. If I want to take it up a notch, I make the mashed potatoes from scratch and add a green bean casserole. If it's Thanksgiving dinner, change the Happy Birthday Jesus cake to a pumpkin pie. Be sure to buy your pumpkin in the form of a can. ;-)

Regardless of whether you're tempted by my super easy dinner, or intend to pull out all the stops this year, be sure to plan out your meal and make a shopping list well in advance! If you want to make Lacy's Easy Holiday Dinner, you'll find the [menu planned out here](#) and the [shopping list here](#).

Plan it: Plan your meal using the [menu pages](#), and make a [grocery list](#). If you're having something that needs to defrost for a long time (such as a ham or turkey), put a note on your calendar to remove it from the freezer a few days ahead. Schedule a time to shop before it gets too close to Christmas day because the stores will be crazy, and may have run out of key ingredients.



SPECIAL EVENT MEAL PLANNER



Meal Being Planned: Lacy's Easy Holiday Dinner

Number of People Attending:

Adults _____ Kids _____ Babies _____

Extra Seating? _____ Extra Dishes? _____ Guests With Dietary Concerns? _____

| Appetizers |
|---------------------|
| Cheese and Crackers |
| |

| Entrées |
|----------------|
| Turkey |
| |

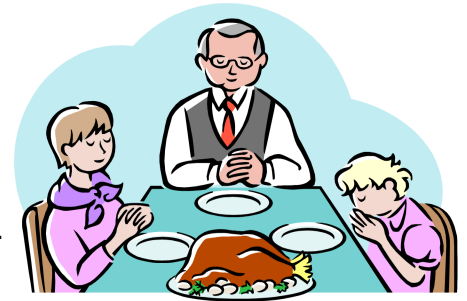
| Sides |
|----------------------|
| Stuffing |
| Mashed Potatoes |
| Gravy |
| Green Bean Casserole |
| Cranberry Sauce |
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |

| Bread |
|--------------|
| Rolls |

| Beverages |
|------------------|
| Holiday Punch |
| Milk |
| |

| Desserts |
|---------------------------|
| Happy Birthday Jesus Cake |
| |

SPECIAL EVENT MEAL PLANNER



Meal Being Planned: _____

Number of People Attending:

Adults _____ Kids _____ Babies _____

Extra Seating? _____ Extra Dishes? _____ Guests With Dietary Concerns? _____

Appetizers

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Entrées

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Sides

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Bread

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Beverages

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Desserts

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LACY'S EASY HOLIDAY DINNER SHOPPING LIST



Turkey

Boxed stuffing

Instant gravy mix

Instant mashed potatoes

Canned green beans

Cream of mushroom soup

French fried onions in a can

Canned cranberry sauce

Canned rolls

7 Up in a 2 liter

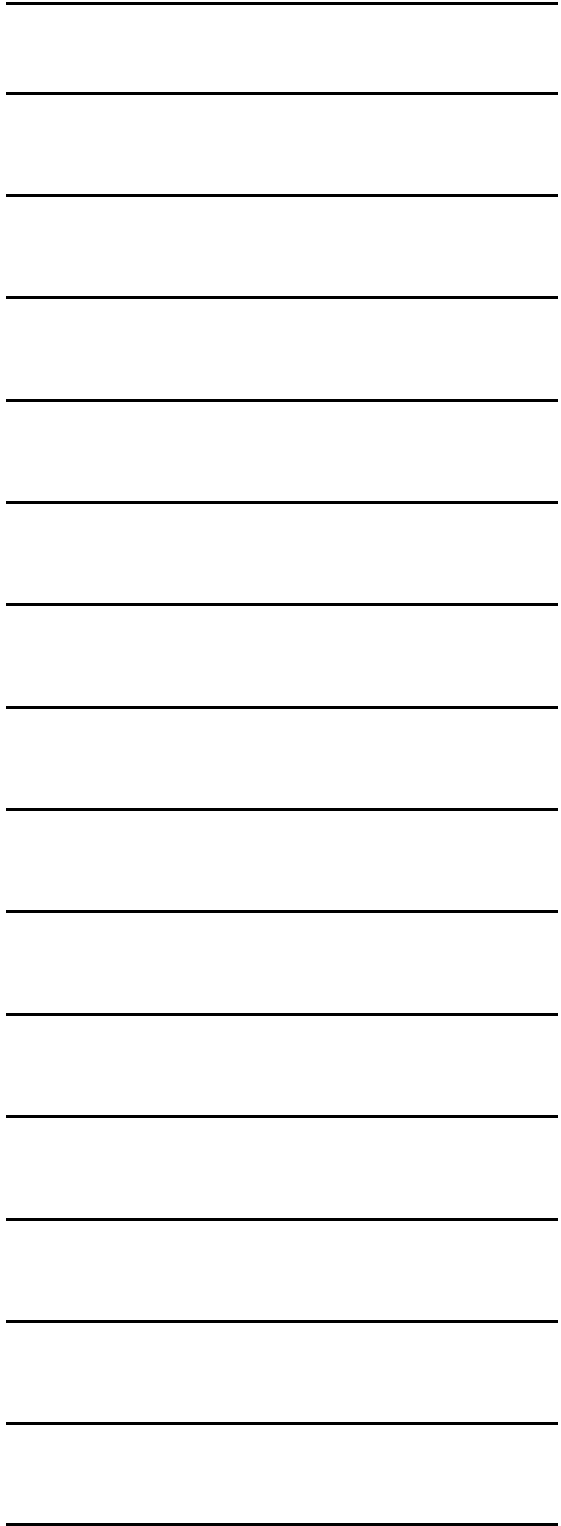
Jar of maraschino cherries

Milk

Box of white cake mix

Can of white icing

Tube of colored icing

[illegible]

PLANNING FOR CHRISTMAS MASS

Holy Day
Of
Obligation



Christmas Mass can be obnoxiously crowded, leaving nowhere to sit, and no air to breathe...but that's good! It means that people love Jesus and they haven't totally forgotten the true reason for Christmas after all!

Christmas Mass

- Point out to your kids that the "Gloria" (which was missing during Advent) is now being sung in Mass again! So joyous and beautiful!
- You can either go to a vigil Mass on Christmas Eve, go on Christmas day, or split the difference and go to midnight Mass. Choose a time, and let everyone know the plan. This includes visitors, family, etc. Invite people to come with you. You might be surprised who says yes!
- If you have visitors coming that aren't used to Mass, get some [Mass missals](#) ahead of time so they can follow along without feeling lost. Even if you have some relatives coming that *used* to be Catholic, these can be handy since the Mass responses have changed.
- [Hide Baby Jesus](#) before you leave.
- Show up early unless you want to stand (clearly not a great idea with children). This probably goes without saying. :-)

Now I know what you're thinking — "What about the clothes! She forgot!" No, I most certainly didn't. There's just way too much to say to fit it in a bullet point. Instead, I made you a [spreadsheet](#) to plan your family's clothes for Christmas Mass. WEEKS before Christmas Mass, raid your children's closets with this spreadsheet, and check off each article of clothing that you can actually put your hands on, currently fits, and matches. This is going to save you some headaches! You are welcome. :-)

Plan it: Fill out your wardrobe sheet, checking for each piece of clothing for each person. Add anything that's missing to your shopping list. Write your Mass time in on your calendar. Order Mass missals for visitors in enough time to allow for shipping.



SPECIAL OCCASION WARDROBE PLANNER FOR FAMILIES



| Name | Shirt/ Dress | Pants | Socks/ Tights | Jacket/ Coat | Shoes | Accessories* |
|------|-----------------|-------|------------------|-----------------|-------|--------------|
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Make sure all items *currently fit* each family member, are grouped together, and are ironed ahead of time. Put a check in each box where an appropriate item was found, and an "x" in each box that doesn't apply to that person. You'll quickly see where your gaps are.

***For accessories**, think hair accessories, tie, belt, purse, jewelry



CHECKLIST FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

- Have stocking stuffers
- Gifts are wrapped
- Kids have decent enough pajamas for pictures
- Camera battery is charged, memory card has space
- Have batteries for toys that need batteries
- Time to assemble any large presents
- Have phone numbers for people to call on Christmas day
- Plans for Christmas breakfast
- Plans for Christmas lunch
- Plans for Christmas dinner
- Chose a Mass time
- Checked for everyone's Mass clothes
- Gathered and ironed Mass clothes
- Scan list of traditions for Christmas day
- Prepared myself with prayer for dealing with my in-laws (Kidding!)
- But seriously, do say a prayer :-)

TRADITIONS FOR CHRISTMAS DAY



Every family has their own traditions for Christmas day, but here are some more you might want to consider:

- Before going to bed, have the father of the house walk down the hallway, knocking on everyone's bedroom door, one room at a time. He asks to stay, and is told "no" by everyone, just as Mary and Joseph were refused a room at the inn. When he gets to the last bedroom door (the master bedroom with mom), he is welcomed in.
- Tie a ribbon at the top of your stairs (or end of the hallway) that the kids may not cross until everyone is awake. You cut the ribbon, and sing "Joy to the World" as everyone heads to the living room together!
- Put up extra Christmas decorations while your kids are asleep. It will really feel like Christmas when they wake up, and will reinforce the idea that we were truly "waiting" during the Advent season!
- Hang a stocking for Jesus. Fill it with things for the needy, as well as the scripture passage Matthew 25:40 "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of my brethren, you did for me."
- Take the time to read the actual Christmas story to your children from the Bible. You can provide props for dressing up as the characters!
- Hang real candy canes or cookies on the tree while the kids are asleep.
- Leave one present for each child unwrapped under the tree—something fun that they can play with immediately. That way, you get to sleep a little longer than you might have otherwise. ;-)
- Let the stockings hang all day and don't open them until after dinner. This makes the fun last all day long!
- Sing Christmas carols together! [Use your list](#) as a guide.
- Reveal who your [Advent Angel](#) was.
- Light your Christ Candle in the middle of your Advent wreath, and/or replace your pink and purple candles with red ones.
- Place Baby Jesus in the manger of your nativity set.
- Start the wise men on their journey to your stable scene.
- Feast, because your time of waiting is over!

Plan it: Whatever sounds interesting to you, add the needed supplies to your shopping list.

Budgeting and Gift Giving



The Magi

BUDGETING



Yuck. Budgeting. A sad reality of this time of year. This is so not what I want to talk about in this book, but I thought I would at least offer you a spread sheet to generally map out your holiday expenses. I have one blank page where you can fill in your own areas of spending, and one that I filled in with different holiday categories that might cost some money this year.

Remember that presents and money are not what this season is about, and that Baby Jesus didn't have a bed to sleep on, an inn to stay in, or even any real clothes. (I'll just go ahead and assume that everyone who purchased this ebook has a heated home, clothes, food, and even a computer with internet access, so it can't be that bad, right?)

If you do find yourself stretching this year, here are some things that have worked well for me in our very frugal past:

- Homemade gifts for family (usually ornaments)
- Used gifts for my children (from thrift stores or yard sales)
- Homemade treats (such as cookies—way cheaper to make them yourself)
- Buy your tree very close to Christmas when they are significantly discounted. Decorate it with Mardi Gras beads and make a star out of foil. (Ok, you don't *really* have to decorate it like that, just reminiscing.) :-)
- Pick up some simple decorations at the Dollar Tree
- Hang actual socks as stockings (free to use and a lot smaller to stuff)
- Stuff St. Nicholas shoes and stockings with homemade goodies
- Buy small presents that require less wrapping paper and keep shipping costs down
- Skip the Christmas cards
- Agree not to exchange gifts with your spouse
- Hey, the last time I checked, Mass and Confession were still free. Score!

In other words, be creative, have fun with it, and don't let life get you down. :-) Use the next few pages to make budget plans for the season.



BUDGET BRAINSTORM

| Money Needed For... | Estimated Cost: |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Gifts for Immediate Family | |
| Gifts for Others | |
| Extra Christmas Groceries | |
| Stocking Stuffers | |
| St. Nicholas Day Stuffers | |
| Charitable Donations | |
| Travel Expenses | |
| Postage/Christmas Cards | |
| Christmas Clothes | |
| Portraits | |
| Christmas Tree | |
| Craft Supplies | |
| Entertainment | |
| Decorations | |
| Tips | |

[illegible]

GIFT AND CARD BRAINSTORM



There is no denying that gift giving is a part of the season.

St. Nicholas is certainly known for his anonymous generosity, and the Wise Men brought gifts to Baby Jesus. In some families, the children get three presents each to reflect the gifts of the Magi. Here is a list to help you brainstorm what people (or groups of people) you might want to send cards to or get gifts for.


I am in no way advocating buying presents or mailing cards to this many people, I am just trying to help you brainstorm so you don't miss someone important to you.

- Spouse
- Your Children
- Your Godchildren
- Siblings
- Nieces/Nephews
- Parents
- Grandparents
- Church Friends
- Your Priest
- Work Friends
- Old Friends
- Neighbors
- Co-op Friends
- School Friends
- Friends from Extra Curricular Activities
- Teachers
- Other Family
- Anyone you think will give you a present (Kidding!...Kinda.)
- Charitable Donations for the Needy

If you are sending Christmas cards, put something together on the computer that you can print a stack of rather than writing them all out. Include some family pictures right in the letter. Consider skipping Christmas cards altogether if you're worn thin this time of year, or even consider sending out Valentine cards with a family update in February instead.

PEOPLE TO SEND CARDS TO



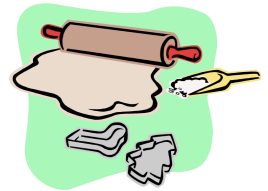
|  | Person | Address | Moved Y/N | Mail or Hand Deliver? |
|---|--------|---------|--------------|-----------------------------|
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PEOPLE TO GET GIFTS FOR

[illegible]



HOMEMADE GIFT PLANNER



| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| For What Person/ Group of People: | |
| What I'm Making: | |
| Number Needed: | |
| Time Needed: | |
| Date for Completion: | |

Supplies / Ingredients
Needed:

Notes:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| For What Person/ Group of People: | |
| What I'm Making: | |
| Number Needed: | |
| Time Needed: | |
| Date for Completion: | |

Supplies / Ingredients
Needed:

Notes:



Budget _____

[illegible]

Budget _____

[illegible]

STOCKING STUFFERS SHOPPING LIST



More Fun for the Christmas Season



Abraham Bloemaert

KEEPING IT GOING AFTER CHRISTMAS

(Just exactly how long is Christmas, anyway?!)

There is a lot of confusion about the Liturgical Christmas Season for Catholics. Does Christmas last 1 day? 8 days? 12 days? 40 days? What's the deal?!



It's a little complicated, but here we go: The Christmas Season begins on the first Christmas Vigil Mass, usually the evening of Christmas Eve. The Roman Catholic Church returns to green vestments (Ordinary time) the day after the feast of the Baptism of

the Lord. This feast day moves, but it's never before the Epiphany. However, many churches and families celebrate until the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Feb 2. The Vatican leaves up their tree and nativity until then. From December 25 - February 2 is 40 days.

Liturgically, we celebrate the octave of Christmas, which is 8 days. (Just FYI—we *also* celebrate an octave of Easter starting on Easter Sunday.) The octave of Christmas ends on January 1, which is a Holy Day of Obligation (the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God).

The Epiphany (when the kings show up to see Baby Jesus) is traditionally celebrated on January 6, but it gets moved to the closest Sunday in the United States. There are 12 days from December 25 - January 5 that lead up to the traditional Epiphany. These days are referred to as the "12 days of Christmas," but because the Epiphany moves around, there are rarely exactly 12 days.

In conclusion... *man, it is no wonder that people are confused!*

LITURGICAL CHRISTMAS CHEAT SHEET

- Dec 24—Christmastide or Christmas Season begins at the first Christmas Vigil Mass.
- Dec 25—Birth of Jesus
- Dec 25 to Jan 1—Octave of Christmas. The 8 days of Christmas that we feast and celebrate.
- Jan 1—Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God (holy day of obligation). Also the Feast of the Circumcision (Jesus' circumcision and naming eight days after His birth—Genesis 17:10-12).
- Dec 25 to Jan 5—"Twelve Days of Christmas" that lead up to the Epiphany, but because the Epiphany moves from year to year, there are not always exactly 12 days.
- Twelfth Night—the night before the Epiphany.
- Jan 6 (or closest Sunday)—Epiphany. The three kings arrive to see Baby Jesus.
- Feast of the Baptism of the Lord—this date changes, but is never before the feast of the Epiphany.
- The day after the Baptism of the Lord—we return to green, or ordinary time.
- Feb 2—Presentation of the Lord, also referred to as Candlemas. This feast commemorates Mary's presentation in the temple for ritual purification after childbirth, and also the presentation of Jesus along with a sacrificial offering. At the temple they encountered Simeon, who recognized Jesus as the Messiah and prophesied that a sword would pierce Mary's heart. (The Vatican leaves their tree and nativity up until this day.) Note that Dec 25 to Feb 2 is 40 days.

So, the big question—when should you take down your tree? I hear of a lot of Catholic families that leave up their Christmas tree until the Epiphany, but leave out their nativity sets through the Presentation. Of course, every family needs to find what works for them...especially if your tree has become a fire-hazard. ;-)



12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

DEC 25 - JAN 5

The 12 days of Christmas are also referred to as the "12 Days of Light." Some families light a new candle each night, until they have 12 on the final day. Did you know the song "The 12 days of Christmas" is full of secret religious symbolism? Here's what the numbers *really* stand for:

- 1 Partridge in a Pear Tree** — Jesus on the Cross
- 2 Turtle Doves** — The Old and New Testaments
- 3 French Hens** — The Theological Virtues (Faith, Hope, and Charity)
- 4 Calling Birds** — The Four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)
- 5 Golden Rings** — The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy)
- 6 Geese a Laying** — The six days of creation (not including the day of rest)
- 7 Swans a Swimming** — The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord)
- 8 Maids a Milking** — The Eight Beatitudes
- 9 Ladies Dancing** — The nine fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23 (Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Self-control. *This does not include Generosity, Modesty, or Chastity.*)
- 10 Lords a Leaping** — The Ten Commandments
- 11 Pipers Piping** — The Eleven Faithful Apostles
- 12 Drummers Drumming** — The Twelve Points of Doctrine in the Apostle's Creed



FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS – DECEMBER 28

The feast of the Holy Innocents is the day that we remember all the babies from Bethlehem that were put to death by King Herod. This day is remembered on the fourth day of Christmas.

These little children were martyrs for Jesus, and died completely innocent. This was foreshadowed in the Old Testament when the babies in Egypt were slain by the Pharaoh, but Moses escaped. In the same way, the Holy Family escapes by fleeing to Egypt with Baby Jesus.



Today, you can read the story of baby Moses to your children from a children's Bible. You can also read them the story of the Flight to Egypt.

At dinner, place several small, white candles around your Christ Candle in the middle of your Advent wreath. You can use votives, tea lights, or even birthday candles. These extra candles symbolize the Holy Innocents, and the white stands for their purity.

You can eat a dessert with red sauce atop something white to symbolize the spilled blood of the Innocents. Some options would be raspberry, strawberry, or another red syrup or fruit atop white ice cream, pudding, or white cake.

Traditionally, the father of the home also blesses all the children.

Plan it: Add candles and/or dessert ingredients to your shopping list, and mark Dec 28 on your calendar. Find your children's Bible, and mark the pages.



MAGI NOVENA

BEGINNING DEC 28



This is a novena in anticipation of the Magi's arrival on the Epiphany. It begins on December 28, which is the feast of the Holy Innocents, and ends on January 5, which is the day before the traditional Epiphany date.

December 28—O holy Magi! You were living in continual expectation of the rising of the Star of Jacob, which would announce the birth of the true Son of justice; obtain for us an increase of faith and charity, and the grace to live in continual hope of beholding one day the light of heavenly glory and eternal joy. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

December 29—O holy Magi! who at the first appearance of the wondrous star left your native country to go and seek the newborn King of the Jews; obtain for us the grace of corresponding with alacrity to every divine inspiration. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

December 30—O holy Magi! who regarded neither the severity of the season, nor the inconveniences of the journey that you might find the newborn Messiah; obtain for us the grace not to allow ourselves to be discouraged by any of the difficulties which may meet us on the way of salvation. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

December 31—O holy Magi, who, when deserted by the star in the city of Jerusalem, sought humbly, and without human respect, from the rulers of the Church, the place where you might discover the object of your journey; obtain for us grace to have recourse, in faith and humility, in all our doubts and perplexities to the counsel of our superiors, who hold the place of God on earth. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

January 1—O holy Magi, who were gladdened by the reappearance of the star which led you to Bethlehem; obtain for us from God the grace, that, remaining always faithful to Him in afflictions, we may be consoled in time by His grace, and in eternity by His glory. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

January 2—O holy Magi, who, entering full of faith into the stable of Bethlehem, prostrated yourselves on the earth, to adore the newborn King of the Jews, though he was surrounded only by signs of poverty and weakness; obtain from the Lord for us a lively faith in the real presence of Jesus in the blessed Sacrament, the true spirit of poverty, and a Christ-like charity for the poor and suffering. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

January 3—O holy Magi, who offered to Jesus Christ gold, incense, and myrrh, thereby recognizing Him to be at once King, God, and Man; obtain from the Lord for us the grace never to present ourselves before Him with empty hands; but that we may continually offer to Him the gold of charity, the incense of prayer, and the myrrh of penance and mortification. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

January 4—O holy Magi, who, when warned by an angel not to return to Herod, traveled back to your country by another road; obtain for us from the Lord, the grace that, after having found Him in true repentance, we may avoid all danger of losing Him again. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

January 5—O holy Magi, who were first among the Gentiles called to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and who persevered in the faith till your deaths, obtain for us of the Lord the grace of living always in conformity to our baptismal vows, ever leading to a life of faith; that like you we may attain to the beatific vision of that God Who now is the object of our faith. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

DECEMBER 29



You remember how you tried and tried to hold the Christmas stuff back during Advent? You went to painstaking lengths to celebrate Advent feast days rather than succumbing to all of the Christmas stuff that ends up being celebrated during the wrong liturgical season? Well, now you can finally do some of it! There are so many adorable nativity crafts and such this time of year, and the feast of the Holy Family is absolutely the perfect day to look some up!

Also, you can do something special to spend time together with your own family on this day. Some of our favorite family activities are playing a board game, watching a movie as a family, or going on an outing together. This can also include praying a Rosary (the Joyful Mysteries) or at least the fifth decade when Jesus is found at the temple. Ask the kids—wouldn't it be so exciting to all be together again?

MARY MOTHER OF GOD — JAN 1



Just as with the feast of the Holy Family, this is the perfect time to work in Christmas crafts and activities that center around Mary with Baby Jesus! It is traditional to bake and eat Ladyfingers on this day because Our Lady's fingers held Baby Jesus. Be sure to go to Mass!



Plan it: Add these dates to your calendar, and put any needed craft supplies or ingredients on your shopping list.

CHOOSE PATRON SAINT FOR THE NEW YEAR

Each year, we choose a saint to be the patron of our family for that year. You can choose someone that has a special significance to your family for the new year. We chose St. Anthony one year I struggled with losing things, and St. Michael the year my husband became a police officer.

I like to put a statue or picture of our family's patron saint by the door in our home. Keeping the statue there reminds me daily of our patron saint of the year. This is a neat way to collect Catholic items slowly over the years.

Here are some ideas for celebrating the yearly patron saint of your family:

- Put a statue of that saint in your home.
- Give your children holy cards or inexpensive saint medals of the saint.
- Do research and learn about your saint over the year.
- Celebrate your saint's feast day.
- Make crafts and do activities with your children relating to your saint and his or her patronage.
- Do a quick internet search to see if your saint has a prayer you can say together on New Year's day, and then put it up somewhere in your home. Include this prayer in your bedtime prayer routine for the year.

Some of my favorite things about having a new patron saint of our family each year:

- We are exposed to more saints and learn about a new one each year.
- Rather than choosing a New Year's resolution, we can choose a saint with a positive aspect that we can work towards emulating for the year.
- We have more saints that we feel "close" to and are special to us. The number grows each year.
- It gives us a new angle to work on ourselves spiritually, taking our new patron saint on as a spiritual inspiration.
- It gives us a reason to celebrate a new saint feast day each year, and learn about the traditions that go along with that saint.

ST. BASIL'S NEW YEAR'S CAKE

St. Basil's feast day is on January 2, but it has become a Catholic tradition to make a "St. Basil's Cake" on New Year's to celebrate one of his miracles! St. Basil was a Bishop and a friend of the poor. He wanted to help the poor people pay their taxes, so he went around town collecting jewelry from each person. He took it all to the governor, but the governor took pity on the people and told them to keep their jewelry. There was just one problem—St. Basil didn't know which piece of jewelry belonged to whom! So he baked cakes with the jewels and gold inside, and distributed them to the people. That's when the miracle happened—each person got exactly the piece of jewelry back that they had given!

You can also make a cake with "jewels" inside! Here's your list of ingredients:

- 4 packages of Jell-O (3 oz each) in different colors
- 1 can of sweetened condensed milk
- 2 envelopes of unflavored (Knox) gelatin



Ingredients for whipped topping:

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon unflavored (Knox) gelatin
- 4 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla

With each package of Jell-O, mix with 1 cup of hot water, stir until it dissolves, and put it in the fridge. You'll need 4 separate containers for the 4 different colors. Let this chill until it turns to gelatin.

To make your white filling, add both of your Knox gelatin packets to two

cups of hot water and stir until it dissolves. Stir in your can of sweetened condensed milk, and then let this sit and come to room temperature. While you're waiting, prepare your Jell-O "jewels"!

After you've cut up all your Jell-O into small squares, pour them into your pan. I used a springform pan, but you could use any Jell-O mold you wanted



or just a glass dish. Once you have all of your jewels in place, pour the white filling over them.



Place your dish in the fridge, and allow this to set up. It will take at least three hours. When it's ready, loosen the edges by running a butter knife around, then place it on your serving dish.

Now it's time to make your whipped topping! You could just use Cool Whip, but I wanted my whipped frosting to be a little more stable to hold up longer. Here's how you do that: Put 1/2 tsp of Knox gelatin in a coffee mug with 1 tablespoon of cold water and let it soften for several minutes. Heat up 2 cups of hot water in a small sauce pan, and then hold the bottom of the mug in the hot water to dissolve the gelatin. Once dissolved, allow to cool to room temperature. While it's cooling, whip your heavy cream into whipped cream.



Add the gelatin mixture at the same time as your powdered sugar and vanilla. Frost your cake immediately, and then chill.



Plan it: Decide what day you want to serve the cake, and write it in on your calendar. Add the ingredients to your shopping list.

EPIPHANY

Holy Day
Of
Obligation

It's very easy to bless your house for the Epiphany, and you don't need a priest—you can do it yourself!

Here's what the chalked markings on the door mean: the "20" is for the first two numbers of the year, the three letters are the first initial of each of the kings (Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar), and the last two numbers are the last half of the year. The "C, M, B" also stands for the Latin blessing *Christus Mansionem Benedicat* which means, "May Christ Bless this House."



For 2014, this is what you would write on your door in chalk:

$20 + C + M + B + 14$



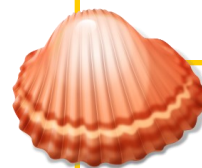
You can have your priest bless your piece of chalk beforehand. It's also traditional to celebrate with 12th night cake!



Plan it: Mark the date. Locate chalk or add it to your shopping list. Print an Epiphany house blessing from the internet and put it into your binder.

BAPTISM OF THE LORD

END OF CHRISTMAS SEASON



This feast day moves around, but it never comes before the Epiphany, and it is the official end of the Christmas season. On the day after the Baptism of the Lord, the Catholic Church switches back to green vestments.

This is the day that we remember Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. This day can be confusing for kids, because it's close to Christmas, and ends the Christmas season...yet Jesus was baptized as an adult. This can get even trickier if you think about the fact that most Catholics are baptized as babies, and we all have Baby Jesus on the mind this close to Christmas.

One way to help your child understand is to show a picture of Jesus being baptized to them, so they can see he was an adult. Any Holy Spirit craft

with a dove would be a great fit for today since the Holy Spirit came down upon Jesus in the form of a dove. Read the story to them from a children's Bible. The shell is also a symbol of Baptism since Jesus may have been baptized with a shell, so shell crafts could be fun as well.

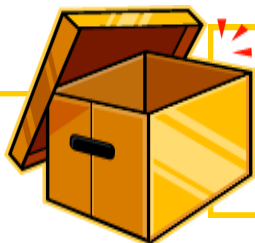


This is a great day to renew your Baptismal promises and sprinkle everyone with holy water. Explain to your kids that Jesus was just setting a good example to us by getting baptized, because he didn't have any original sin. It is important that we follow this example and become

baptized. Challenge your children to do something to set a good example for someone else today.

Plan it: Mark the date on your calendar. Add anything you need for celebrating to your shopping list.





PACKING IT UP FOR NEXT YEAR

If you're able to, invest in some plastic bins to store your holiday things rather than putting them in cardboard. It's easier to label, find, and stack things this way, plus nothing gets ruined by attic pests. It also makes it easier to keep the attic neat.

The first thing you need to do is stop thinking of your stuff as only "Christmas decorations" and divide it between Advent and Christmas items. You'll need at least one box to label "Advent." In this box, put your Advent wreath (*not* any extra candles, as they will melt in the attic), nativity set, Jesse Tree, and any other Advent things you have. Basically anything you want to be able to use *before* you're dragging out the tree stuff. Also, put all your Advent/Christmas children's books in the Advent box as well. There's just no need for these to be out all year long, and this way they're special when you bring them out during Advent every year.

Now take what's left of your Christmas stuff and divide it between tree items and non-tree items. Pack all of your non-breakable ornaments together in a bag or box. (We put our lights and tree skirt in this same box.) That way, when you bring home your tree and the kids are all hyper about deco-



rating it, you can give them their ornaments and let them go for it! Even if they get dumped out on the floor and chewed on by babies, that's what this bin of Christmas ornaments is for.

Your breakable ornaments (if you're brave enough to own them) are

all going to go into a separate bin, wrapped in tissue paper. This way, after you get everyone started with tree decorating, you can get the breakable ones out for the grown ups to decorate with. Or better yet, this bin of ornaments can just wait to even show its face until after bedtime. :-)

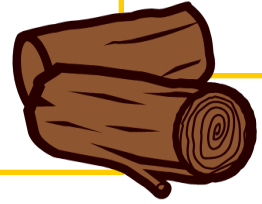
When packing up for next year, throw away whatever light strings didn't light. You didn't bother fixing them this year, and you won't bother fixing them next year. If you have enough ornaments to decorate about 12 Christmas trees, get rid of some of those, too. I give you permission. After all, you'll never have 12 Christmas trees all at once.

When it comes to Christmas clearance, us Catholics really have the advantage! First off, we know that the Christmas season only *begins* on Christmas day, so when everyone else is putting Christmas treats and gingerbread houses on clearance, it's still in the season for us! Also, stock up on things like Christmas cards, wrapping paper, decorations, etc. for next year. Because we don't pack up our Christmas decorations on Dec 26, everything is still out when you stock up on clearance. Now the things you bought can go right into your holiday boxes for the attic rather than sitting around all year! (Be sure to sort them into either the Advent or Christmas category.)

Now, take this new awesome Advent/Christmas planning binder that you've put together, and place it in your Advent box. That way it will be right where you need it. Clearly label your boxes "Advent" or "Christmas," and put your Advent boxes in the front. Store together along with your tree stand. Next year, Advent and Christmas are going to be a breeze! Whatever you've put the work into this year (let's say building a Jesse Tree) will be there waiting for you. So next year, your Jesse Tree will be ready to go and you can use your energy doing something else. Your traditions will build year after year (along with your experience) until you *are* able to do it all. Or at least most of it. :-)

Plan it: Add storage tubs and tissue paper (or whatever you need for packing up) to your shopping list. Write in on the calendar when you'd like to go Christmas clearance shopping.

BRIDGING CHRISTMAS TO LENT



When you're taking down your Christmas tree, you can actually turn it into a Lenten Yule Log (or Lenten Cross). Bridging Christmas to Lent in this way re-

minds us that the reason Jesus came down to earth for us on Christmas morning was so that he could die for us on the Cross.

A Lenten log works much like an Advent wreath in that one new candle is lit each Sunday during Lent.

This project is more involved than most, so hopefully if you want to do this, you have a super handy husband. You'll have to strip your Christmas tree and cut two log sections, flattening the bottoms. They need to be notched and fit together like Lincoln Logs. Also, drill holes the right size to insert taper candles. Allow the sap to dry, and varnish it.



Plan it: Don't throw away your Christmas tree if you think you want to do this! Otherwise, Lent will roll around and it will be too late! Also, you will need to hunt down some more pink and purple candles before Lent starts.

CANDLEMAS — FEB 2



Candlemas can also be known by a few other names: the Meeting of the Lord, the Presentation of the Lord, or the Purification of the Virgin Mary. Basically this was a traditional Jewish ceremony that happened 40 days after the birth of the oldest boy in a family. The parents had to "buy him back" with two turtle doves or two young pigeons. The mother was also purified through a ritual. This is when Simeon prophesied that Jesus would be "a light to the revelation of the Gentiles," which is why we call this day Candlemas.

It is traditional to eat crepes on Candlemas. If that's out of your cooking league, feel free to make pancakes instead. Light lots of candles, make some candle crafts, or even craft two birds. You can also sing "This Little Light of Mine." Snowdrops are a common symbol of Candlemas since they bloom around this time. This is the very, very end of the Christmas season.



Plan it: Mark Feb 2 on the calendar. Add the ingredients for crepes to your shopping list. Print a recipe for crepes and keep it in your planning binder. Add any needed craft supplies to your shopping list as well.



Extra Printables and Planning



Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

READY TO BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

You've been through my whole run-down of Advent and Christmas events, and now you are ready for everything from purchasing Advent candles to blessing your door on the Epiphany before the season even begins.

But really, when I talk about beginning with the end in mind, I'm referring to the way in which we want to raise our children. We should always have the end in mind, and that end we're thinking of needs to be heaven. We're not raising them to have the most fun, to be the happiest, or even to be the smartest kids. We're raising them to know, love, and serve the Lord in this life, and be happy with Him in the next. They're not really our kids, they're His kids, and we just get them for a little while. Sainthood has to be the goal here.

So your [planning calendars](#) are provided on the next three pages, along with a list of dates and occasions to consider when filling them out. Use your planning list you've been making as you read the book, schedule the things you've placed stars next to first, and remember...begin scheduling with the end in mind.

DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Time to add everything from your list that got a star! Check the yellow "Plan it!" boxes for help implementing all of your new traditions. It's best to plan using your own calendar if you have one; however, a printable one has been provided for you on the following three pages if you need one. You can also use the cute calendar stick-ons provided to mark your calendars if you'd like! Remember, only put in the dates you *really* want to celebrate so you don't become overwhelmed.

Possible Dates for Your Calendar:

- Thanksgiving Day
- All 4 Sundays of Advent
- Nov 30—St. Andrew
- Dec 1—Begin Jesse Tree
- Dec 4—St. Barbara
- Dec 6—St. Nicholas
- Dec 7—St. Ambrose
- Dec 8—Immaculate Conception
- Dec 9—St. Juan Diego
- Dec 10—Our Lady of Loreto
- Dec 11—Our Lady, Queen of Angels
- Dec 12—Our Lady of Guadalupe
- Dec 13—St. Lucia (St. Lucy)
- Dec 14—St. John of the Cross
- Dec 16—Begin Christmas Novenas
- Dec 17—Begin O Antiphons
- Dec 21—St. Thomas
- Dec 24—Christmas Eve
- Dec 25—Christmas Day
- 12 Days of Christmas
- Octave of Christmas
- Dec 28—Holy Innocents
- Dec 29—Holy Family

- Jan 1—Mary, Mother of God
- Jan 2—St. Basil
- Jan 3—Most Holy Name of Jesus
- Epiphany
- Baptism of the Lord
- Feb 2—Candlemas
- Time for Confession

Other Calendar Events to Consider:

- Christmas plays/pageants
- Traveling
- Visitors coming and going
- Last day to ship things before Christmas
- Days off of work
- Parties/gatherings
- Christmas tree day
- Interactive nativity days
- Gift exchanging events
- Family gatherings
- Days for shopping

November

Dedicated to the Souls in Purgatory



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
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Notes:

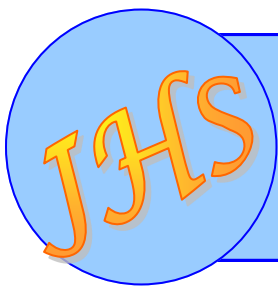


December

Dedicated to the Divine Infancy

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | |
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Notes:



January

Dedicated to the Most Holy Name of Jesus

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | |

Notes:

November

Dedicated to the Souls in Purgatory



All Saints' Day
Go to Mass!

Nov 1
*Holy day of
Obligation!*



All Souls Day

Nov 2



St. Martin
de Porres

Nov 3



St. Elizabeth

Nov 5



St. Martin
of Tours

Nov 11



St. Frances
Xavier Cabrini

Nov 13



St. Margaret
of Scotland

Nov 16



St. Elizabeth
of Hungary

Nov 17



Feast of
Christ the King

moves



St. Cecilia

Nov 22



Thanksgiving

(moves)



St.
Catherine
Laboure

Nov 28



St. Andrew
(Begin Novena)

Nov 30



First Sunday
of Advent

*moves

*Some years Advent begins in November, and other years not until December. You might not need this yet.



December

Dedicated to the Divine Infancy



First Sunday
of Advent



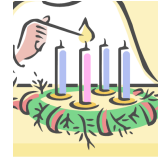
Second Sunday
of Advent



Third Sunday
of Advent



Gaudete
Sunday



Fourth Sunday
of Advent

*Choose between this
or the next one



St. Barbara

Dec 4



Put out Shoes!

Dec 5



St. Nicholas
Day!

Dec 6



St. Ambrose

Dec 7



Immaculate Conception
Go to Mass!

Dec 8



San Juan Diego

Dec 9



Our Lady
of Loreto

Dec 10



Our Lady,
Queen of Angels

Dec 11



Our Lady of
Guadalupe

Dec 12



St. Lucia

Dec 13



St. John of
the Cross

Dec 14



Begin O
Antiphons

Dec 17



St. Thomas

Dec 21



Christmas Eve

Dec 24



Christmas Day

Dec 25



St. John
the Apostle

Dec 27



Holy Innocents

Dec 28



Holy Family

Dec 29



Set out Nativity



Decorate Tree



Begin Jesse
Tree

Dec 1

EXTRA CHRISTMAS STICK-ONS



1st day of
Christmas

Dec 25



2nd day of
Christmas

Dec 26



3rd day of
Christmas

Dec 27



4th day of
Christmas

Dec 28



5th day of
Christmas

Dec 29



6th day of
Christmas

Dec 30



7th day of
Christmas

Dec 31



8th day of
Christmas

Jan 1



9th day of
Christmas

Jan 2



10th day of
Christmas

Jan 3



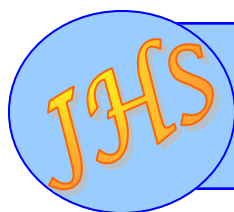
11th day of
Christmas

Jan 4



12th day of
Christmas

Jan 5



January

Dedicated to the Most Holy Name of Jesus



Mary, Mother
Of God
Go to Mass!

Jan 1



St. Basil

Jan 2



Most Holy
Name of Jesus

Jan 3



Elizabeth
Ann Seton

Jan 4



Epiphany

Jan 6
(moves)



Baptism Of
The Lord

moves



St. Agnes

Jan 21



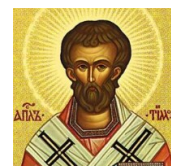
Day Of Prayer
For Unborn

Jan 22



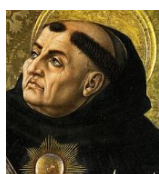
St. Frances
de Sales

Jan 24



St. Timothy

Jan 26



St. Thomas
Aquinas

Jan 28



St. John Bosco

Jan 31



Candlemas

Feb 2

Extra Calendar Stick-ons.

Cut and paste the days you want to celebrate on your regular calendar.



_____'s
Baptism
Anniversary!



_____'s
Baptism
Anniversary!



Holy Day
Of Obligation!



Special
Feast Day!



Anniversary!



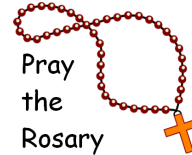
Go to
Confession



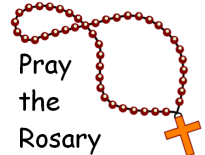
_____'s
Birthday!



_____'s
Birthday!



Pray
the
Rosary



Pray
the
Rosary



Volunteer



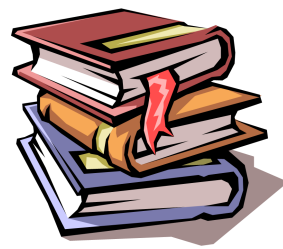
Donate

OUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS SONGS

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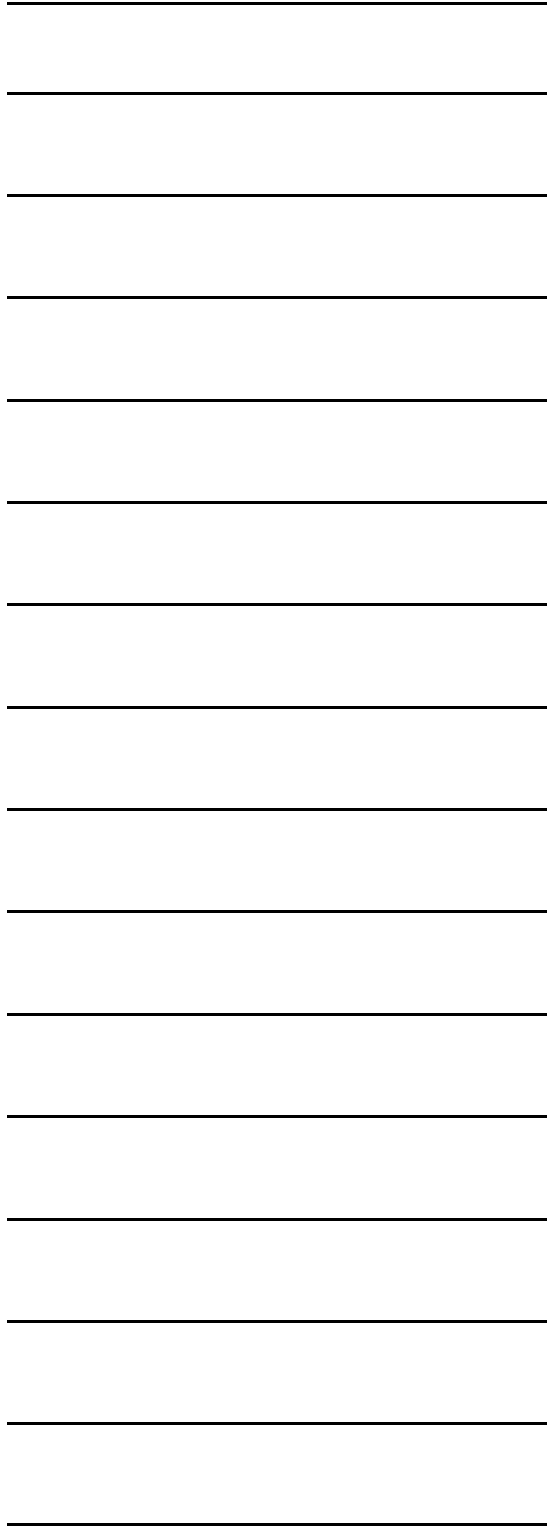
OUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS MOVIES

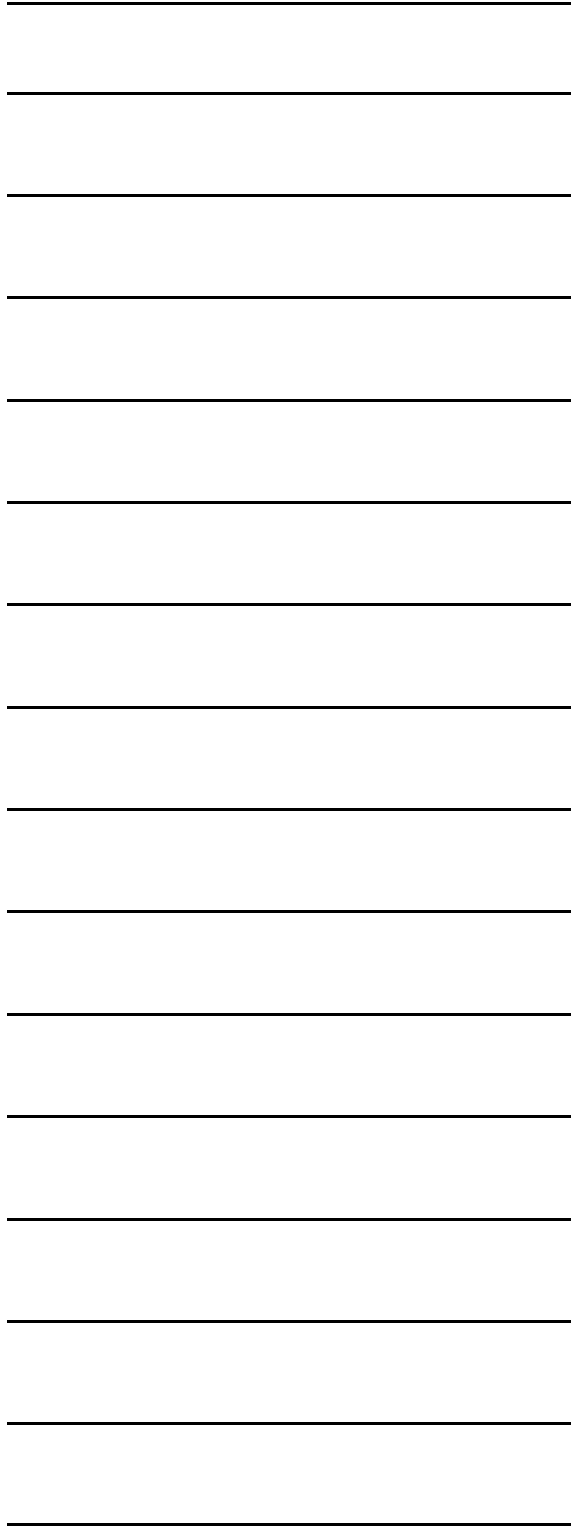
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OUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

[illegible]

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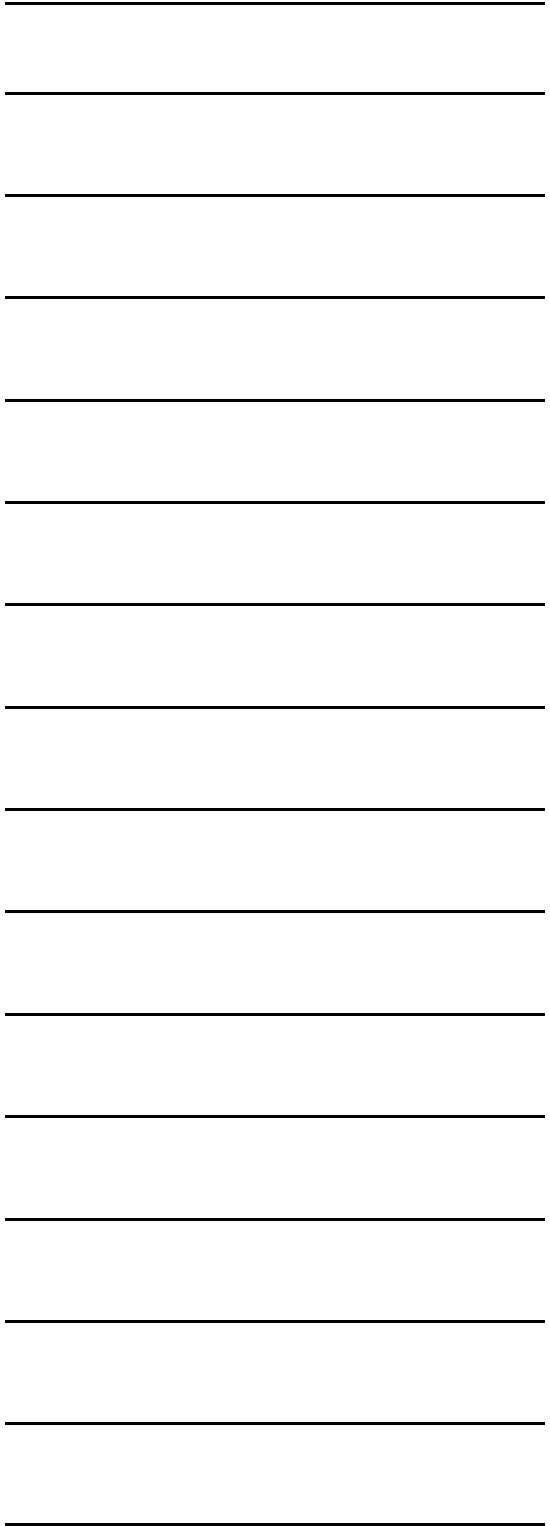
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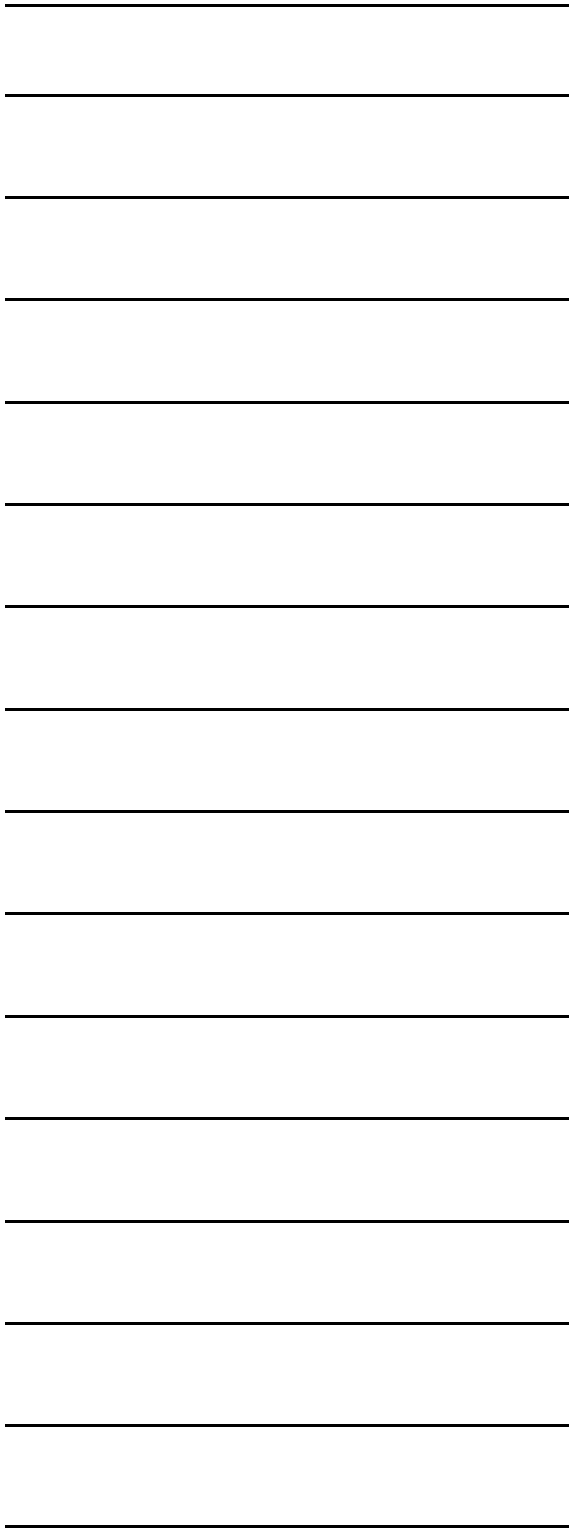
CHRISTMAS THANK YOU CARDS

[illegible]

ADVENT SHOPPING LIST

[illegible][illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Merry Christmas!

From my family to yours.



Thanks for reading, and don't forget to visit [Catholic Icing .com](http://CatholicIcing.com) for more Catholic fun!

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