

The Collection Basket

DECEMBER 2020

Family Life Office

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Volume XXXV, Number 12

IDEAS FOR LIVING BETTER FROM THE FAMILY LIFE OFFICE

Family Ritual

This year, decorate for Christmas more than you ever have before.

Consider decorating your Christmas Tree in Jesse Tree fashion. Put up one decoration a day and say a prayer or read an Advent reflection as you do so.

Set up a Nativity Scene in your home, but with only the animals in the scene. Put the other characters – Mary and Joseph, the Wise Men, and the Shepherds – in different parts of your home. Each week throughout Advent (or every day if you choose), move them a little closer to the crèche until they arrive there at Christmas.

Andre McCarville
Director of Family Life
Diocese of Altoona Johnstown



Blessing of a Christmas Manger

God of every nation and people,
from the very beginning of creation
you have made manifest your love:
when our need for a Savior was great
you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary.
To our lives he brings joy and peace,
justice, mercy, and love.

Lord,
bless all who look upon this manger;
may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus,
and raise our thoughts to him,
who is God-with-us and Savior of all,
and who lives and reigns forever and ever.
R/. Amen.

Check out
[https://
www.catholicicing.com/](https://www.catholicicing.com/)

Free resources for
Catholic Families!
Crafts and stories
galore!



WHAT A FINE CHRISTMAS AT HOME WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY!



  Beginning on December 1st, read one chapter of Luke each day through December 24th. There are 24 chapters. By Christmas Eve, you will have read all 24 chapters – an entire account of the birth, ministry, sacrifice on the cross, and resurrection of Jesus.



Drive around and see the lights!
We have noticed extra efforts in outdoor home decorating this year. Have you?



ZOOM Crafts & Baking with socially-distanced members of the family, especially Grand Parents & Great-Grand Parents!



Write those Christmas messages of JOY now! Get them posted. Sit back and reap the rewards! More Christmas Cards!



Bell ringing! Instead of singing! I'm in!



Donate to the local Toys for Tots Drive. <https://www.toysfortots.org/> to find locally. Help Catholic Charities today! (814) 944-9388 Altoona and (814) 535-6538 Johnstown. Fulton County MISSION (814) 485-5917.



Have you made an Advent wreath? SURE! Use any thing you can gather up. Garland, Ribbons! Candles! One pink, 3 purple!



Gather around for a family photo!
Do you have tradition of matching clothes or a family pet with a Christmas bow?

MOVIE NIGHT Have a bespoke movie night. Every one must pick their favorite Christmas Classic. Hot Chocolate! And *It's a Wonderful Life!*



Ideas from Maureen in the Family Life Office

Families and the Gospel



First Sunday of Advent (NOV. 29)

Mark 13:33-37

Today's gospel tells us to "Be watchful." This comes natural to families. Parents are watchful of their children's health, grades and friends. Children are watchful of parental moods. Today's gospel encourages us to use this ability to see God acting in the innocence, tenderness, love and forgiveness of your family. "Be watchful," the Lord is already with you.

Second Sunday of Advent

Mark 1:1-8

Why is it so hard to forgive, yet so easy to get even? Listen to John the Baptist in today's gospel and repent of the anger and ugly feelings which block your ability to forgive. This Christmas give a gift which makes a difference. Give forgiveness.

Third Sunday of Advent

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Today's gospel reports "there is one among you whom you do not recognize." It is hard to believe Christ is present in a family with crazy schedules, suppers that start too late and end too early, cars that don't start, misunderstandings, frustrations, piles of laundry, unmatched socks and stretched food budgets. The list is endless. The words spoken at mass, "The Lord is with you," are not a hope, they are a fact.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Luke 1:26-38

QUESTION: What do you call a family which began with an unmarried pregnant teen and had a twelve year old son who ran away from home and was eventually executed as a criminal?

ANSWER: HOLY! Two lessons in today's gospel: (1) No matter what is happening in your family, "The Lord is with you." (2) "Do not be afraid" for "nothing is impossible with God."

Christmas

Luke 2:15-20

This Christmas remember your task as a parent is the same as Mary's: We must not let our doubts, fears and unfulfilled expectations get in the way of our loving ACCEPTANCE of our children.

Holy Family

Luke 2:22-40

The gospel today shows Mary and Joseph weren't 'perfect' parents. If you have ever been 'amazed' and 'astonished' at what came out of your child's mouth, then you are in good company. If there were times you 'didn't understand' your children or felt 'anxious' about their behavior so did Mary and Joseph. Parenting is tough but it is also the stuff of holiness.

Reprinted with permission: A Family Perspective by Bud Ozar



"Hope" by Maryknoll Father James Keller (1900 - 1977)

- Hope looks for the good in people instead of harping on the worst.
- Hope opens doors where despair closes them.
- Hope draws its power from a deep trust in God and the basic goodness of human nature.
- Hope "lights a candle" instead of "cursing the darkness."
- Hope regards problems, small or large, as opportunities.
- Hope pushes ahead when it would be easy to quit.
- Hope is a good loser because it has the divine assurance of final victory.

Christopher News Notes 12 East 48th St. New York, NY 10017

<https://www.praythefilm.com/>

Here in the Family Life Office, we are *still* grateful for the year 2020. We have introduced 70+ couples to our Marriage Preparation Program, celebrated Mass with 310 widows & widowers (on TV!), and 61 Anniversary couples (in-person!). Andre's Campus Ministry thrives even in the days of remote learning. Dotty manages the Missions Office and, despite all the odds, the Mission Co-Op Appeal raised \$28,616 And counting!

Most of all we want to wish each and everyone of our readers a VERY, Merry Christmas!
In Christ, André, Dotty & Maureen

