

The COLLECTION Basket

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IDEAS FOR LIVING BETTER FROM THE FAMILY LIFE OFFICE



Enjoying Snow Days



As we begin to settle into winter don't let these days get you down. Pull out those dusty games, puzzles, photos or craft boxes and enjoy family time or quiet time learning to knit, crochet or sew. Finish a project that's been tucked away. Turn the devices off and light a fire or candle, make popcorn or smores. Try to pretend we are living in simpler times like families of long ago.



What is Epiphany?

Epiphany is the Christian festival marking the visit of the Magi to celebrate Jesus Christ's birth. It was the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

Until recent years the Epiphany always fell on January 6. The feast was changed to the Sunday following New Year's Day due to its importance. It marks the end of the Christmas Season and the Church wanted to celebrate it in a special way. Rather than make it a Holy Day that would often fall on a weekday, it was given a fixed Sunday so all people could celebrate the feast. Celebrating the Epiphany in a special manner helps us remember that Christmas is a "season" and not just a day.

The word epiphany has been used in various other ways in recent years so just what does it really mean?

It is a sudden realization or a leap of understanding through an ordinary occurrence. Or an illuminating discovery, a revealing scene or moment.

Jesus' birth was all of the above. And so are many other moments in our lives. Look for them and celebrate them.

Adapted and reprinted from the booklet published by the Family Life Office entitled "HOLIDAY SPIRITUALITY IN THE HOME - Thanksgiving to Epiphany".

Post Holiday Blues

With dread, anxiety, and pain—that's how many of us approach the season of supposedly joy-filled, family-oriented excitement. Sometimes we think we have been successful in creating the Norman Rockwell scene of family unity, humor and love. Other years, we are just glad to see January so we can put away the decorations.



For most grieving people, it's not easy to make simple decisions. Every action and thought seems tainted by pain and uncertainty. Making long-range plans appears useless and too demanding. Deciding New Year's resolutions feels childish and burdensome.

What about the days to come? Make some plans for the days after New Year's. The natural let-down of post-holiday blues can be lightened by having something to anticipate. Get tickets to a play, schedule a group activity, invite a friend to visit or go to a friends for a few days. Do whatever keeps you involved with others and gives you a reason to make it through this emotionally draining season.

No matter how bad things seem to us, looking around the world illustrates that others are worse off than we are. There's a miracle in helping others—we receive as much, if not more, than we give. If we give from our own goodness, we can't help but be touched. True happiness is derived from making a difference for others and from bringing beauty into another's life. Whether with a phone call, card, or visit, reach out and touch someone.

Hope is contagious!

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"It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable." *-Moliere*

Reprinted from: Apple Seeds—Fr. Brian Cavanaugh, TOR

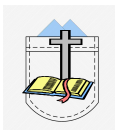
Small Pockets of Prayer

by Jeanne Hunt

Our fast-lane mentality is a deterrent to active prayer lives. I suggest we learn to combine prayer and work.

This may seem a surprising combination. Prayer is often pictured as a kneeling activity. However, if we wait for knee time, we'll rarely connect the God. St. Benedict taught his monks to always be at prayer, to see every action as an opportunity to talk to God. Does God want us to keep the conversation going while driving car pool, walking grocery aisles, and stirring soup? YES!

Each day offers pauses when prayer fits perfectly. I call these "small pockets of prayer." We pick up the morning paper, notice the breathtaking sunrise and pause to praise the Creator. We're tied up in traffic, so we pray the rosary. We arrive early at the soccer field, turn off the car and talk with God.



God offers us many pockets of prayer. These moments begin to infuse our schedule, and we start hearing God's invitation to create more: Once a week, eat lunch alone and pray, or skip the evening news and watch the night sky with God instead. God walks through the day with us. God listens and watches. Knee time is a rare commodity, yet three minutes here and two minutes there add up. Looking for small pockets of prayer makes our entire day holy.

Janie enters the grocery checkout line and sees the "coupon lady" ahead of her. Rather than move to another lane, Janie pulls out her daily reflection book; she reads and prays as she waits. For the first time in months she's relaxed and free of the constant guilt of too little, too late with God. She unloads her cart, praying, "Good and gracious God, I'm weary tonight as I head home to make supper. Give me renewed strength and a smile for my family. Amen." As she puts the bags in her car trunk she reflects on how praying on the run has changed her. She realized that God doesn't only wait for us in chapels; he loves to find us wherever we go.

Jesus, sit down with me. I want to simply be with you. My heart needs nothing profound. I only want to know your presence here. Share this time with me and speak to my heart.

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Ramblings of a Retired Mind

The older you get, the tougher it is to lose weight, because by then your body and your fat have gotten to be really good friends!

The easiest way to find something lost around the house is to buy a replacement.

Excerpted and reprinted from: *Apple Seeds*—Fr. Brian Cavanaugh, TOR

Families and the Gospel

January 1

Lk 2:16-21

Would the birth of Jesus have gone un-noticed if the shepherds had been "too busy" to travel to Bethlehem to spread the word about Him? The shepherds, the first missionaries, played a major role in human history. Every family is called to be missionary by "glorifying and praising God for all they have heard and seen."

January 8

Mt 2:1-12

There are two different perspectives in today's gospel: For Herod, the child Jesus was expendable because He interfered with Herod's personal goals but the Magi risked all to protect the same child. Do you imitate Herod or the Magi? Are children a priority in your life or are they sacrificed for career, convenience and possessions.

January 15

Jn 1:29-34

Can you say "I have testified Jesus is the Son of God?" If you aren't talking about Jesus in your family, you aren't testifying. If you are talking and not walking your talk, your children will see your words as meaningless.

January 22

Mt 4:12-23

When Jesus called his disciples, they came immediately. Parents wish their children would respond as quickly, but they don't. Children grow slowly into responsibility. It's a process like walking, not done immediately but in small steps. Parenting demands patient encouragement.

January 29

Mt 5:1-12a

It is in our family where we learn to be merciful and comforting to others. The Beatitudes of the Kingdom of God begin at home and depend on you. Parents lead the way.



A Family Perspective by Bud Ozar