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IDEAS FOR LIVING BETTER FROM THE FAMILY LIFE OFFICE

Advent Family Ritual

Every night before supper or bedtime light a candle, turn out the lights, and pray that Jesus' love and mercy will come into our world.

Then share some conversation such as:

- How did you bring Jesus' love to someone today?
- How did you feel Jesus loving you today?



8 Gifts That Don't Cost A Cent

The Gift of Listening: But you must really listen. No interrupting, no daydreaming, no planning your response. Just listening.

The Gift of Affection: Be generous with appropriate hugs, kisses, pats on the back and handholds. Let these small actions demonstrate the love you have for family and friends.

The Gift of Laughter: Clip cartoons. Share articles and funny stories. Your gift will say, "I love to laugh with you."

The Gift of a Written Note: It can be a simple "Thanks for the help" note or a full sonnet. A brief, handwritten note may be remembered for a lifetime, and may even change a life.

The Gift of a Compliment: A simple and sincere "You look great", "You did a super job" or "That was a wonderful meal" can make someone's day.

The Gift of a Favor: Every day, go out of your way to do something kind.

The Gift of Solitude: There are times we want nothing better than to be left alone. Be sensitive to those times and give the gift of solitude to others.

The Gift of a Cheerful Disposition: The easiest way to feel good is to make others feel good.

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"Apple Seeds"
Fr. Brian Cavanaugh, T.O.R.

Follow That Teenager

Advent is a great time to start thinking about the word *fiat*. Not Fiat, the little Italian car! Rather, *fiat* is the Latin word meaning, "Let it be done." In the Catholic community, it refers to the young Mary's response when the angel Gabriel announced she would conceive Jesus: "May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Mary's *fiat* shows her complete willingness to do God's will, even without fully understanding what it would mean for her.

Mary's *fiat* and the high priority the church places on it can give us pause. Was that "yes" really such a big deal? After all, the angel said, "You will conceive." Wasn't Mary basically saying yes to something that God had already planned? Yes, God had already chosen her and had chosen Jesus. Yes, the angel was announcing that God had found favor with Mary, and the tone the angel takes is not one of asking permission.

So why do we celebrate Mary's "yes"? Because we recognize that whenever God brings something to our lives, we have the free will either to move in rhythm with God or to resist God's movement. Mary's *fiat* shows how we should respond. Even while God's will is happening in our midst, we can deny it and move away from it. Mary did neither, choosing instead to embrace her new reality.

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Dear Lord,
You gave us the greatest present of all, the gift of your Son. May we never forget to unwrap the gift of Your Love and may we be willing to wrap others in Your Love. Amen.
Merry Christmas!



ANTIPHONS

The final seven days before Christmas Eve, the church calls us to cry for the coming of Jesus with special poems for each day. These poems may be said with our meal prayer or as part of our night prayer.

Dec. 17– O Wisdom, who issued from the mouth of the Most High reaching from beginning to end. Ordering all things mightily but tenderly, Come teach us the way of prudence.

Dec. 18– O Lord of Lords and leader of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the bush's flaming fire and gave to him the Law of Sinai, Come to redeem us with stretched-out arms.

Dec. 19– O Root of Jesse, a standard to the peoples before whom all kings are made, to whom all nations shall appeal, Come to deliver us; delay, please, no longer.

Dec. 20– O Key of David and scepter of the house of Israel, you open and no one dares shut, you shut and no one dares open, Come deliver those who are imprisoned in darkness.

Dec. 21– O Rising Dawn, redeemer of eternal light and Sun of Justice, Come, enlighten those sitting in darkness.

Dec 22.– O King of Nations and our deserved one, you the cornerstone, Come and save us whom you created.

Dec. 23– O Emmanuel, our king and lawgiver. You are the one for whom we wait, Come to save us, O Lord, our God.

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

Tin Can Lanterns

Fill a tin can with water and freeze until solid ice has formed. Lay can sideways on towel. With a hammer and nail, pound holes around the can in various patterns -snowflakes, birds, trees, etc. Put the can in the sink until the ice melts. Let it dry out. Add a tea light and watch the light reflect in the darkened room.



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Festive Wassail

Combine 2 cups apple juice, 2 cups cranberry juice, 1/2 cup orange juice in saucepan with 2 cinnamon sticks and 3 whole cloves. Simmer for 10 minutes, remove spices and serve in mugs on cold winter evenings or holiday parties.



Families and the Gospel

December 4

Mt 3:1-12

Today's gospel raises many questions. Was the Baptist's family embarrassed by his life style, diet, clothing, and message? Did they avoid or ignore him or advise him to come home and be "normal"? Advent, a time to change our hearts, raises another question: Who in your family needs for your acceptance?

December 11

Mt 11:2-11

The question put to Jesus in today's gospel is also put to us today: "Are you the one...?" Are you the one who will give guidance to the children in your life or must they look to TV sitcoms, films, videos and music lyrics for direction? Are you the one? Will you be the one?

December 18

Mt 1:18-24

The child born to Joseph and Mary was named Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." Every child is EMMANUEL, reminding us "God is with us." Children are signs of God's continuing presence in our lives.

December 25

Jn1:1-18

The birth of Jesus reminds us we have a choice. We can choose to not know Him or to see Jesus as the true light which enlightens everyone. Make this a Merry Christmas and choose well: your decision has eternal consequences.

December 30

Mt 2:13-15, 19-23

The feast of the Holy Family is not just about Jesus, Mary & Joseph. Your family too is called to be a sign to the world of a way of life modeled after the Holy Family. Like Mary and Joseph, you will be a sign opposed by others. For being different a sword will pierce your heart. If we are doing it right, pain and Christianity go together!



A Family Perspective by Bud Ozar