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85

ADVENT IN OUR HOME
National Bulletin on Liturgy

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This Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope. It is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, catechists, teachers, religious, seminarians, clergy, and diocesan liturgical commissions, and for all who are involved in preparing, celebrating, and improving the community liturgy.

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The liturgical year is a year of praise offered to our Father in thanksgiving for his saving love: through the dying and rising of Jesus, he has called us to be saved. We begin the liturgical year with the Christmas cycle, from the first Sunday of Advent to the feast of the Lord’s baptism.

This issue of the Bulletin offers many positive suggestions for family prayer and practices during Advent and the Christmas season each year. These are based on the daily liturgy of these seasons.

Bulletin 85 is based on the “Family Advent Prayer Program.” This program was developed and circulated for some years by the Diocese of Nelson, British Columbia, with Sister Agnes Poelzer, CSJ, as editor.

In this new format, the program is intended for wider distribution. It may be used each year by families, and will help them to share more fully in the graces of the Advent and Christmas seasons.
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*A calendar for the Advent and Christmas seasons from 1982 to 2001 is given on page 185.*
INTRODUCTION

Handing on the memory

Tradition means that we remember what we have received, and hand on our memory. It is not a lifeless repetition; we have to make the memory part of our own life before we hand it on to our children, so that it can become a part of their life that they in turn will pass on to the next generation.

We hand it on by telling a story. It is not a mere repetition of what we heard as children: now we are part of it, and we hand it on so that our children can be part of it in their turn.

The Israelites were commanded to tell the story of God's great deeds among them: see Exod. 12: 26-27; Exod. 13: 8-10; Deut. 6: 20-25. So strongly did they do this that they felt drawn into the story: "We were there!" Jewish families still carry on the practice during the Passover: the youngest child asks the meaning of these rites, and the father tells the haggadah, the ancient and ever-new story of their salvation from the land of Egypt.

During Advent: As the scripture readings are heard and discussed, as the Advent wreath is lighted in darkness, as the Jesse tree is prepared, and as the crib is set up: these are teachable moments when parents can hand on the story to their children. What is this story? Simply, our need of a savior and our longing for help; the story of the incarnation; the birth of Jesus as one of us (see the first two chapters in the gospels according to Matthew and Luke). God has done this for us because he loves us — the members of this family and the rest of the world.

During the Christmas season: As we share gifts and visit friends, as we take our children to visit the crib in church, as we sing carols, as we begin the new year, as we add the figures of the wise men to our home crib: these are the moments for passing on the story that Jesus the Son of God is one of us. He is with us, and helps us to work with him to save the world.

In your family, what are some other opportunities that you can use for sharing the story of Jesus and his love for us? Here are a few ideas you could consider:

• Baking cookies in the form of a star, angel, trumpet, crib, cross, or crown. Children may suggest other appropriate shapes.

• Decorations: Lights, symbols of Jesus, symbols from the Jesse tree (see pages 151-153).

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• Cards and letters: Write a message of love and sharing, rather than repeating a trite formula.

• Songs and music: More emphasis on Jesus and less on Santa, reindeer, and snowmen.

• Prayer corner: Set one up, or start to use it again: see below, page 187.

• God’s word: Listen to his word each day. Use some of the passages listed for the Advent and Christmas season.

• Meal prayers: Begin to say them, if you have not been doing so. Use them at least occasionally to remember the love that God shows to us during the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

What other ways are there for you to remember, and to hand on the memory?

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

The Christmas cycle comes at the beginning of the Church’s liturgical year, and celebrates the Good News that the Son of God became one of us in order to save us. Periods of preparation, celebration, and continuation last about seven weeks.

Preparation: The four weeks of Advent have two main stages: up to December 16, the main emphasis is on the coming of Christ in final judgment, and on our preparation in joyful hope; this continues the spirit of the final weeks of ordinary time. The closing days of Advent direct us toward the coming of the Son of God among us as one of us. True God and true man, Jesus has come in love to save us, to make us the people of God, and through us, to continue his work of praising the Father and saving the world.

Celebration: Christmas and its octave center on the great truth of the incarnation: God loves us so much that he sent his Son to be one of us, that we might believe and love and have eternal life (see Jn. 3: 15-16). The eternal Son of God, made man, crucified, risen, seated at the right hand of the Father, sending his Spirit to us, and living among us: this is the Lord we celebrate at Christmas.

Continuation: The Epiphany concludes the Christmas cycle as we celebrate the ways in which God our Father has manifested or revealed himself and his love to us through his Son Jesus. As his Church, we are to continue to be the light of the nations, revealing God’s love in Christ through our lives as his followers. The Christmas cycle ends with the feast of the Lord’s baptism, and ordinary time begins.
ADVENT AT HOME

Family prayer

Your family at prayer: Family prayer — by your family — is important in the life of the people of God. If you are praying at home, listening to God’s word in faith, and praising God for his goodness, you will be ready to continue to do this when you come to church on Sunday with the other members of the community. The better your family’s prayer life, the more you can contribute to your parish liturgy.

Seasonal variations: As we move from one season to another, the spirit of the liturgy remains basically the same, but its tone and flavor change somewhat. This issue of the Bulletin is about your personal and family prayer life during Advent and the Christmas season (The next issue, no. 86, is entitled Lent in Our Home.)

Advent: The spirit of this season is hope, joy, anticipation. During the first two weeks, we look forward to the coming of Jesus Christ our savior at the end of time; on Dec. 17 we turn more to remember his coming at the first Christmas, and to our renewal this year. Advent is not a season of penance like Lent, but it does call us to conversion, to prepare a way for the Lord in our lives, to continue to die with him to sin and to live with him for God.

Advent prayers: Some prayers are particularly appropriate during this season:

• The Lord’s prayer, especially “May your kingdom come, and your will be done” (see Mt. 6: 10-11).
• Come, Lord Jesus: see 1 Cor. 16: 22; Rev. 22: 20; Didache 8: 6.
• Canticle of Zechariah: Lk. 1: 68-79: We praise God for sending his Son to save us.
• Hail, Mary: Based in part on Lk. 1: 28 and 42, this prayer ends with a petition for all people.
• The Angelus: based on Lk. 1: 26-38, 42.
• Glory to the Father: We offer this praise to the Trinity living in our hearts.
• Suitable psalms for Advent include Ps. 25 and Ps. 85.
• Other prayers are included in this Bulletin:
  □ Advent litany: page 158
  □ Prayers for each Sunday and weekday: pages 154-171
  □ Prayers for use with Advent wreath, Jesse tree, Christmas decorations, tree, and crib: pages 150-153 and 172-173.
Advent activities

There are many ways in which your family can benefit from the meaning of the season of Advent. Some of these are described here:

Advent Wreath

The custom of having an Advent wreath in our home has been growing in recent years. It is a simple reminder that we are waiting during this season for the coming of Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Each Saturday or Sunday evening, another one of the candles is lighted to mark the steps in our family's Advent journey.

Making a wreath: A wreath may be fashioned by each family in the week after the celebration of Christ the King. A circle, square, or diamond may be made with wire, wood, or other suitable material, covered with evergreen boughs [real, not plastic!]; or four small candlesticks may be arranged on a table, sideboard, or mantel, and surrounded by evergreen. Four candles are placed on the wreath: three purple (or blue), and one rose or pink.

First Sunday in Advent (or on the preceding Saturday evening): One purple candle is lighted in silence, and then this blessing may be said:

Let us ask our heavenly Father to bless us.
All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Father,
we praise you for sending your Son
to save us from our sins
and to be light in our darkness.
Bless + us as we gather in his name,
and bless + this wreath as a sign of his light among us.
We ask this blessing through Christ our Lord.
All answer Amen!

An Advent litany may be prayed (see page 158), and all may sing a verse of "O come, O come, Emmanuel" or another Advent hymn.

Second week: Two purple candles are lighted in silence. This prayer (or one from pages 159-160) may be said:

Heavenly Father,
look upon us with love,
and fill us with the Spirit of Jesus.
Help us to love you,
and protect us during this week
as we await the coming of our Lord.
We ask this grace
in the name of Jesus our Lord.

All answer  Amen!

All may join in an Advent litany (page 158) and an Advent hymn.

Third week: Two purple candles and the rose one are lighted in silence. The prayer Heavenly Father (above) or one from pages 163-164 may be said. All may join in an Advent litany (page 158) and an Advent hymn.

Fourth week: All four candles are lighted in silence. The prayer Heavenly Father (above) or one from pages 167-168 may be said. All may join in an Advent litany (page 158) and a seasonal hymn.

Jesse Tree

A branch, a large plant, or a bush is decorated with reminders of God's promise to send a savior, and with symbols of some of Jesus' ancestors. Where a tree is not available, the family can make a montage on a wall, a door, bulletin board, refrigerator door, window, or other suitable place.

Symbols may be made of paper, wood, or aluminum foil. As each one is prepared, the story of this person or event is told. It is suggested that at least one symbol from each of the groups below be made. Family members may wish to make more, or suggest other appropriate symbols from the scripture readings during Advent.

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Reconciliation

God's work: Our loving Father brings us back to himself, through the dying and rising of our brother Jesus, in the love of the Holy Spirit. It is God who reconciles us to himself. Reconciliation is also our work: after we are forgiven by God, we reach out to share God's forgiven love with others.

During Advent, we are invited to share in God's reconciliation in a variety of ways:

• In our family, we can take a few moments once a week during Advent: perhaps at the end of supper, we can light the Advent wreath, turn out the house lights, and sit together in silence, reflecting on God's call to make straight the way of the Lord in our own lives. Then, we could sing (or say) Lamb of God as at Mass, and pray the Lord's prayer together. All could share a sign of love and forgiveness, and sing a song of joy or thanks.

• In our parish community, we can take part in the Advent penance celebration.

• On Christmas eve, we can gather for a few moments of prayer for one another as we prepare to celebrate the great feast of peace and love: see page 171.

* * *

Make all our ways straight in our hearts and in our lives:
Come, Lord Jesus, come!
DAYS OF ADVENT

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

As we begin the season of Advent, God's people are looking forward to the coming of our Lord in glory. He comes to judge the world and hand over the kingdom to his Father.


Advent wreath: See page 150. One purple candle is lighted.

Gospel reading (Mt. 24: 37-44): Jesus will come when we least expect him. We are to stay awake and be ready for his coming.

Other readings: Is. 2: 1-5; Ps. 122; and Rom. 13: 11-14 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 36-39).

Reflection: The Lord Jesus is already among us to teach us his way to God, and to bring us peace and joy. We are called to live as his holy people, and not in sin and wickedness. Our day of salvation is coming closer: we are to stay awake, be ready to greet the Lord with joy.

Prayer: Blessed are you, Lord Jesus, for you are the savior of the world. We praise you for loving us and for leading us to God our Father. Guide us all week by the help of your Spirit, and teach us to be ready to meet you when you come to bring us into your joy. Blessed are you, Lord, for ever and ever.

Action: Look at your life, see what is not pleasing to Jesus, and start to change it now with his help.


Advent wreath: See page 150. One purple candle is lighted.

Gospel reading (Mk. 13: 33-37): Jesus tells his followers to stay awake. Our Lord is coming when we least expect, and wants to find us ready for his coming.

Other readings: Is. 63: 16-17; 64: 1, 4-8; Ps. 80; and 1 Cor. 1: 3-9 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 54-57).
Reflection: We are God's own children, his family, his people, his Church. He is ready to help us to turn back to him and to live without sin as we wait for the coming of Jesus. Are we ready to place our trust and our lives in Jesus' hands?

Prayer:  
Holy Jesus, our Lord and our brother,  
look on us with love and pity:  
help us to overcome our sins with your power,  
and turn us back to your love.  
Teach us to remain faithful to you,  
awake and ready for your coming.  

Lord Jesus,  
hear our prayer and save us in your love.

Action: What does Jesus want me to improve in my life during this season of grace? Start to work on this today.

Year C  

Advent wreath: See page 150. One purple candle is lighted.

Gospel reading (Lk. 21: 25-28, 34-36): At the end of time Jesus will come in glory to judge the world and to bring his holy people into glory. We are to avoid sin and to stay awake, praying for help to stand up with Jesus.

Other readings: Jer. 33: 14-16; Ps. 25; and 1 Thess. 3: 12—4: 2 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 71-74).

Reflection: God has promised to send us a savior. Jesus has come to lead us from sin to God, and to guide us along his pathways to salvation. He gives us the strength and courage to stand up with him. As the season of Advent begins, we look at our way of living — as individuals and as a family — and ask ourselves what Jesus wants us to change in our lives.

Prayer:  
Lord Jesus, our savior and our brother,  
we thank you and praise you for saving us.  
Open our hearts to the action of your Holy Spirit  
and guide us along the paths that lead us to the Father.  
Cleanse our hearts and our lives,  
and let us live in love for you.  

Glory be to your name, Lord Jesus.

Action: Look at your own way of life to see what Jesus wants to change. Begin to turn back to his ways.
First Week in Advent

MORNING

Gospel reading (Mt. 8: 5-11): Jesus is pleased with the Roman army officer for his great faith. God's kingdom is open to people from all nations.

Reflection: Do I trust Jesus as completely as the centurion did? Do we pray to our Lord for other people in need? Are we trying to share God's kingdom with other people?

Prayer: Lord Jesus,
listen as we pray for N. and N., who need your help.
Share your love with them today,
and give them your strength and courage.
Lead all people into your kingdom.

Action: What can we do to help someone this week?

TUESDAY

Gospel reading (Lk. 10: 21-24): Jesus rejoices in the Spirit and gives thanks to his Father for teaching us about his great love for us.

Reflection: Do we thank God for loving us? for giving us his Holy Spirit to live in our hearts? Do we ask our Father to open other people to his love?

Prayer: Loving Father,
pour your Spirit into our hearts.
Help us to praise you
by the way we live each day for you.
Teach us to see Jesus in everybody.

Action: See some good things in all the people at home, and in all the people you know. Say thank you to God for them.

WEDNESDAY

Gospel reading (Mt. 15: 29-37): Jesus heals the sick, and gives food to all people who listen to his word.

Reflection: God our Father looks after his people because he loves us. He heals us from sin and gives us the bread of life and the cup of salvation. God loves us: how can we love him in return? How well do we take part in the Mass?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, our shepherd,
help us to get along with others,
to share with them,
to love them as you do.
Gives us your holy food and drink
and bring us into everlasting life.

Action: How can we share ourselves with others?
**First Week in Advent**

**THURSDAY**  
See also Is. 26: 1-6, and Ps. 118

**Gospel reading** (Mt. 7: 21, 24-27): Jesus tells us to listen to his word and do the will of God our Father.

**Reflection:** Jesus obeyed the Father and did what he asked him to do. This is the way God saves us. God asks us to obey him by keeping his word and loving other people. Are we trying to hear God's word? Do we obey it?

**Prayer:**  
*Jesus, our Lord and our brother,*  
*help us to listen to the Father and obey his word.*  
*Be with us and teach us to love other people*  
*as you love us all.*

**Action:** What can I do to listen to God more carefully and obey him more fully?

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**FRIDAY**  
See also Is. 29: 17-24, and Ps. 27

**Gospel reading** (Mt. 9: 27-31): Two blind men believe in Jesus and ask him to let them see. He cures them because they believe in him.

**Reflection:** God gives us the power to believe in Jesus. How strongly do I believe in our Lord? Do I trust him, listen to him, obey him? Do I try to help others and share myself with them?

**Prayer:**  
*Jesus, light of the world,*  
*bring your light into our hearts,*  
*into our home, our work, our play.*  
*Help us to believe in you and to follow you in love.*

**Action:** How can I share God's light and love with other people?

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**SATURDAY**  
See also Is. 30: 19-21, 23-26, and Ps. 147

**Gospel reading** (Mt. 9: 35 — 10: 1, 6-8): Jesus felt for the people who had no leaders. He wants us to ask God to send shepherds and helpers to his people. God's kingdom is close to us.

**Reflection:** God shows his love by sending us to help one another. How often do we pray for the Church, God's people on earth? Do we ask God to pick out shepherds and helpers from our own family and friends? Are we ready to share ourselves with others at home?

**Prayer:**  
*Heavenly Father,*  
*help us to love you more.*  
*Choose helpers and shepherds for your people,*  
*and teach us to love others as Jesus does.*

**Action:** The first week of Advent is ending. What can we do to show how much God loves our family and all his people?
DECEMBER 8

See also Gen. 3: 9-15, 20; Ps. 98; and Eph. 1: 3-6, 11-12

Immaculate Conception

When December 8 is a Sunday, the feast of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated on Saturday, December 7.

Gospel reading (Lk. I: 26-38): Mary is highly pleasing to God. She will bear a son conceived by the Spirit. Her son Jesus will be God’s Son, a king. Mary obeys God’s word in her faith.

Reflection: How good our heavenly Father is to all his people! He gives us Jesus as our Lord, king, and savior. By Mary’s example we can learn to be ready to obey God’s will for us. How open am I to the work of the Spirit?

Prayer: Heavenly Father,
we praise you for your love.
Help us to obey your word with joy
and to serve you with love as Mary did.

Action: Accept God’s will at once, and do what he wants.

ADVENT LITANY

This litany may be prayed at a gathering during the season of Advent. The response may be sung, if desired.

Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world.
All answer Come, Lord Jesus.

You are light in our darkness. R.
Son of God, save us from our sins. R.
Bring hope into the lives of all people. R.
Give your peace to all nations. R.
Be the joy of all who love you. R.
Bless us as we gather here in your name. R.
Lord Jesus, stay with us. R.

Other petitions may be added.

This prayer may be used at the end of the litany:

May Christ give us his peace and joy,
and let us share them with others.
All praise and glory are his for ever.

All answer Amen!
SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

God is coming to save his people because he loves us. He invites us to build a straight road for him in the desert of our life, for he is sending his Son Jesus to baptize us with fire and the Holy Spirit.


Advent wreath: See pages 150-151. Two purple candles are lighted.

Gospel reading (Mt. 3: 1-12): John the Baptist calls all to repent and make a straight path for the Lord. The Messiah will baptize with the Spirit and with fire.

Other readings: Is. 11: 1-10; Ps. 72; and Rom. 15: 4-9 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 40-44).

Reflection: Filled with God's Spirit, Jesus comes to help the good and judge the wicked. His kingdom will be one of peace and justice. God our Father helps us to follow the example of Jesus by loving other people.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, our brother and our savior, fill us with your Holy Spirit and overcome evil in our lives. Help us to build a straight road for you in our desert, so that we may give glory with you to our heavenly Father.

Action: Make your life a straight way for the Lord by moving away from sin.


Advent wreath: See pages 150-151. Two purple candles are lighted.

Gospel reading (Mk. 1: 1-8): John the Baptist preached in the desert, calling people to repent and build a straight road for the Lord. The one to come is greater than John, and will baptize with God's Spirit.

Other readings: Is. 40: 1-5, 9-11; Ps. 85; and 2 Pet. 3: 8-14 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 58-62).

Reflection: God brings us Good News: his people are to be forgiven. They are to make a straight road for him, and he will come to care for them and bring them peace and justice. As we wait for the Lord to come, we are to live a blameless life.
Second Sunday in Advent

Prayer:  
Blessed are you, loving Father,  
Lord of heaven and earth:  
we give you glory and praise  
for loving us as your children  
and for sending your Son Jesus to save us.

Action: With God’s help I will make the Lord’s road straight by working to get rid of one of my faults.

Year C  

Advent wreath: See pages 150-151. Two purple candles are lighted.

Gospel reading (Lk. 3: 1-6): John the Baptist is sent by God to call his people back, to invite them to repent and be forgiven. They are to prepare a straight way for the Lord.

Other readings: Bar. 5: 1-9; Ps. 126; and Phil. 1: 4-6, 8-11 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 75-79).

Reflection: As God’s people we are invited to rejoice: God is coming to save us, to remove obstacles from our path, and to guide us in light and joy. All nations will praise God for his saving love. He will continue to make us holy so that we will be ready for the coming of Jesus our Lord.

Prayer:  
Holy Father,  
send the Spirit of your Son into our hearts  
to flatten our pride and build up our faith.  
Make our love pure and strong,  
and help us to serve you  
by loving and serving all your people.

Action: Ask the Spirit to guide you as you work to prepare the way for Jesus in your life.

* * *

Bless our home, Father,  
and all who live here in peace:  
may we all love you.
Second Week in Advent

MONDAY

See also Is. 35: 1-10, and Ps. 85

Gospel reading (Lk. 5: 17-26): Jesus cures a man and forgives his sins because he and his friends have faith.

Reflection: Jesus sees our faith and trust in him. He is ready to forgive us and change our lives. Do we praise God for saving us through Jesus?

Prayer: Jesus, you are our Lord and our brother:
Come and save us from our sins.
Stir up our faith,
and help us to love you more.

Action: Forgive someone as God has forgiven you.

TUESDAY

See also Is. 40: 1-11, and Ps. 96

Gospel reading (Mt. 18: 12-14): Our heavenly Father wants to save everyone.

Reflection: Are we praying for sinners? Do we rejoice when we are forgiven? Do we resent it when God chooses to forgive some people?

Prayer: Father in heaven, look at your people with love, and forgive us our sins. Call sinners back to Jesus, and let us all praise you for saving us by your love.

Action: Pray for sinners, and thank God when he forgives them.

WEDNESDAY

See also Is. 40: 25-31, and Ps. 103

Gospel reading (Mt. 11: 28-30): Jesus invites us to come to him when we are weary, and share in his burden.

Reflection: Jesus knows how weary we can be. He wants us to come to him for true rest and peace. Are we ready to let him guide us in our work for him?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, look on your people and help us to build up God's kingdom with you. Give us strength and courage to go on with you when we are tired. Lord Jesus, we love you.

Action: Help someone who is tired or has too much to do.
Second Week in Advent

THURSDAY

See also Is. 41: 13-20, and Ps. 145

Gospel reading (Mt. 11: 11-15): Jesus tells us that John the Baptist is the greatest of the prophets.

Reflection: God promises to save us. John the Baptist tells us that Jesus is our savior. Do I want to be saved? Am I trying to live with Jesus for the Father?

Prayer: Loving Father,
we praise you for loving us
and for giving us Jesus as our savior.
Help us to accept him as our Lord,
and serve you by serving other people with love.

Action: Praise God because he loves us all, and share your love with other people.

FRIDAY

See also Is. 48: 17-19, and Ps. 1

Gospel reading (Mt. 11: 16-19): Jesus talks about the way many people reject prophets that God sends to us.

Reflection: God sends us prophets to teach us about him. Prophets tell us God’s word, and not what we want to hear. Are we listening to God’s word in our home? Who are his prophets in our world?

Prayer: Holy Father,
let the Spirit of Jesus stir up our hearts.
Open our minds and lives to your word,
and help us to listen with faith to your prophets.
Have mercy on all your people.

Action: Find a true prophet in our time, and listen.

SATURDAY

See also Sir. 48: 1-4, 9-11, and Ps. 80

Gospel reading (Mt. 17: 10-13): God sent John the Baptist as his prophet, but people didn’t listen. They will also make Jesus suffer.

Reflection: God continues to teach us in many ways: in nature, in grace, in people, in events, in his word. Do we look for his hand in all these? Are we open to his will, to his ways?

Prayer: Lord Jesus,
forgive those who do not listen to your prophets.
Open our hearts to your Spirit,
and lead us in your light.

Action: Listen to God, and share his words with others.
THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

John the Baptist continues to guide us toward Jesus. We begin to turn our attention to the coming feast of Christmas, when we will remember God's love for us: he has sent his Son to be one of us, Jesus our brother and our savior.

If today falls on or after Dec. 17, the Sunday readings are used. The prayer may be taken from either the Sunday or the weekday (pages 169-170).


Advent wreath: See page 151. The rose candle and two purple ones are lighted.

Gospel reading (Mt. 11: 2-11): Jesus tells the followers of John the Baptist that he is the one sent by God to heal his people and bring them the Good News of salvation. John is the prophet sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus.

Other readings: Is. 35: 1-6a, 10; Ps. 146; and James 5: 7-10 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 45-49).

Reflection: God's people are encouraged to rejoice, for God is coming to help us and heal us. He loves us, and listens to our prayers. Jesus is coming: are we ready to greet him?

Prayer:  Jesus, our Lord and our brother,  open our hearts to your Spirit of love.  Give us the courage to do your will, and help us to listen to your word.

Action: Thank God our Father for his gifts to you, and ask him to heal you.


Advent wreath: See page 151. The rose candle and two purple ones are lighted.

Gospel reading (Jn. 1: 6-8, 19-28): John the Baptist came to lead people to Jesus. John is the voice telling us to make a straight road for the Lord.

Other readings: Is. 61: 1-2a, 10-11; and 1 Thess. 5: 16-24 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 63-66).

Reflection: The Spirit of God has been poured on Jesus, who comes to save God's people and lead them to give him glory. God will make us perfect and keep us holy, but we have to work with him. Am I ready to let God do this in my life?
Third Sunday in Advent

Prayer:  
   Eternal Father,
   send your Spirit into our hearts
   to conquer evil and make us holy.
   Let us share in the victory of Jesus over sin
   and grow in your love each day.

Action: Work with Jesus and his Spirit to root out your sins, and prepare a straight road for the Lord in your heart.

Year C  

Advent wreath: See page 151. The rose candle and two purple ones are lighted.

Gospel reading (Lk. 3: 10-18): John the Baptist tells people to share their food and goods with those in need, and to avoid bullying others. He promises that the Messiah will come to baptize us with the Spirit and with fire.

Other readings: Zeph. 3: 14-18a; Phil. 4: 4-7 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 79-83).

Reflection: We are invited by God to rejoice, because he is with us. He has overcome sin through Jesus, and we should sing for joy. Whenever we pray to him, he listens to our needs.

Prayer:  
   Heavenly Father,
   help us to remember
   that you are living in the hearts of all who love you.
   Listen to our prayers for strength
   and give us the grace to serve you with Jesus.

Action: Start to remove from your life whatever is against the will of Jesus for you.

   *   *   *

A prayer for joy:

   Blessed are you, Lord God,
   maker of heaven and earth:
   you have given us your Spirit with his gifts.

   Fill us with joy at your love for us,
   and help us to love you by loving others
   and by enjoying life in your service.

   Glory to you, Father,
   through your beloved Son
   in your Spirit of joy,
   for ever and ever.

   All answer  Amen!
Third Week in Advent

Special readings are provided for December 17-24: see pages 169-171.

**MONDAY**

See also Num. 24: 2-7, 15-17a, and Ps. 25

Gospel reading (Mt. 21: 23-27): Both John the Baptist and Jesus were sent by God to call people to turn back to God's ways.

Reflection: Our Father sends Jesus to show us how much God loves us: how do we answer his love? Jesus our Lord teaches us his ways: are we listening to him?

Prayer: Loving Father, we praise you for your love and for sending Jesus to be our Lord and brother. Help us to listen to him and follow his ways.

Action: Look at your own life, and see where Jesus wants you to change to his ways.

**TUESDAY**

See also Zephaniah 3: 1-2, 9-13, and Ps. 34

Gospel reading (Mt. 21: 28-32): Jesus calls sinners to repent, to change their lives, and to do God's will. Then they can give God praise by their way of life.

Reflection: God is calling us to turn away from our sins and faults, and to change our lives for him. He invites us to do his will with Jesus. Are we listening?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, our brother and our savior, you came to do the Father's will in all things. Help us to keep your commandment of love and build up God's kingdom with you.

Action: Do something to show you love the other people in your home.

**WEDNESDAY**

See also Is. 45: 6b-8, 18, 21b-25; and Ps. 85

Gospel reading (Lk. 7: 18b-23): By healing and helping many people, our Lord shows that he is the Messiah that God's people are waiting for.

Reflection: God our Father has sent his Son Jesus to lead his people back to him. Our Lord forgives our sins, and helps us to praise God each day. Our heavenly Father wants us to put our trust in Jesus.

Prayer: Jesus, we trust you: help us to believe in you more firmly and follow you by loving and helping other people.

Action: Do something good for another person as a sign of your love.
**THURSDAY**

Gospel reading (Lk. 7: 24-30): John the Baptist was the prophet sent by God to get people ready for Jesus.

Reflection: Are we listening to God's word, and getting ready to recognize and welcome Jesus in our midst? God gives his people joy when they obey him and praise him.

Prayer:  
Heavenly Father,  
we praise you for your love.  
Help us to give you glory  
by our prayers and by our actions for you.

Action: Listen to the people that God sends to teach us about his ways.

**FRIDAY**

Gospel reading (Jn. 5: 33-36): John the Baptist was sent by God to lead people to Jesus. Our Lord has come to save us.

Reflection: God calls all nations to serve him and praise him: Jesus is the savior and king of all. How open am I to Jesus? Do I follow him by praying, by praising God, by obeying him?

Prayer:  
Jesus, our brother and our Lord,  
we give you glory for saving the world.  
Help all the people who are alive today  
to turn to God through you.

Action: Give praise to God, and pray for someone in need.

* * *

"O" antiphons: These are prayers addressed to Christ in the terms of the Hebrew scriptures. They are used as antiphons to the canticle of Mary (Lk. 1: 46-55) in the Church's evening prayer from Dec. 17 to Dec. 23.

See page 152, above, and the prayers given for Dec. 17-23 on pages 169-171, below.
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Joseph, Mary, and Elizabeth praise God our Father for his goodness, and prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ our savior.

The Sunday readings are used. The prayer may be taken from the fourth Sunday, below, or from the appropriate date between December 18 and 24 (see pages 169-171).

Year A

Advent wreath: See page 151. All four candles are lighted.

Gospel reading (Mt. 1: 18-24): Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit, and comes to save his people from sin. He is Emmanuel, God-with-us.

Other readings: Is. 7: 10-14; Ps. 24; and Rom. 1: 1-7 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 49-53).

Reflection: Our Lord is the king of glory, holy and powerful: he is the Son of God. Sent by the heavenly Father, he became the son of the virgin Mary, to lead us to joy and peace.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, Son of God,
our brother and our savior,
we praise you:
help us to love you and follow you each day.

Action: Show that you follow Jesus by helping another person today.

Year B

Advent wreath: See page 151. All four candles are lighted.

Gospel reading (Lk. 1: 26-38): Mary accepts God's will for her, and Jesus is conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the Son of God, and will be our king for ever.

Other readings: 2 Sam. 7: 1-5, 8b-11, 16; Ps. 89; Rom. 16: 25-27 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 67-70).

Reflection: David's descendants will rule for ever: Jesus is our eternal king, and we sing his praises. We give God glory and praise through Jesus.
Fourth Sunday in Advent

Prayer:  
Blessed are you, Holy Father:  
you have sent your Son to be our Lord,  
and have made him our king for ever.  
Help us to love him and follow him each day.

Action: Look at your life: is there anything in it that is against God's will for you?

Year C  

Advent wreath: See page 151. All four candles are lighted.

Gospel reading (Lk. 1: 39-45): Mary visits Elizabeth, who calls her blessed and the mother of our Lord. Mary is praised for believing what God has promised to her.

Other readings: Micah 5: 1-4a; Ps. 80; Heb. 10: 5-10 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 83-87).

Reflection: Bethlehem is to be the birthplace of the shepherd of God's people. Jesus comes to us, ready to obey God's will: this is the sacrifice that is pleasing to God, the sacrifice by which Jesus saved us.

Prayer:  
Lord Jesus,  
we praise you for saving us  
by obeying the Father's will for you.  
Help us to keep your commandment  
by loving others as you love us.

Action: Do I deliberately disobey God? If so, he wants me to change, and obey him as Jesus did.

* * *

A prayer to Mary:

Blessed are you, mother of my Lord,  
for you have believed the word of God.  
In faith and love,  
you have pondered the words and actions of God  
in your life and the life of his holy people.

With Jesus we call you mother.  
Pray for us,  
and ask your Son to lead us to the Father.

All answer  Amen!
Week Before Christmas

**DECEMBER 17**

*See also Gen. 49: 2, 8-10, and Ps. 72*

**Gospel reading** (Mt. 1: 1-17): Jesus is the savior promised by God. He comes to save us from sin and to rule us in peace.

**Reflection**: God loves us so much that he sends his own Son to become one of us and save us (Jn. 3: 16-17). What does God want me to change in my life?

**Prayer**:  
*Jesus, Wisdom of the Father,  
you rule and guide the universe with love:  
come and show your people  
the path leading to God's salvation.*

**Action**: Remember what God has done in your life, and thank him.

**DECEMBER 18**

*See also Jer. 23: 5-8, and Ps. 72*

**Gospel reading** (Mt. 1: 18-24): God reveals to Joseph that Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit, and is to save God's people from sin.

**Reflection**: Jesus is the promised savior who comes to be our king, and save us from sin. How often do we thank him for saving us? Let us praise God our Father for sending Jesus to us, and continue to work to remove sin from our life.

**Prayer**:  
*Lord Jesus,  
you are the savior of the world.  
Reach out to us:  
come and free us from our sins.*

**Action**: Thank God for sending Jesus to save us.

**DECEMBER 19**

*See also Judges 13: 2-7, 24-25a, and Ps. 71*

**Gospel reading** (Lk. 1: 5-25): God hears the prayers of Elizabeth and Zechariah, and sends them a son. John the Baptist will be a prophet who leads people back to God.

**Reflection**: Our God loves us and continues to call us back to him, John the Baptist came to lead people to Jesus, and Jesus continues to lead us back to the Father. Am I listening to his voice?

**Prayer**:  
*Jesus, son of David,  
you are a sign of God's love for all nations:  
come and save the world.*

**Action**: God loves you. Share his love and your love with someone else.
Week Before Christmas

**DECEMBER 20**

*See also Is. 7: 10-14, and Ps. 24*

**Gospel reading** (Lk. 1: 26-38): God invites Mary to be the mother of his Son, who will be a great king and rule God's people for ever. Mary accepts God's will for her.

**Reflection:** God sends his Son to be one of us, Emmanuel or God-with-us. Jesus is our brother and our king. Are we ready to obey his commandment of love, and let him rule our lives?

**Prayer:**

*Lord Jesus, son and key of David,*

*we are in need of your help:*

*come and free us from darkness, sin, and death,*

*and bring us into the freedom of God's children.*

**Action:** Start to get rid of something in your life that is against God's will for you.

**DECEMBER 21**

*See also Zeph. 3: 14-18a, or Song of Songs 2: 8-14; and Ps. 33*

**Gospel reading** (Lk. 1: 39-45): Mary goes to visit Elizabeth. The Spirit causes John to leap for joy in his mother's womb. She praises Mary because she has believed God's word to her.

**Reflection:** God speaks to each of us about his love for us: are we listening? Do we believe his promises of everlasting life and joy for us? How ready are we to praise God for the good things he does in us?

**Prayer:**

*Jesus, radiant dawn of God's love,*

*light from light, light of the world:*

*come and bring your light*

*to all who live in sin,*

*and bring them into your kingdom of light.*

**Action:** Praise God for the good he does in each member of your family.

**DECEMBER 22**

*See also 1 Sam. 1: 24-28*

**Gospel reading** (Lk. 1: 46-56): Mary praises God for loving his people and for sending them a savior.

**Reflection:** Do we praise and thank God for loving us? When do you thank God for loving and saving you? (Mary's song in today's gospel is used by the Church as a song of praise in evening prayer each day.)

**Prayer:**

*Jesus, king of all nations,*

*you are the only source of true joy:*

*come and save all people from misery*

*and bring us into your kingdom of peace.*

**Action:** Thank God for loving you and calling you to follow Jesus.
DECEMBER 23

See also Mal. 3: 1-4, 23-24, and Ps. 25

Gospel reading (Lk. 1: 57-66): John the Baptist is born. His parents give him the name chosen for him by God, and praise the Lord for his gifts to his people.

Reflection: John came to lead us to Jesus. God sends many messengers to show us his way, his path of truth. Am I ready to listen to all who lead me to God?

Prayer: Jesus, God-with-us,
you are the savior of all:
come and free us from sin,
and bring us into your kingdom.

Action: Listen to God's word, and thank him for his gifts of love to your family.

DECEMBER 24

See also 2 Sam. 7: 1-5, 8b-11, 16; and Ps. 89

Morning Mass

Gospel reading (Lk. 1: 67-79): Zechariah blesses (praises) God for keeping his promises, and for saving his people through the Messiah. He also sees God's plan for John as preparing the way for the Lord.

Reflection: Do we praise and thank God for remembering and keeping his promises to us? Do we give him glory for saving us through Jesus? (The Church prays Zechariah's canticle each day at morning prayer.)

Prayer: Loving Father,
we praise you for giving us Jesus to save us.
Help us to follow him
by obeying your commandments
and loving other people as he did.

Action: Give thanks to God our Father for saving us through Jesus.

*   *   *

On Christmas eve, the family may want to spend a few moments in prayerful watching:

* Rereading the Christmas story
* Praying for themselves, for their family, relatives, friends, and neighbors
* Praying for peace in the world
* Thanking God for his many gifts to us: see page 176.
Family activities

The days before and during the Christmas season are hectic, with individual members of the family going in all directions to all sorts of parties, plays, and events. Some positive suggestions for family activities and prayer are outlined in the following pages. How can you include them in your family's way of handing on the message? (See pages 147-148, above.)

Christmas Tree Blessing

The tree may be decorated with lights and Christian symbols (see pages 151-153, above). The family or group gathers around it, and friends and neighbors may be invited for the blessing of the tree.

Opening song: All sing a verse or two of a Christmas hymn or carol.

Reading: A gospel passage may be read: Lk. 2: 1-14; Lk. 2: 15-20; Lk. 2: 16-20; Lk. 2: 25-32; or Jn. 1: 1-5, 9-14.

Silent prayer: A moment of silent reflection on God's love for us.

Blessing: All stand — if desired, with hands outstretched in prayer — for the blessing:

All glory and praise to you, heavenly Father:
we thank you for sending us your Son Jesus
to be our brother.

Bless + us as we gather here,
and bless + our Christmas tree.
Let its lights remind us of Jesus,
who came to be the light of the world
and to save us from sin.
Grant that we may welcome him as our savior,
and continue to give you glory by our lives.

We ask this grace, Father,
in the name of Christ our Lord. All answer Amen!

Sign of peace: All may share a sign of peace, and sing a Christmas hymn or carol.
A Crib in Your Home

The crib may be a vivid reminder of the birth of Jesus as our savior. It may be set up during the last days of Advent. If desired, family members may make the crib and figures. On Christmas eve, the parents may tell the story to their children, or encourage them to tell it or re-enact it. Then the figure of Jesus is placed in the manger. The figures of the wise men are best reserved until Epiphany (see pages 175 and 183, below).

**Blessing:** After the crib has been set up (and the house or room has been decorated), all may gather for the blessing of the crib.

**Readings:**

Let us listen to the story of Christmas.

A first reader reads Heb. 1: 1-3 (God prepares us for the coming of our savior). A second reader reads Jn. 3: 16-17 (God’s love for us). Then a third reader reads Lk. 1: 28-33 (our savior is coming). All may sing a verse or two of a Christmas hymn, or “God is love.”

The first reader reads Lk. 2: 1-5 (trip to Bethlehem), followed by the second reader with Lk. 2: 6-7 (birth of Jesus). The third reader concludes with Lk. 2: 8-20 (shepherds). All may sing a verse or two of “Silent night,” or the “Huron carol.”

The first reader then reads Heb. 1: 4-6 (adoration by angels). A song follows: “Angels we have heard on high,” “What child is this,” or “Go, tell it on the mountain.”

**Litany:** The Christmas litany on page 176 may be prayed.

**Blessing:**

Let us pray.

All pause for a moment of silent prayer.

Blessed are you, Lord God, king of all creation: we praise you for your love.

We thank you because you have loved us so much that you sent your only Son to bring us eternal life.

Bless + this crib that we have prepared, and let it be a reminder to us of the Lord Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary.

Father, we praise you through Christ our Lord.

All answer **Amen!**

The celebration concludes with all standing around the crib, singing “O come, all ye faithful.”
BODY

HEAD

CLOAK

ROLL TO FORM A CONE FOR THE BODY
• **Christmas:**

• **Epiphany:**
LITANY FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

One of these litanies may be used in our prayers during the Christmas season. The response may be sung.

Blessed are you, Lord God.
All answer  Amen!

Holy is your name.  R.
You have sent your Son to be one of us.  R.
You love your people with deepest love.  R.
You have sent your Son to save us from sin.  R.

Great is your mercy for your people.  R.
You fill your children with joy.  R.
You call us to praise your name.  R.
Look with love upon your holy Church.  R.
Send the Spirit of your Son into our hearts.  R.

Let us bring glory and praise to your name.  R.
Through Jesus Christ your Son.  R.
And in the love of your holy Spirit.  R.

*  *  *

Give thanks to God, for he is good.
All answer  Glory to God in the highest!

He sent his Son to be one of us.  R.
He sent his Son because he loves us.  R.
He sent his Son to dwell among us.  R.
He sent his Son to save us.  R.
Jesus came to save us from sin.  R.
He came to bring us eternal life.  R.
Jesus is Emmanuel, God-with-us.  R.

The family may wish to develop its own litany, using the format of Ps. 136, and praising God the Father for the events of the Christmas story. This could use scripture phrases from the readings of the Christmas season (see references on pages 178-184, below, and in Sunday Mass Book, pages 91-139).
BLESSINGS IN YOUR FAMILY

These blessings may be celebrated on the feast of the Holy Family, or much more often.

Parental blessing for children: The blessing of children by their parents, a custom mentioned in the scriptures, is a practice that is once more beginning to take its rightful place in family living. A strong French-Canadian tradition continues this blessing on New Year's day. In some families, the parents bless the children each evening before they go to bed, or before their lights are turned out.

- Simple form:

  May God bless you, N.
  and keep you in his love.

  The child answers  Amen!

- Bedtime:

  Heavenly Father,
  bless N. and keep him/her in your love.
  Grant him/her a good rest tonight,
  and send your angels to protect him/her.
  In the name of the Father, and of the + Son,
  and of the Holy Spirit.

  The child answers  Amen!

Family blessing: This may be said by one or both parents, or by all the family:

  Heavenly Father,
  we bless you and give you thanks
  for your love and kindness.

  Look on us with love
  as we come together in Jesus' name.
  Bless + us all: mother and father,
  Katie and Gregory, Andrew and Pauline.
  Help us to love you,
  teach us to be good,
  and help us to help other people.

  Father,
  we pray to you through Jesus our Lord.

  All answer  Amen!

*  *  *

During the year: Parents may bless their children at any time. It is particularly appropriate to give them a blessing as they are going to bed, or before they go on a trip. Parents may place their hands on each child's head in silence, or say a simple "God bless you," or use a more formal blessing, as given above.
Christmas Day

God loves us so much that he gave us his Son as our savior and source of life. We celebrate the coming of the eternal Son of God as one of us. Born before the ages, he becomes a man and is born of the virgin Mary.

Gospel readings:

- Mt. 1: 18-25 (or 1-25): Jesus, son of David, is conceived by the Holy Spirit. He is Emmanuel, God-with-us, and he comes to save us from our sins.
- Lk. 2: 1-14: Jesus is born in Bethlehem, and is laid in a manger. Angels tell shepherds that the savior is born, and sing their hymn of glory to God.
- Lk. 2: 15-20: The shepherds visit Jesus and tell everyone what they have heard and seen. They glorify God, and Mary reflects on what he has done.
- Jn. 1: 1-5, 9-14 (or 1-18): The eternal Word of God is the light of all people. He becomes flesh and brings his light into our darkness. He saves all who accept him as the Son of God our Father.

Other readings help us to reflect on the meaning of this celebration: see Is. 62: 1-5; Is. 9: 1-4, 6-7; Is. 52: 7-10; Ps. 89; Ps. 96; Ps. 97; Ps. 98; Titus 2: 11-14; Titus 3: 4-7; Heb. 1: 1-6. (See Sunday Mass Book, pages 92-111.)

Reflection: Even though we have sinned against him, God loves his people, and sends his own Son to become one of us. Jesus, Son of God, is our brother and our savior. How much God loves us!

Prayer: Heavenly Father,
we praise you and thank you
for sending your Son Jesus to be our savior.
Help us to keep his commandments
and to love you by loving other people.

Blessed are you, Lord our God,
for ever and ever.

or:

Lord Jesus, our brother:
we praise you.
You have come to save us from sin:
we praise you.
You are our holy Lord:
we praise you.
Help us to be kind to others:
we praise you.
Lord Jesus, Son of God:
we praise you.

Action: To thank God for loving you, show your love for someone today.
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are the holy family. They try to follow God's law faithfully, and show their love for him by loving and serving God's people.

Gospel reading: Three incidents from the life of the holy family are described in this Sunday's gospel:

  
  Joseph is commanded to take Mary and Jesus into Egypt. Like the chosen people, Jesus is led by God from Egypt to the land of Israel.

  
  In the temple Jesus is presented to God. Simeon and Anna praise God and speak about this child sent by God to save his people. Jesus grows to maturity before God and his people.

  
  At the age of 12, Jesus remains in the temple to speak with the teachers. His parents find him, and bring him home to Nazareth, where he continues to grow to maturity before God and his people.

Other readings: Sir 3: 3-7, 14-17; Ps. 128; Col. 3: 12-21 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 112-118).

Reflection: Parents and children are invited to let Jesus' love guide their lives. By loving, helping, and forgiving one another, we may grow to full maturity in Christ our Lord.

Prayer: Jesus, our brother and our Lord,  
fill our family with your Spirit of love.  
Help us to love you by loving one another each day.  
Be with us today and always  
as we try to live for you.

Action: Show you love God by loving all the members of your family.

* * *

Family blessings: Parents may wish to bless their children on the feast of the Holy Family, and on other days: see page 177, above.
Christmas Week

DECEMBER 26

See also Acts 6: 8-10; 7: 54-59; and Ps. 31

St. Stephen, first martyr

Gospel reading (Mt. 10: 17-22): Jesus promises his followers that they will be handed over to bear witness to him. The Holy Spirit will speak through them. Those who stand up for Jesus will be saved.

Reflection: Read the story of St. Stephen in Acts 6 and 7: he is handed over and stands up for Jesus. He entrusts his life to our Lord and enters glory. How willing am I to bear witness for Jesus in my daily life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus,
you showed your love for us by dying to save us.
Help us to live each day for you.

Action: Make some change in your life that will help you to give witness for Jesus.

DECEMBER 27

See also 1 Jn. 1: 1-4, and Ps. 97

St. John, apostle and gospel writer

Gospel reading (Jn. 20: 2-8): When Mary Magdalen reports that Jesus' tomb is empty, Peter and John run to see. They enter, and John believes in the risen Lord.

Reflection: The apostles believed in Jesus, and they shared their faith with us. When we believe in Jesus, the Trinity lives in our heart, and we share the joy of Jesus.

Prayer: Holy Father,
we praise you for raising Jesus from the dead.
Help us to believe in him more strongly
and put our faith into action each day.

Action: Praise God for teaching you about Jesus our Lord.

DECEMBER 28

See also 1 Jn. 1: 5-2: 2, and Ps. 124

Holy Innocents, martyrs

Gospel reading (Mt. 2: 13-18): Joseph is warned to take Mary and Jesus to safety. Herod tries to kill Jesus by slaughtering all the baby boys around Bethlehem.

Reflection: Like Moses, Jesus is saved from the tyrant. By dying for us on the cross, Jesus obeys the Father and washes us clean from sin. We praise God our Father for forgiving us through Jesus.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, our brother,
we thank you for saving us from sin.
Purify us, and help us to be holy in our daily living.

Action: Continue to die to sin and live with Jesus for God.
Christmas Week

DECEMBER 29

See also 1 Jn. 2: 3-11, and Ps. 96

Gospel reading (Lk. 2: 22-35): Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the temple to present him to God. Simeon praises God for sending Jesus as light to all the world.

Reflection: Jesus is brought to the temple of God his Father. Simeon's song is used by the Church in its night prayer: we are to be ready to go in peace to our Father, who gives us Jesus as our light. We keep Jesus' commands as our way of serving God.

Prayer:  
Lord Jesus, light of the world,  
rescue us and all sinners from the power of sin.  
Make us children of your light,  
so that we may follow you  
and praise you as our king and savior.

Action: Share Jesus' light and love with the rest of your family.

DECEMBER 30

See also 1 Jn. 2: 12-17, and Ps. 96

Gospel reading (Lk. 2: 36-40): Anna praises God, who has sent Jesus to save us. The family returns to Nazareth, where Jesus matures before God and his people.

Reflection: Jesus wants us, old and young, to become mature Christians. He has forgiven our sins, and sends us to do God's will and love other people each day. This is the way we give him glory.

Prayer:  
Glory to you, Lord Jesus, our king and our brother:  
protect your people from sin,  
and help us to love you more  
by loving and serving others each day.

Action: Do something to show you love other people.

DECEMBER 31

See also 1 Jn. 2: 18-21, and Ps. 96

Gospel reading (Jn. 1: 1-18): The gospel reminds us that God's own Son became a man, one of us, our brother. He helps us to accept him as our savior, and makes us God's children.

Reflection: As we come to the end of Christmas week, we praise our heavenly Father for loving us so much that he sent his Son to be our brother Jesus.

Prayer:  
Loving Father,  
we thank you for sending your Son  
to become one of us, our brother Jesus.  
Fill us with his Spirit of truth,  
and help us to follow him by loving other people.

Action: Help someone today as a sign of your love.

New year's eve:  
see page 182.
New Year's Eve

A family may wish to offer this prayer at supper or during the evening on New Year's eve or near the end of the year:

All praise and glory are yours,
Father of heaven and earth, Lord of all ages:
you have brought us to the end of another year in your service.
We praise you for the gifts you have given us,
and for the ways we have been led to use them
for your people and for your world.
Forgive us, Father, for our failures this year:
for neglecting your word,
for failing to listen to your Spirit,
for refusing to love you in others.
As we begin a new year in your service,
bless + our family and our friends.
Let your Son be our leader and your Spirit our guide,
your word a lamp for our feet and strength for our hearts.
Help us to work for your honor and glory
and for the salvation of all your people.
Praise and honor and glory are yours, Father,
through your Son, our Lord and brother,
in the love and unity of your Holy Spirit
now and evermore.          All answer   Amen!

JANUARY 1

Mary, Mother of God

We begin a new civil year by praising our heavenly Father for his great love:
he has chosen to save us by sending his Son to be born of Mary and to be one of us.

Gospel reading (Lk. 2: 16-21): The shepherds praise God for what he has done.
Mary reflects in her heart on God’s mighty deeds for his people.

Other readings: Num. 6: 22-27; Ps. 67; Gal. 4: 4-7 (see Sunday Mass Book, pages 119-122).

Reflection: In his great love for his holy people, God blesses us. The greatest of his blessings is Jesus, Son of God, who was born of the virgin Mary. He comes to invite us to call God our beloved Father.

Prayer:   Holy Father,
we praise you for calling us in Jesus your Son
to be your beloved children.
Help us to love you and serve you this year
as faithfully as Mary did.

Action: As we begin a new year in God's service, we ask Jesus to guide us in his pathways. We may ask God to bless our family (page 177, above).
Other prayers:

• **New year:**

  Blessed are you, Lord God,
  maker and ruler of the universe:
you have brought us to the beginning
of another new year in your service.
Remember your love for us in Jesus Christ,
and help us to live for your honor and glory
and for the salvation of all.

  Blessed are you, Lord God,
  now and for ever.
All answer *Amen!*

• **For peace:**

  Lord Jesus, prince of peace,
bring peace into the world.
You died to save us all:
raise us to new life with you,
and help us to be peacemakers.

  Lord Jesus Christ, hear our prayer,
  for you are Lord for ever.
All answer *Amen!*

**EPIPHANY OF THE LORD**  
*Sunday after January 1*

*Epiphany means “appearing” or “manifestation.” We know that God loves us because he sent his Son to be among us as our brother and our leader. Today we celebrate as Jesus is shown to be the savior of all nations and cultures.*

**Gospel reading** (Mt. 2: 1-12): Wise men come to honor the newborn king, the shepherd of God’s people. At Bethlehem they give him their gifts.

**Other readings:** Is. 60: 1-6; Ps. 72; Eph. 3: 2-3, 5-6 (see *Sunday Mass Book*, pages 129-133).

**Reflection:** The Lord Jesus brings light to his chosen people. All nations sing his praise, for he brings God’s justice and peace into the world. Jesus is the savior of all.

**Prayer:**  
Lord Jesus, our brother and our savior,
bring your light into our hearts.
Help us to work with you and with your people
to bring your justice and peace to all.
Call all nations to sing your praises.

**Action:** Do what is right, and let the light of Jesus Christ shine out in your daily living.
**BAPTISM OF THE LORD**  
*Sunday after Epiphany*¹

John the Baptist baptizes Jesus in the Jordan River. The Spirit of God rests on Jesus, and the Father declares that he is his beloved Son. Jesus' baptism is a model of what God does in each of us when we are baptized.

- **Year A:** Mt. 3: 13-17  

- **Year B:** Mk. 1: 6-11  

- **Year C:** Lk. 3: 15-16, 21-22  

When Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit comes upon him. Our heavenly Father declares that Jesus is his beloved Son.

**Other readings:** Is. 42: 1-4, 6-7; Ps. 29; and Acts. 10: 34-38 (see *Sunday Mass Book*, pages 134-139).

**Reflection:** God has chosen Jesus as his beloved Son and servant, and sends him to heal us and save us. We give God glory for sending Jesus as our brother and our Lord.

**Prayer:**

*Blessed and praised are you, Lord our God,  
king of heaven and Father of your people:  
we give you glory for your great love.  
We thank you for saving us  
by sending your Son to be one of us.*

*Father,  
we bless you through Christ our Lord.*

**Action:** We remember that God has made us his beloved sons and daughters in baptism, and we ask him to help us to live as his children should.

¹ In some years, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated on the Monday after Epiphany. The date for the feast is given for each year in the calendar on page 185.

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**NEXT ISSUE**

*Lent in Our Home* is the title of the next issue of the National Bulletin on Liturgy. Bulletin 86 is a companion volume to this issue, and may be used every year.

Bulletin 86 will be a booklet that families and individuals can use during Lent and Holy Week as they move with the Church toward the great Easter celebration of the Lord's victory over death. Daily reading references, reflections, prayers, and suggested practices are provided for each Sunday and weekday.

This issue contains 48 pages, and will be ready for mailing in November. Prices are as given on the inside front cover of this issue.
### Calendar 1982-2002

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* This year, the feast of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated on Saturday, Dec. 8; see page 158, above.
Prayer in your home

Your family is called to pray: As individuals, each of you is invited by God to praise him, and to pray to him for the world. As a family, you are invited by our heavenly Father to be a little part of his worldwide family: he calls you to be people of prayer.

• Each day: As individuals we should seek to spend a few moments in personal prayer. As a family too, we should come together in prayer at least once a day.

• What is happening in your home? Do you give praise and thanks to God? Do you pray for yourselves and for one another and for the world? Are you people of prayer?

What is the Lord Jesus asking of you?

Times for praying: There are many times when we can pray to God:

• Regular times: Morning, evening, and bedtime. It is good to mark these moments of the day with prayer.

• Meal time: We pause to thank God for his gifts to us.

• In time of need or joy: When someone — ourselves or others — is in need, temptation, frustration; in time of sadness; in time of joy or celebration.

• Anytime: We can turn to God at any moment, and give him praise, thank him, or ask him for help for ourselves and for others.

God is always listening to our prayer.

Actions as well as words: We can also express our prayer by our actions:

• Postures: Standing is the traditional position for public prayer, in honor of the risen Lord Jesus. We may bow in reverence, or sit as we pray, listen, or reflect. We may kneel as a sign of reverence, humility, or sorrow. In personal and family prayer, we may choose the postures that we find most suitable for our times of prayer.
• **Gestures:** Some gestures that we know from public worship may also be used in our prayer at home: large or small signs of the cross, striking our breast in sorrow, the kiss of peace, laying on hands in blessing. We may also stretch out our hands and arms in praise, reverence, petition, humility, or sorrow. All may hold hands in silence or during a prayer.

• **Symbols and symbolic actions,** such as light, water, burning incense, lighted candles, and making signs of reverence toward the book of God's word or a cross, may also be used in our prayer.

**Using your own words:** Our prayer must come from our heart. We may use prayers from scripture, the liturgy, and from the Church's tradition, as well as prayers written by others. We may also pray in our own words.

• **Praise and thanks:** Prayers from the scriptures and the liturgy are often prayers of praise and thanks; we give glory to God first before we make our petitions.

• **Variety:** In personal and family prayer, we are free to use a variety of prayers. When we are encouraged to pray in our own words as part of our prayer, we are able to grow in our prayer. At the same time, we need to be careful that we are not putting up a smoke screen of words to hide what is in our hearts.

• **Silence** is always a valuable part of our prayer, letting God's Spirit speak to us in moments of stillness.

**A corner for prayer:** Some families find it helpful to have a corner where members can pray alone or together.

• **Where:** It can be a quiet room, or a corner of the family room, used when the TV and radio are shut off. Or it can be the dinner table after the dishes are cleared away.

• **Books:** The prayer corner may contain a shelf or table to hold a bible, psalm books, hymnals, prayer books, and other helpful publications. Blessed water may be kept there and used in times of prayer.

• **Furnishings:** The corner need not be elaborate. Chairs, stools, a bench, or cushions could be available, depending on the age and agility of family members.

• **Good art:** A picture, icon, statue, or cross of good quality may mark this spot for prayer. Sometimes a banner in good taste may be displayed. When the family gathers to pray, a candle may be lighted, or the lights turned down.

• **A place for quiet:** The prayer corner may be used by individuals in the family as a place for silence, reflection, or prayer; or as a place to regain composure after an upset. At such times, other family members should respect the person's need for quiet.

• **Visitors:** When relatives or friends come, invite them to see your family's corner for prayer. They may wish to pray for your family, or join you in prayer while in your home.

After presenting the place of various ministries in the history and the present life of the Church, Fr. Allen offers concise reflections on the meaning and responsibilities of these four ministries. Specific requirements and needs, questions for discussion, and practical points provide a useful resource for ministers, liturgy committees, and clergy. Recommended as a helpful aid.

Little Things Mean a Lot: Minute Meditations, by Marie McIntyre (1982, Twenty-Third Publications, PO Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355): paper, 4 by 7 inches, photographs, 48 pages. $1.95.

Forty brief one-page reflections on common objects, each ending with a short “help me, God” prayer: this booklet may be carried in purse or pocket, and opened any time at any page. Recommended to all as an aid to personal prayer and reflection on God's work in us.


When used in catechetics class or other youth groups, these forms can be useful to children. No matter how you twist or bend the Directory for Masses with Children, it does not permit or encourage this type of thing in the eucharist. Nor does good taste.


Guide notes for teachers and parents [shouldn't this order be reversed?] are included. Useful references from scripture, Vatican II documents, and the U.S. catechetical directory are given for adults' use. The liturgy is explored in unit five by looking at the sacraments one by one. In places lacking the Canadian catechetical program, this could be a useful resource.


This is vol. 3 of a new series, Message of the Sacraments, under the general editorship of Monika Hellwig (see next review). In this book, Dr. Keifer explores what the eucharist can mean for ordinary Catholics in our day. Both liturgical reform and popular piety are discussed with clarity as he helps us to understand the traditions from which we have come, and some of the directions in which the Spirit seems to be moving the Church. Clearly written, this book is recommended for clergy, seminarians, ministers of the eucharist, liturgy committees, and students of liturgy.

Prices for U.S. publications are given in U.S. dollars, unless otherwise noted.

In vol. 4 of the Message of the Sacraments series, Dr. Hellwig begins and ends this study with questions that Catholics are facing today. She leads us through various stages of the development of this sacrament and the role of the minister. We are also invited to reflect on the relationship of reconciliation and social justice in our world. Each chapter concludes with several references for further reading. Recommended as a helpful and up-to-date book for lay Catholics who want to explore this sacrament more fully, and for clergy and seminarians.

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This book is vol. 4 of studies in the Reformed Rites of the Catholic Church. Fr. Mitchell gives us a clear picture of the gradual development of worship of the eucharist outside the Mass, beginning with bringing communion to the sick and absent, and lay persons keeping the sacrament at home so that they could receive communion each day: these practices are recorded at Rome in 150 and 215 AD. The eucharist came to be celebrated on days other than Sunday, and gradually controversies and private devotion led to the worship of the eucharist outside Mass. This book includes the good, the bad, and the bizarre in our eucharistic history. The second half of the work studies the 1973 reforms of eucharistic worship outside Mass, and helps us to understand them more clearly in the context of Church renewal.

This excellent study is recommended highly for clergy, seminarians, students of liturgy, and for all who want a fuller understanding of this important part of our liturgical heritage.

* * *


The author, dean of the Anglican cathedral in Vancouver, gives us 40 two-page meditations on different stages and events in the life of Jesus. Writing as a believer for believers, he presents a reverent and helpful book that may be used by every Christian in personal and family prayer. Recommended.

* * *


These meditations on the mother of our Lord seek to provide a reverent portrait of Mary from the scriptures and the devotional heritage of the Church. Two-page meditations, each based on a passage of scripture, lead us into her thinking and feelings, and help us to appreciate this person whom Jesus called mother. Recommended as a book for personal and family prayer, and as a gift for a believing friend.

* * *


Father Haering is a good pastor who encourages us to accept God's many graces as we try to follow Jesus. We are not to be content with mediocrity, for we are called to be holy with Christ our brother and all God's children. This is a balanced, prayerful, and inspiring book which can benefit every Christian who wants to walk more faithfully with Jesus in the midst of life's daily concerns. Recommended.

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This issue provides an essay in truth and beauty, discussing the graces and needs of the sick and aged, and the ways in which the believing community can both assist them and learn from them. Solidly based on the scriptures, human experience, and the liturgy, the 15 articles in this book open our eyes to God's love and many possibilities that we have of celebrating it with the sick. Recommended for liturgy committees, ministers to the sick, clergy, and all who have sick or aged relatives.

* * *


A wise and experienced teacher and pastor explains the depths of meaning to be found in the signs, gestures, and words of the liturgy. Thirty brief articles — ten specifically addressed to children — open up the riches of the sign of the cross, blessed water, anointing with oil, standing for the gospel, Sunday, Lord, have mercy, communion, and many more. The translation is smooth, and the block prints add to the beauty of this book. Recommended for families, catechists, liturgy committees, and pastors.

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This attractive and colorful book is written for parents to read to preschool children. The illustrations have a touch of the icon, and invite children to explore their many details. From the annunciation to the coming of the wise men, we follow the events recorded in Matthew's gospel. Recommended as a prayerful reading book for families with young children.

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The author combines a brief reflection from John XXIII for each mystery with a sentence of scripture for each Hail, Mary in order to help people pray the rosary well.

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Fr. Bausch writes as a pastor to help educated Catholics grasp the full meaning of ministry in the New Testament, in the tradition of the Church, and in today's world. Practical examples from parish life and many opportunities for extending ministry now and in the future make this a book that can open many eyes in each community of faith. Recommended for parish ministers, councils, liturgy committees, organizations, and for clergy.

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CORRECTION: In Bulletin 82, page 14, second paragraph, line 6, “meditation” should read “mediation.”

On most of the Sundays in the year, we hear a reading from one of Paul's letters. Fr. Feider presents the 13 books of the New Testament which are attributed to Paul or his school, and helps us to meet them in their original context. Prepared for personal or group study, this book will be of great value to all who wish to grow in their understanding of St. Paul; those who preach or read during the Sunday liturgy will also benefit from this guide. Recommended.

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This book is an illustrated, hand-printed letter to a child, answering his questions about going to church on Sunday, about eucharist, and about God's presence. The text and its accompanying illustrations are good, and may be used with children as they begin to read, and as they prepare for their first communion. Recommended for families.

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Every book reveals something of its author's personality to the reader. But when it is a writer's last book, it can be a special mirror reflecting the depths of his penetrating insights. Urban Holmes died in 1981, but his clear thinking lives on, and is shared with us in this, his final book.

Dr. Holmes explores the meaning of the spiritual life for clergy in the present North American world. His writing is based on the Christian tradition and is aware of the findings of modern science. Faith and science are both realities exploring the wonderful works of God among us. This book analyzes the vocation of those ordained to ministry (without losing sight of the truth that baptism calls every Christian to minister), their prayer life in the service of others, the role of the community in working and praying with them.

This is a carefully written book. Recommended for clergy, seminarians, and all working for renewal in ministries.

* * *


In the American Revolution of 1776, thirteen colonies left the rule of Great Britain and formed the United States of America. In the process, the Anglicans in the new country had to change prayers for the King of England to prayers for local and national government; they also moved from being a daughter Church to becoming a sister Church of the Church of England.

A number of books by Dr. Hatchett have been reviewed and several of his articles included in past issues of the Bulletin. In this book, he traces the developments and movements for liturgical reform active in England and Scotland in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and shows their influences in America. The gradual process of revision is also outlined from letters, reports of meetings, and other publications, leading to the proposed book of 1786 and the American Book of Common Prayer of 1789. Further additions, revisions in 1892 and 1928, and even the present prayer book, testify to the wisdom of the process and the sound principles at work in making the 1789 book.

Recommended for all who wish to study the adaptation of liturgy to the needs of current society while remaining faithful to the tradition.
The Welcoming Table: Planning Masses with Children, by Elizabeth McMahon Jeep and others, edited by Mary Ann Simcoe (1982, Liturgy Training Publications, 155 East Superior Street, Chicago, IL 60611): paper, illustrations, 89 pages. $5.95 ($5.00 each for five or more).

Written for catechists and clergy who work with children to prepare and celebrate the Mass, this book contains 19 articles, the Directory for Masses with Children, and notes on copyright. Each article is brief and practical, and is based on the writer's experience in liturgies with children. A useful planning chart is given on pages 59-70. Music, words, gestures, planning, ministries — all have an important place. Recommended for schools and liturgy committees, catechists, teachers, and clergy.


This pleasant little booklet is written for children, and contains prayers from the scriptures, liturgy, and other parts of our tradition. Simple illustrations by Barbara Schmich and brief introductory notes increase the attractive and useful nature of this book. Recommended for families, for classes, and for catechists and clergy.

Church Calendar 1982-83: shaped by Sam Mackintosh and designed by Barbara Schmich (1982, Liturgy Training Publications, 155 East Superior St., Chicago, IL 60611): colored chart, approximately 26 by 26 inches. $1.50 (10 or more, $1.00 each).

This attractive chart portrays the liturgical year as a wheel revolving around the cross. Each day from August 1982 to July 1983 is shown, with larger indications for Sundays. All main feasts are indicated, along with Jewish holy days and American civic holidays, ember and rogation days, and Ascension Thursday.


The author, a Christian layman, writes for seminary trustees, showing how they can encourage seminaries to know their mission and provide leadership in the Churches. This booklet may be useful reading for seminary trustees and faculty members.

AN ANNIVERSARY

In 45 BC, Julius Caesar reformed the calendar in use in the Roman empire, and gave us the Julian calendar. It was more accurate than those in use up to his time, but it missed about a day every century.

By the sixteenth century, the calendar was ten days out of date. Pope Gregory XIII had his astronomers prepare a new one, the Gregorian calendar — the one we still use today as our civil calendar. It came into effect in 1582, and jumped ahead ten days at once: citizens went to bed on October 4, and woke up the next morning on the 15th. St. Teresa of Avila died on the fourth, and was buried the next day: her feast is still October 15.