

Catholic Parenting Newsletter

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January 10 is the Feast of St. John Camillus the Good. Do a "good" deed in secret.

January 26 is the Feast of St. Timothy. He learned his faith from his mother. Thank all who handed on the Faith to you.

"How, in this materialistic, competitive world, can I raise kind children? ...Begin by being a kind adult. When your child sees you go the extra mile to help a friend, carry someone's groceries, or invite people in to your life who aren't exactly like you, your child will see loving kindness as the natural way to live."

Mimi Doe

"Lent is a favorable season for opening the doors to all those in need and recognizing in them the face of Christ."-- Pope Francis

"The value of consistent prayer is not that God will hear us, but that we will hear God."

William McGill

"Each day of our lives, we make deposits in the memory banks of our children."

Charles R. Swindoll

Four Ways to Extend your Christmas Joy

What will you remember? Memories are the reason we have traditions. Without them, all of the work and energy we put into the Christmas season are for nothing. Save that card. Write down that special story. Frame that photograph. Share with loved ones the things that stood out to you this year so that they can become part of your mutual history of this most recent Christmas.

Who did you see? Out of opportunity, tradition or obligation, those we see at the holidays become an indelible part of how we experience Christmas. Think together as a family of those you didn't get to see this Christmas whom you wish you would have, friends or family who have passed on or who weren't nearby. Make a concerted effort to visit—in prayer, in person or virtually—those whom you missed this year.

What will you do differently next year?

These are not resolutions. Some Christmases just don't live up to our expectations. Sometimes we put too much pressure on ourselves, or even others, to act or be a certain way. Some traditions,

rituals and memories detract from the joy of the season rather than augmenting it. Talk honestly as a family about changes to make Christmas merry for everyone. Stay focused on the real reason for the season.

How are you keeping the spirit of Christmas going?

Christmas doesn't end on the 26th. The liturgical season goes well into January. And the phrase "we need a little Christmas right this very minute" is true year-round. Leave the Nativity scene up—even if only through the feast of the Epiphany (traditionally, January 6). Let your children touch it, and talk with them about the history and the meaning of the Holy Family.

Adapted from *Take Out*, OSV

Recommended Reading: "The Catholic Faith from A to Z"

by Sophie de Mullenheim

Arranged alphabetically, this beautifully illustrated book is much more than a simple dictionary. Fifty-two words, from Advent to Zeal, all important to our Faith. Fifty-two words that every Catholic child should know, thoroughly yet simply explained with suggestions on how to apply them to everyday living. With each page, young readers will come to know their faith better, learn about God's love for them and the everlasting happiness in store for those who stay rooted in His love. Contains Scripture references and arranged alphabetically with great illustrations. Ages 7 and up.



When Do You Encounter God's Presence?

"So teach us to number our days/that we may get a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12, RSV

To live a healthy, full life, it is important to create space in your life for caring for your body, mind and spirit. Mass is where this begins, and it is important to carry our relationship with God with us every day. We can do this through daily prayer, quiet contemplation, journaling or walks. Finding ways to connect and build your relationship with God will help you build better relationships with your family, your children and your friends.

Talk with your children about where you encounter Christ's presence in your life. Ask them...

- Did you see Christ at school? (Maybe someone was being a good friend.)
- Did you see Christ at home? (Perhaps when we love each other by helping with homework or picking up our toys?)
- Did you see Christ in our world? (Who are the helpers doing good in society?)

Adapted from "Family Faith on the Go"



Cherish the Gift of Time

TIME. In today's world, there never seems to be enough of it. As the speed of family life continues to increase, how we use our time together (and even the time we are apart) becomes more important. Here are some ways to help your family celebrate the gift of time.

TIME FOR RENEWAL—This year, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord was transferred to Monday, January 8, because the celebration of

Epiphany was transferred to Sunday, January 7. Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River and the spirit of God descends upon him. It is on this day that Jesus begins his public ministry. Even though today many Catholics are baptized as infants, our baptism still marks the beginning of our new life in Christ. Light a white candle in the center of your table to celebrate your baptism and Christ's light in the world.

TIME TOGETHER—We find holiness in the ordinary experiences of our lives. When we teach a child a new skill, when we discipline a child with love, when we keep our children safe and healthy, we are living our lives in the same way that the Holy Family lived. The essence of what we see in the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph is a relationship of love—loving God and loving each other. (Hold hands as you pray together at mealtimes this month.)

Adapted from *Family Faith on the Go*, OSV

Teaching Children about Lent



Lent is a wonderful season during our liturgical year to share the concepts of prayer, fasting and almsgiving with our children. Explain to your children that Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent (February 14 this year). Kids seem to love Ash Wednesday, and they are interested in the meaning behind the ritual. On Ash Wednesday, blessed ashes are put on your forehead in the shape of a cross. For small children emphasize how the drawn cross is meant to be a reminder of the main focus of Lent—Jesus. Ask them how they might grow closer to Jesus this Lent as a member of a family, as a student and as a friend. Try to go to Mass during Lent as a family, and attend the Stations of the Cross with the children if you can. Encourage repentance. Teach your child that repenting for their sins will lead to a closer relationship with God. They may not understand the value of seeking forgiveness at first. However, by encouraging your child to admit to and apologize for their mischief (fighting with another child, saying bad words, sneaking candy), you can help them grow into a more mature person.

Explain that we honor Jesus, who fasted for forty days in the desert. During Lent, “fasting” may not always involve food. There are other ways to practice sacrifice and strive for closeness with God. This period of fasting is also a good time to show solidarity with people who do not have enough food. Take your child with you to donate to a food bank or serve meals at a shelter.

Encourage your child to help others. Let your child decide on an act of kindness and who they would like to perform it for. Giving your child an active role will increase their enthusiasm and the act’s impact upon them. For instance, maybe you have a shut-in, elderly neighbor. A younger child could decorate a card. Let them know that giving to others is even more Christ-like than giving up things yourself.

Lent can be a time of beauty for your family. Tell them that you are going to take this time to slow down and focus on Jesus’ sacrifice for all of us, and to give thanks for the eternal glory it opened up to us. As a mother and as a father, carve out time in your day for your own special prayer time.

Happy New Year!

Family New Year's Eve parties are a fun alternative to the traditional “going out” scene. Invite one or two other families to your home to celebrate in a fun, kid-friendly way. While adults mingle, children can have a pajama party, complete with soda-filled plastic champagne flutes, funny hats and finger-food treats. If you and your family have small children, set your clocks ahead several hours and let the kids enjoy a countdown to “midnight.” Cover the dining-room table with white craft paper and encourage older kids to write their wishes for the upcoming year and what they were grateful for during the past year. Send every family home with a prayer for a year of health, happiness, faith and fun.



Adapted from *Take Out*, OSV

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New Year's Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for a new year. May everyone in our family be willing to begin anew with a clean slate.

We know that you are always ready to forgive us.

Help us to be willing to forgive ourselves
and to forgive one another.

As we begin a new year, remind us of our truest values and our deepest desires. Help us to live in the goodness that comes from doing what you want us to do. Help us to put aside anxiety about the future and the past, so that we might live in peace with you now, one day at a time. Amen

Adapted from Loyola Press