

Keeping the Christmas Season: A Christmas Prayer Companion



Domenico Ghirlandaio - *The Nativity*, 1492

By Jennifer Gregory Miller

<http://familyfeastandferia.wordpress.com>

by Jennifer Gregory Miller, 2009-2014.

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Keeping the Christmas Season

The days building up to the Solemnity of Christmas have been full of expectation and anticipation – and probably full of busy activity. We have counted down the days until Christmas every day in Advent. But Christmas isn't just one day – the climax is spread out for several weeks, with the last day of the season being the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord.

Our family enjoys having a prayer companion and picture study to mark the days of the liturgical seasons. To avoid a post-Christmas letdown, this is a little prayer companion to mark the days of the Christmas season. The meditations are aimed to appeal to children.

In addition to the prayers and thoughts, we try to sing a different Christmas carol for each day of the Christmas season. Not all days have the lyrics to the carol, due to lack of space.

This prayer companion is set up to be printed once and reused every year (to save on printing costs). Since the Christmas season changes every year, not every page will be used, nor will it have the corresponding date on the top.

These pages will be kept in a [horizontal easel binder](#), with extra pages of the prayers printed out for everyone's use.

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Some of the feasts of the Christmas season can change from year to year. The Church document General Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, nos. 32-38 explains how the feasts will occur each year.

General Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, nos. 32-38:

IV. Christmas Season

32. Next to the yearly celebration of the paschal mystery, the Church holds most sacred the memorial of Christ's birth and early manifestations. This is the purpose of the Christmas season.

33. The Christmas season runs from Evening Prayer I of Christmas until the Sunday after Epiphany or after 6 January, inclusive.

34. The Mass of the vigil of Christmas is used in the evening of 24 December, either before or after Evening Prayer I. On Christmas itself, following an ancient tradition of Rome, three Masses may be celebrated: namely, the Mass at Midnight, the Mass at Dawn, and the Mass during the Day.

35. Christmas has its own octave, arranged as follows:

- a. Sunday within the octave is the feast of the Holy Family;
- b. 26 December is the feast of Saint Stephen, First Martyr;
- c. 27 December is the feast of Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist;
- d. 28 December is the feast of the Holy Innocents;
- e. 29, 30, and 31 December are days within the octave;
- f. 1 January, the octave day of Christmas, is the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. It also recalls the conferral of the holy Name of Jesus.

36. The Sunday falling between 2 January and 5 January is the Second Sunday after Christmas.

37. Epiphany is celebrated on 6 January, unless (where it is not observed as a holyday of obligation) it has been assigned to the Sunday occurring between 2 January and 8 January (No. 7: In those places where the solemnities of Epiphany, Ascension, and Corpus Christi are not observed as holydays of obligation, they are assigned to a Sunday, which is then considered their proper day in calendar. Thus: a. Epiphany, to the Sunday falling between 2 January and 8 January; b. Ascension, to the Seventh Sunday of Easter;).

38. The Sunday falling after 6 January is the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.



Adoration of the Child, Gerrit van Honthorst, 1620



December 24: Christmas Eve

After attending the vigil Mass, we have a ceremony to place Baby Jesus in the Manger. This is our prayer ceremony; depending on attention span, it will be shortened. We gather in another part of the house, holding the Christ Child, and lighted candles, and process to the manger, singing Silent Night:

Silent Night! Holy Night!
All is calm, all is bright,
'Round yon Virgin Mother and Child.
Holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent Night! Holy Night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia.
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!

Silent Night! Holy Night!
Son of God, love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth!

Then a shortened version of the Proclamation of the Birth of Christ is read:

From the Roman Martyrology:

In the twenty-fourth day of the month of December;
In the forty-second year of the Empire of Octavian Augustus;
In the Sixth Age of the world while all the earth was at peace,

JESUS CHRIST,

Eternal God, and Son of the Eternal Father, willing to consecrate the world by His gracious coming; having been conceived of the Holy Ghost, and the nine months since His conception having now passed (all kneel),
was born in Bethlehem of Judah of the Virgin Mary, made man. (Very solemnly):

THE BIRTHDAY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

All: Thanks be to God.

The Christ Child is laid in the manger.

Christmas Eve Prayers (continued)

Father: Our help is in the Name of the Lord

All: who made heaven and earth.

All: The eternal Word, born of the Father before time began, today emptied himself for our sake and became man.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and Holy is His Name.

He has mercy on those who fear Him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of His arm,
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of His servant Israel
for He has remembered His promise of mercy,
the promise He made to our Fathers,
to Abraham and His children for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

All: The eternal Word, born of the Father before time began, today emptied himself for our sake and became man.

From the holy Gospel according to St. Luke (2:15-20):

And it came to pass, when the angels had departed from them into heaven, that the shepherds were saying to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste, and they

found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in the manger. And when they had seen, they understood what had been told them concerning this Child. And all who heard marveled at the things told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept in mind all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken to them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Father: The Word was made flesh, alleluia.

All: And dwelt among us, alleluia.

Father: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come to You.

Father: Let us pray. O God, who made this most holy night to shine forth with the brightness of the true Light, grant we beseech Thee, that we who have known the mystery of His light on earth, may attain the enjoyment of His happiness in heaven. Who lives and reigns with Thee forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Crib Blessing (optional):

Father: Bless, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, this crib (*he sprinkles it with holy water*) which we have prepared in honor of the new birth in the flesh of Thine only begotten Son, that all who devoutly contemplate in this image the mystery of His Incarnation, may be filled with the light of His glory. Who lives and reigns with Thee forever and ever.

All: Amen.

All Sing:

O come all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
To Jesus, to Jesus in Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him,
Born the King of Angels,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ our Lord.

Meal Prayers for the Christmas Season

Before Breakfast

Leader: The Word was made flesh, alleluia, alleluia!
All: And dwelt among us, alleluia, alleluia!
Leader: Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad,
All: Before the face of the Lord, for He comes.
Leader: Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty. Through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.

After Breakfast

Leader: Glory to God in the highest!
All: And on earth peace to men of good will, alleluia!
Leader: The Lord has reigned,
All: And He is clothed with beauty.
Leader: O Almighty God, the Savior of the world, who hast nourished us with heavenly food, we give Thee thanks for the gift of this bodily refreshment which we have received from Thy bountiful mercy. Through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.

Before Dinner

Leader: All the ends of the earth have seen, alleluia!
All: The Salvation of our God, alleluia!
Leader: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
All: The Lord is God and He has shone upon us.
Leader: Unto us a child is born, Alleluia
All: A Son is given to us, Alleluia.
Leader: Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty. Through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.

After Dinner

Leader: The goodness of God our Savior has appeared.
All: Not by the works of Justice which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us.
Leader: A sanctified day has shone upon us, alleluia!
All: Come, you nations, and adore the Lord!
Leader: Let us pray. Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the new birth in the flesh of Thine only-begotten Son may set us free, whom the old bondage holds under the yoke of sin. Through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.
Leader: We give Thee thanks, Almighty God, for these and all Thy gifts, which we have received from Thy bounty. Who livest and reignest world without end.
All: Amen.

Christmas Night Prayers at the Crib

Father: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Father: Our help is in the Name of the Lord.

All: Who made heaven and earth.

Father: Let us think over whether our actions during the day have done honor to the Christ-Child (pause).

Let us ask forgiveness for what we have not done as we should.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come:
Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All: Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

All: This day Christ is born; this day the Savior has appeared; this day angels are singing on earth, archangels are rejoicing. This day the just are glad and say, Glory to God in high heaven, alleluia.

All Pray: (Psalm 134)

Come, bless the Lord, * all you servants of the Lord.

Who stand in the house of the Lord * during the hours of the night.

Lift up your hands toward the sanctuary * and bless the Lord.

May the Lord bless you from Sion, * the maker of heaven and earth.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son * and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, * world without end.

Amen.

All: (Repeat antiphon preceding psalm.)

Mother or Eldest Child: (Lesson from Jeremiah): You are in our midst, Lord, and Your holy Name has been invoked upon us. Do not forsake us, O Lord our God. The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Father: Into Your hands, O Lord, * I commend my spirit.

All: Into Your hands, O Lord, * I commend my spirit.

Father: For You have redeemed us, O Lord, God of truth.

All: I commend my spirit.

Father: Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

All: Into Your hands, O Lord, * I commend my spirit.

Father: Keep us, O Lord, as the apple of Your eye.

All: Shelter us under the shadow of Your wings.

Canticle of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32)

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;
Your word has been fulfilled:

my own eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared in the sight of every people:

a light to reveal you to the nations
and the glory of your people Israel.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, * world without end. Amen.

Father: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come to You.

Father: Let us pray. Visit this dwelling, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy. Let Thy holy Angels dwell herein, who may keep us in peace, and let Thy blessing be always upon us. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Father: Let us remember the saints who come with us today to show their love for the Christ-Child.

(The Collect or some other appropriate part of the Mass of the day is read.)

Let us now sing a carol to the Christ-Child so that He may rest peacefully with us this night.

Night prayers end with a favorite carol.





Adoration of the Shepherds, Agnolo Bronzino, 1539-40

December 25: Solemnity of the Birth of Jesus Christ

The Word was made flesh, alleluia, alleluia!

And dwelt among us, alleluia, alleluia!

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth!

How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is giv'n;
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His Heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.

Where children pure and happy pray to the blessèd Child,
Where misery cries out to Thee, Son of the mother mild;
Where charity stands watching and faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks, and Christmas comes once more.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!



Stoning of St. Stephen, 1447-1449, Fra Angelico
Fresco, 326 x 236 cm

December 26: Feast St. Stephen, Deacon and First Martyr

The Church celebrates the first eight days, or octave of Christmas, as every day being another little Christmas. There is another octave during the Liturgical Year which is celebrated at Easter. The difference between the two octaves is the Christmas octave includes a few other feast days within the octave, but Easter has none. The Christmas octave includes the feasts of St. Stephen, St. John Evangelist, Holy Innocents, and the Holy Family. The first three feasts are of martyrs, symbolizing the three kinds of martyrdom: a person who freely chose martyrdom and was killed (St. Stephen); a person who freely chose martyrdom but did not die (St. John); and a person who did not choose, but was martyred for Jesus (Holy Innocents). New Year's Day, which is the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, is the final day of the Christmas octave.

St. Stephen was the first or protomartyr of the Church. He was a deacon, and the account of his martyrdom is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (see next page for reading). In England, this is known as Boxing Day, and various gifts and money is given to the poor.

Father: Christ, the New-born, today crowned blessed Stephen.

All: Come, let us adore Him.

Mother: Stephen, full of grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people.

All: Thanks be to God.

Father: You crowned him with glory and honor, O Lord.

All: You have given him rule over the works of Your hands.

Father: Let us pray. Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that we may imitate him whose memory we celebrate, so as to learn to love even our enemies; because we now solemnize his martyrdom who knew how to pray even for his persecutors to our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, who lives and reigns forever. Alleluia.

All: Alleluia.

December 26, continued:

First Reading: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-60

Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, arose and disputed with Stephen.

Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Hymn to Sing:

Good King Wenceslas

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the feast of Stephen
When the snow lay round about
Deep and crisp and even
Brightly shone the moon that night
Though the frost was cruel
When a poor man came in sight
Gath'ring winter fuel | 4. "Sire, the night is darker now
And the wind blows stronger
Fails my heart, I know not how,
I can go no longer."
"Mark my footsteps, my good page
Tread thou in them boldly
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly." |
| 2. "Hither, page, and stand by me
If thou know'st it, telling
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence
Underneath the mountain
Right against the forest fence
By Saint Agnes' fountain." | 5. In his master's steps he trod
Where the snow lay dinted
Heat was in the very sod
Which the Saint had printed
Therefore, Christian men, be sure
Wealth or rank possessing
Ye who now will bless the poor
Shall yourselves find blessing. |
| 3. "Bring me flesh and bring me wine
Bring me pine logs hither
Thou and I will see him dine
When we bear him thither."
Page and monarch forth they went
Forth they went together
Through the rude wind's wild lament
And the bitter weather. | |



Apostle St. John the Evangelist, 1610-1614, El Greco

December 27: Feast of St. John, Evangelist and Apostle

St. John was the youngest apostle of Jesus, the brother of St. James the Greater. He wrote the fourth Gospel, and mentions himself as the “disciple whom Jesus loved” or the “beloved disciple.” St. John is the only apostle who was not martyred, but he did suffer beating, poisoning, and boiling in oil, of which he all miraculously survived. For his feast the priest wears white; all other feasts of apostles the priest wears red.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* mentions that “early Christian art usually represents St. John with an eagle, symbolizing the heights to which he rises in the first chapter of his Gospel. The chalice as symbolic of St. John...is sometimes interpreted with reference to the Last Supper, again as connected with the legend according to which St. John was handed a cup of poisoned wine, from which, at his blessing, the poison rose in the shape of a serpent.”

St. John, who spent most of his life teaching the main precept of Jesus “Little children, love one another” (from Jerome, *Comm. in ep. ad. Gal.*, vi, 10). On this day we drink to the love of St. John. The *Roman Ritual* includes a blessing of wine. At the family meal, serve wine for the adults, another drink for the children. The father leads the blessing for the wine:

Blessing of Wine

Let us pray. Lord God, bless + and consecrate + this vessel of wine (or any other beverage) by the power of your right hand; and grant that, through the merits of St. John, apostle and evangelist, all your faithful who drink of it may find it a help and a protection. As the blessed John drank the poisoned potion without any ill effects, so may all who today drink the blessed wine in his honor be delivered from poisoning and similar harmful things. And as they offer themselves body and soul to you, may they obtain pardon of all their sins; through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Afterwards, the father pours a glass of wine, passes it to the mother and says “Drink to the love of St. John” and the mother answers “I thank you for the love of St. John” or “Where love is, there is God.” Cups are then handed around the table the greeting is repeated by different members and guests.

December 27, continued:

Hymn to sing:

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen

1. God rest ye merry, gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Savior
Was born on Christmas Day;
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray

2. In Bethlehem, in Judah
This blessed Babe was born,
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn;
The which His Mother Mary,
Did nothing take in scorn.

Chorus:

*O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.*

3. From God our heav'nly Father,
A blessed Angel came;
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same;
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by Name.

Chorus.

Chorus:



St John the Evangelist Drinking from the Poisoned Cup,
1348-1353, Taddeo Gaddi
Panel, 33 x 36 cm



The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin: The Flight into Egypt,

c. 1496, Albrecht Dürer

Oil on pine panel, 63 x 45,5 cm

(Note: The depictions of the massacre of the Holy Innocents are too graphic and disturbing even for me, so I'm picturing the Flight.)

Christmas Prayer Companion 2013-14, by Jennifer Gregory Miller <http://familyfeastandferia.wordpress.com>

December 28: Feast of the Holy Innocents

The Holy Innocents are the boy babies that Herod had killed when he was trying to find Baby Jesus. From Matthew's Gospel comes the story (Mt 2:16-18). And an angel appeared in a dream to St. Joseph and told him to take Mary and the child Jesus into Egypt to escape Herod. These young boys are the first to die for Christ; Jesus' life was spared because they gave theirs. Today there is a blessing for children, and the parents can remember to bless their children every night with a sign of the Cross on their forehead.

Blessing of Children

Father: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come unto You.

Father: Let us pray. O Lord Jesus Christ, once You embraced and placed Your hands upon the little children who came to You, and said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, and their angels always see the face of my Father!" Look now with fatherly eyes on the innocence of these children and their parents' devotion, and bless them this day through our ministry. *(The father signs the forehead of each child with the sign of the cross.)* In Your grace and goodness let them advance continually, longing for You, loving You, fearing You, keeping Your commandments. Then they will surely come to their destined home, through You, Savior of the world. Who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All: Amen

Father: May God bless you. And may He keep your hearts and mind—the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

The father then sprinkles the children with holy water.

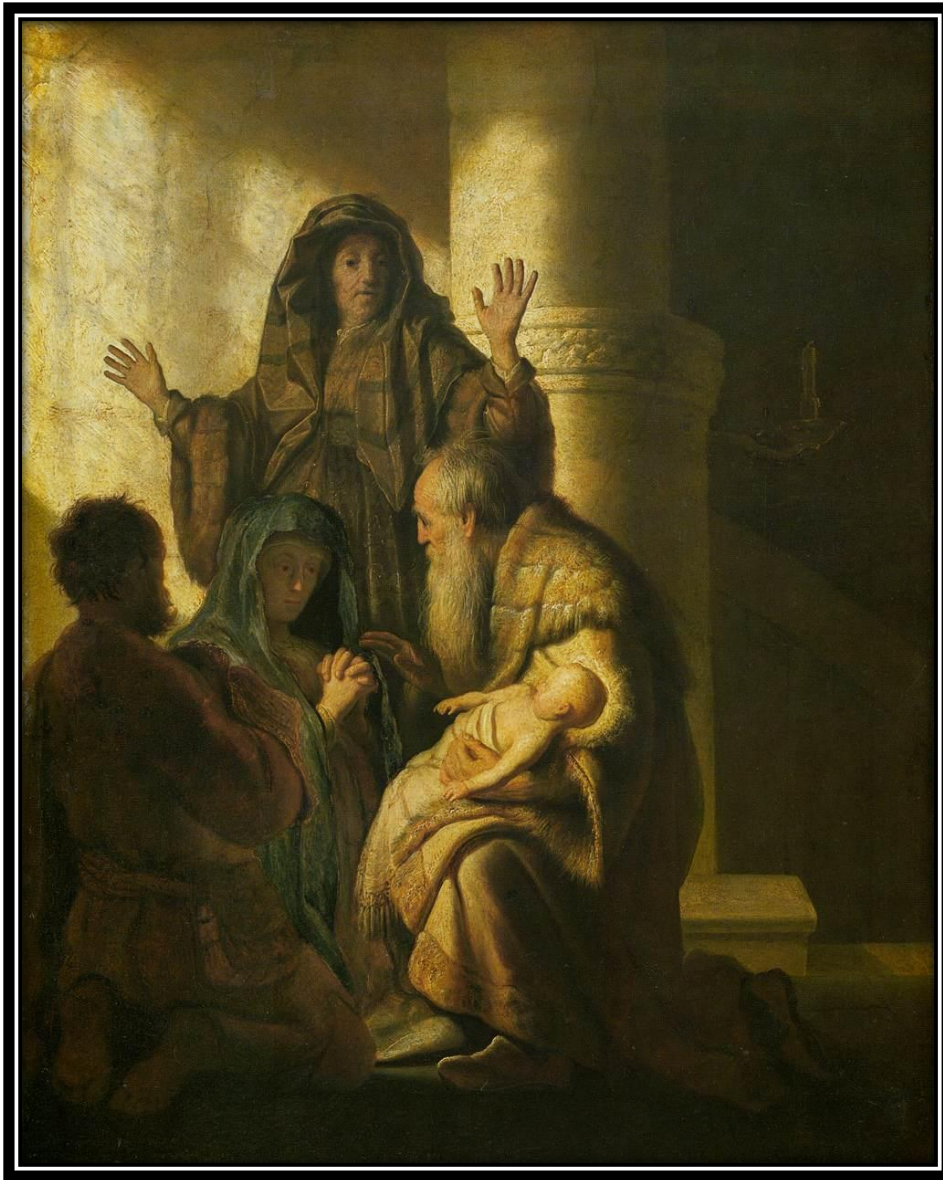
Coventry Carol (*Lullay, Thou Little Tiny Child*)

Lully, lullay, Thou little tiny Child,
By, by, lully, lullay.

1. O sisters too, how may we do,
For to preserve this day
This poor Youngling for Whom we sing
By, by, lully, lullay?

2. Herod the king, in his raging,
Charged he hath this day
His men of might, in his own sight,
All young children to slay.

3. Then woe is me, poor Child, for Thee,
And ever mourn and say;
For Thy parting nor say nor sing,
By, by, lully, lullay.
Lully, lullay, Thou little tiny Child,
By, by, lully, lullay.



*Simeon and Anna Recognize the Lord in Jesus, c. 1627,
Harmenszoon van Rijn Rembrandt
Oil on wood*

December 29: 5th Day in the Octave of Christmas Optional Memorial of St. Thomas Becket, bishop & martyr

Today is the optional Memorial of St. Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr. He was the Archbishop of Canterbury and died in 1170, murdered by knights of King Henry II in the cathedral. His symbol is a sword in bishop's hat, the mitre.

The Gospel today is the Presentation in the Temple, Luke 2:22-35, below is an excerpt:

[Simeon] took [Jesus] up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel." And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

Good Christian Men Rejoice

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Good Christian men rejoice
With heart and soul and voice!
Give ye heed to what we say
News! News!
Jesus Christ is born today!
Ox and ass before Him bow
And He is in the manger now
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today! | 2. Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice
Now ye hear of endless bliss
Joy! Joy!
Jesus Christ was born for this
He hath ope'd the heav'nly door
And man is blessed evermore
Christ was born for this
Christ was born for this. |
| 3. Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice
Now ye need not fear the grave:
Peace! Peace!
Jesus Christ was born to save
Calls you one and calls you all
To gain His everlasting hall
Christ was born to save
Christ was born to save. | |



The Holy Family, Juan Simón Gutiérrez
Oil on canvas, 126 x 96 cm

First Sunday in the Octave of Christmas or December 30 if there is no Sunday: Feast of the Holy Family

The first Sunday in the octave of Christmas is the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Today we meditate on the Holy Family and pray for help to imitate their virtues in our home. See the readings of today, especially the second reading from Paul to the **Colossians 3:12-21**.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Prayer to the Holy Family

Lord Jesus Christ, who, being made subject to Mary and Joseph, didst consecrate domestic life by Thine ineffable virtues; grant that we, with the assistance of both, may be taught by the example of Thy Holy Family and may attain to its everlasting fellowship. Who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Feast of the Holy Family, continued:

Hymns to sing:

Besides this carol, another appropriate hymn would be *Where Charity and Love Prevail* or *Ubi Caritas*.

Once In Royal David's City

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her Baby
In a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little Child. | 3. And through all His wondrous
childhood
He would honor and obey,
Love and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms He lay:
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as He. |
| 2. He came down to earth from
heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Savior holy. | 4. Jesus is our childhood's
pattern;
Day by day, like us He grew;
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feeleth for our sadness,
And He shareth in our gladness |

Where Charity and Love Prevail

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Where charity and love prevail,
there God is ever found;
Brought here together by Christ's
love,
by love are we thus bound. | 4. Let strife among us be
unknown,
let all contention cease;
Be His the glory that we seek,
be ours His holy peace. |
| 2. With grateful joy and holy fear
His charity we learn'
Let us with heart and mind and soul,
now love Him in return. | 5. Let us recall that in our midst
dwell's God's begotten Son;
As members of His body joined,
we are in Him made one. |
| 3. Forgive we now each other's
faults
as we our faults confess;
And let us love each other well
in Christian holiness. | 6. No race nor creed can love
exclude,
if honored be God's name;
Our family embraces all
whose Father is the same. |

Ubi Caritas

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Congregavit nos in unum Christi
amor.
Exultemus, et in ipso iucundemur.
Timeamus, et amemus Deum vivum.
Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero. | 2. Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Simul ergo cum in unum
congregamur:
Ne nos mente dividamur,
caveamus.
Cessent iurgia maligna, cessent
lites.
Et in medio nostri sit Christus
Deus. |
| 3. Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Simul quoque cum beatis videamus,
Glorianter vultum tuum, Christe
Deus:
Gaudium quod est immensum,
atque probum,
Saecula per infinita saeculorum.
Amen. | |



Adoration of the Shepherds, 1539-40, Agnolo Bronzino

December 30: 6th Day in the Octave of Christmas

Today the Gospel concludes the Presentation in the Temple story, including Anna, the prophetess. (Luke 2:26-30):

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Away in the Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay

2. The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle 'til morning is nigh.

3. Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me for ever and love me, I pray
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care
And take us to Heaven to live with Thee there.



*The Nativity, 1508-1519, Juan de Flandes
Oil on Panel*

December 31: 7th Day in the Octave of Christmas

Optional Memorial of Pope St. Sylvester I

This is the last day of the year 2012, New Year's Eve. In the midst of celebrating New Year's activities remember also to pray for the family, our nation, and our Pope for the upcoming year.

Prayer to Mary for My Family (by Rev. George Dennerle)

I am just a little child, dear Mother Mary. That's why I know that you love me, and will listen to me now. You were the Mother of your happy Family. May I ask you, please to help my dear mother? Keep her well and strong, so that she can take care of her family as you did. You loved Saint Joseph, for he was the head of your Family. Please help my good father. He must be well and strong, too. He must have work to do. Jesus was the Child of your Family. Please help all the children in our family to be like your Jesus. Amen

Prayer for Our Nation (by Rev. George Dennerle)

Dear Mother Mary! You are the greatest of all the saints in heaven. We ask you to watch over our country. We ask you to guard our flag. Please help our leaders: make them good, make them brave, make them love you and your dear Son, Jesus. Be a mother to all the people. Help us now, and bring us to heaven when we die. Amen.

Prayer for Our Holy Father

Dear Jesus, please watch over and bless our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. Give him good health and energy to fulfill his office. Help him to love You more every day. May he be open to the direction of the Holy Spirit so that he can guide the whole Church on earth. Amen.

The Friendly Beasts

1. Jesus, our Brother, strong and good,
Was humbly born in a stable rude,
And the friendly beasts around Him
stood,
Jesus, our Brother, strong and good.
2. "I," said the donkey, shaggy and
brown,
"I carried His mother uphill and down,
I carried His mother to Bethlehem town;
I," said the donkey, shaggy and brown.
3. "I," said the cow, all white and red,
"I gave Him my manger for His bed,
I gave Him hay to pillow His head;
I," said the cow, all white and red.
4. "I," said the sheep with curly horn,
"I gave Him my wool for His blanket
warm,
He wore my coat on Christmas morn;
I," said the sheep with curly horn.
5. "I," said the dove, from the rafters high,
"I cooed Him to sleep that He should not
cry,
We cooed Him to sleep, my mate and I;
I," said the dove, from the rafters high.
6. Thus all the beasts, by some good spell,
In the stable dark were glad to tell
Of the gifts they gave Emmanuel,
The gifts they gave Emmanuel.



*Virgin and Child, 1320-22, Lippo Memmi
Tempera on Wood*

January 1: Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Today concludes the Christmas Octave, and marks the beginning of the year 2013. We honor Mary as the Mother of God, the highest privilege for a human being. *Theotokos* is the Greek word for this title of “Mother of God” and this is one of Mary’s oldest titles.

Traditionally many people visited family and friends on this day. In particular it has been a day for remembering our baptism and our godparents and godchildren. We both pray for our godparents (perhaps visiting, providing gifts) and our godchildren. Perhaps all the family baptismal candles could be arranged around a central Christ Candle as the table display, and everyone could renew their baptismal promises.

Renewal of Baptismal Promises:

Leader: When you were baptized, your godparents made promises to God for you. Now you are old enough to make themselves. Tell me: do you promise to have nothing to do with the devil?

All: We do promise.

Leader: Nor with his works of sin?

All: We do promise.

Leader: Do you promise to keep away from everything the devil uses to lead people into sin?

All: With God’s help, we do promise.

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, who was born and died for us?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe all the Catholic Church believes and teaches?

All: We do believe. For Jesus Christ, began the Catholic Church. He promised to be with His Church always. He promised that His church would teach only what is true.

Leader: Will you always believe in the Holy Catholic Church?

All: Yes, with God’s help, we will live and die as Catholics.

January 1, Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God continued:

Hymns to Sing:

What Child is This?

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. What Child is this who, laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom Angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and Angels sing;
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary. | 3. So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
Come peasant, king to own Him;
The King of kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise a song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
The Babe, the Son of Mary. |
| 2. Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The Babe, the Son of Mary. | |

Sing of Mary

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Sing of Mary, pure and lowly,
Virgin mother undefiled,
Sing of God's own Son most holy,
Who became her little child.
Fairest child of fairest mother,
God the Lord who came to earth,
Word made flesh, our very brother,
Takes our nature by his birth. | 2. Sing of Jesus, son of Mary,
In the home at Nazareth.
Toil and labour cannot weary
Love enduring unto death.
Constant was the love he gave her,
Though he went forth from her side,
Forth to preach, and heal, and suffer,
Till on Calvary he died. |
| 3. Glory be to God the Father;
Glory be to God the Son;
Glory be to God the Spirit;
Glory to the Three in One.
From the heart of blessed Mary,
From all saints the song ascends,
And the Church the strain reechoes
Unto earth's remotest ends. | |



Adoration of the Child, c. 1455, Fra Filippo Lippi
Tempera on wood, 137 x 134 cm

January 2: Weekday of Christmas Time Memorial of Sts. Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church

Even though yesterday was the last day in the Octave of Christmas, the Christmas season continues until the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord. The Gospel, John 1:19-28, has St. John Baptist explaining that he is not the Messiah, but preparing the way for Jesus.

Today is the memorial of two great Bishops and Doctors of the Church: St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen. They were born in Cappadocia which is now modern day Turkey. They both fiercely fought the Arian heresy.

Collect Prayer;

O God, who were pleased to give light to your Church by the example and teaching of the Bishops Saints Basil and Gregory, grant, we pray, that in humility we may learn your truth and practice it faithfully in charity. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Angels We Have Heard on High

1. Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.

3. Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ Whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Refrain

Refrain: *Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song?
Refrain

4. See Him in a manger laid,
Whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
While our hearts in love we raise.
Refrain



*Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, 1440-42, Fra Angelico
Fresco*

January 3: Weekday in Christmas Time Optional Memorial Most Holy Name of Jesus

The Gospel is John giving witness that Jesus is the Son of God:

John 1:14a, 12a: John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."

The Optional Memorial today is the Most Holy Name of Jesus, which was restored to the calendar a few years ago. Today we honor Jesus Christ's name, also pictured as IHS. It is pious act to bow one's head at the name of Jesus.

This is based from St. Paul's quote:

Philippians 2:9-11: Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

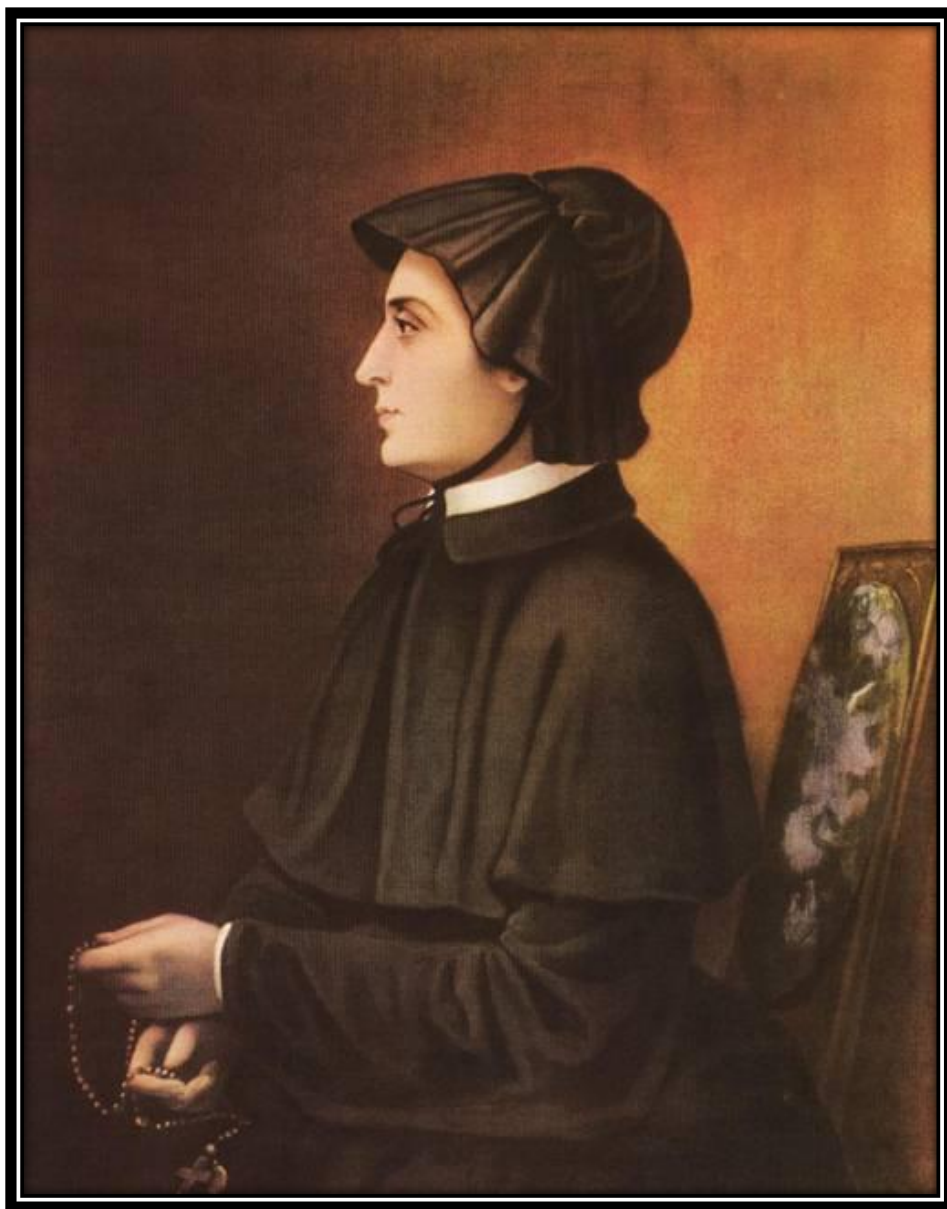
O Come All Ye Faithful

1. O Come All Ye Faithful
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him,
Born the King of Angels.

2. O Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all that hear in heaven God's holy
word.
Give to our Father glory in the Highest;
Refrain

Refrain: O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

3. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
O Jesus! for evermore be Thy name adored.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing; *Refrain*



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious
Unknown Artist, 1804, Filicchi Portrait

January 4: Weekday in Christmas Time Memorial of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is the first canonized saint born in the United States. St. Elizabeth born in 1774, witnessed the birth of our country. She married William Seton, had five children. Her husband died of tuberculosis, and she converted to Catholicism after his death, and began a religious order, the Daughters of Charity, in Emmitsburg, Maryland. She died in 1821. She helped establish Catholic schools in the US. She is a very special saint, with so much in common with families and home education, that we should learn more about this saint and pray to her for assistance through our school year.

St. Elizabeth lived this reading from St. John, and we should think about these words and keep them in our hearts.

1 John 3:7-10: Children, let no one deceive you. The person who acts in righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous. Whoever sins belongs to the Devil, because the Devil has sinned from the beginning. Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the Devil. No one who is begotten by God commits sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot sin because he is begotten by God. In this way, the children of God and the children of the Devil are made plain; no one who fails to act in righteousness belongs to God, nor anyone who does not love his brother.

Huron Carol ('Twas in the Moon of Wintertime)

1. 'Twas in the moon of wintertime,
When all the birds had fled,
That mighty Gitchi Manitou
Sent angel choirs instead;
Before their light the stars grew dim,
And wondering hunters heard the hymn:

Refrain: Jesus your King is born,
Jesus is born,
In excelsis gloria.

2. Within a lodge of broken bark
The tender babe was found,
A ragged robe of rabbit skin
Enwrapped His beauty round;
But as the hunter braves drew nigh,
The angel song rang loud and high:
Refrain

The earliest moon of wintertime
Is not so round and fair
As was the ring of glory on
The helpless Infant there.
The chiefs from far before Him knelt
With gifts of fox and beaver pelt.

Refrain

3. O children of the forest free,
O seed of Manitou,
The holy Child of earth and Heav'n
Is born today for you.
Come kneel before the radiant Boy,
Who brings you beauty, peace and joy.
Refrain

January 5: Weekday in Christmas Time Memorial of St. John Neumann, Bishop

St. John Nepomucene Neumann was born in Bohemia and came to the United States to be a missionary. He was ordained in New York in 1836 and consecrated bishop in Philadelphia in 1852, but died of exhaustion in 1860.

The Gospel is the calling of the apostles, Philip and Nathanael. We must listen to Jesus' call to follow Him, even in hard times. St. John Neumann left his family and homeland and worked tirelessly in the still fairly new United States.

John 1:43-51: Jesus decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth." But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true child of Israel. There is no duplicity in him." Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree. Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see great things than this." And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see the sky opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

I Saw Three Ships

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas Day in the morning. | 4. Pray, wither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Pray, wither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas Day in the morning? |
| 2. And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day in the morning? | 5. O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day in the morning. |
| 3. The Virgin Mary and Christ were there,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
The Virgin Mary and Christ were there,
On Christmas Day in the morning. | 6. And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day in the morning. |



VENERABLE JOHN NEPOMUCENE NEUMANN, C.S.S.R.
Fourth Bishop of Philadelphia, 1852-1860



Detail of No. 17 Scenes from the Life of Christ: 1. Nativity: Birth of Jesus
1304-6, Giotto di Bondone
Fresco

January 6: Weekday in Christmas Time before Epiphany

Optional Memorial St. André Bessette, Religious (Traditional Feast of the Epiphany)

For the dioceses in the US, Epiphany is celebrated on the Sunday between January 2nd and 8th. In some years when Christmas falls on Sunday or Monday there will be extra days in the weekdays of Christmas that fall past the Traditional Feast of Epiphany.

The Gospel today has a choice of reflecting on Christ's baptism, or the genealogy of Christ. Both of these Gospels illustrate God had plan from the very beginning for His Son to come into the world.

In the dioceses of the United States, today is an optional memorial for St. André Bessette, a religious of the Congregation of the Holy Cross. He was a humble priest who worked for the poor and sick all in the name of St. Joseph, and built a shrine to St. Joseph in Montreal, which is now a basilica, St. Joseph's Oratory.

Angels from the Realms of Glory

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Angels from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story
now proclaim Messiah's birth:</p> | <p>2. Shepherds, in the field abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
yonder shines the infant light:
<i>[Refrain]</i></p> |
|--|--|

Refrain:

Come and worship, come and
worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king.

3. Sages, leave your contemplations,
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great Desire of nations;
ye have seen his natal star: *[Refrain]*



Nativity, Cell 5, Fra Angelico, 1440-1441
Fresco, 193 x 164 cm

January 7: Weekday in Christmas Time before Epiphany

Who is this Child that is born? We get a glimpse today with His first miracle, at the Wedding of Cana (the 2nd Luminous Mystery). Let us pray today to Mary to learn to be obedient to Jesus and listen to Him always.

John 2:1-11: On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast." So they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

1. The snow lay on the ground,
The stars shone bright,
When Christ our Lord was born
On Christmas night.
Venite adoremus Dominum;
Venite adoremus Dominum.

Refrain:

Venite adoremus Dominum;
Venite adoremus Dominum;
Venite adoremus Dominum;
Venite adoremus Dominum;

2. 'Twas Mary maid,
so young and strong,
Who welcomed here the Christchild
with a song
She laid Him in a stall
At Bethlehem;
The ass and oxen shared
The roof with them.

Refrain

3. Saint Joseph, too, was by
To tend the Child;
To guard him, and protect
His mother mild;
The angels hovered round,
And sung this song,
Venite adoremus Dominum.

4. And thus that manger poor
Became a throne;
For He Whom Mary bore
Was God the Son.
O come, then, let us join
The heavenly host,
To praise the Father, Son, And Holy Ghost.



Adoration of the Magi, 1423-24, Fra Angelico
Tempera and gold on panel, 63 x 54 cm

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, Sunday between January 2 and January 8 in US

The "Twelve Days of Christmas" would be from Christmas to January 6, Epiphany. The Church in the United States now celebrates Epiphany on the second Sunday after Christmas, so some years there are less than 12 days. On this day the Roman Ritual includes several special blessings: **Blessing of Water, Blessing of Chalk, Blessing of Gold and Frankincense, and Blessing of Homes.** The House Blessing is included here. In our family the children all play the role of the Kings, wearing crowns and bearing "gifts" in the procession. The manger is decorated regally, with Baby Jesus wearing a crown and royal robe.

This day marks the opening of Mardi Gras in Louisiana. Many other traditions are attached to Twelfth Night (the vigil of Epiphany). King cakes and other special breads and cakes are found in almost every country. In many Hispanic countries the gifts are brought by the Three Kings. In Italy *La Befana* brings the gifts on Epiphany Eve.

The Gospel today is Matthew 2:1-12 (excerpt):

When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

We Three Kings of Orient Are

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar.
Field and fountain, moor and
mountain, following yonder star. | 3. Frankincense to offer have I.
Incense owns a Deity nigh.
Prayer and praising, all men raising,
worship Him, God on high. Refrain |
| Refrain:
<i>O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect Light.</i> | 4. Myrrh is mine: its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom.
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb. Refrain |
| 2. Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,
Gold I bring to crown Him again,
King forever, ceasing never, over us all
to reign. Refrain | 5. Glorious now behold Him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice.
Alleluia, alleluia! sounds through the
earth and skies. Refrain |

Epiphany House Blessing Ceremony

The manger is decorated regally, containing the enthroned Christ Child. All gather around the manger while the visiting priest leads the prayers. If there is no priest present, the father of the family leads:

P: God's peace be in this home,

All: And in all who live here.

P: **The star burned like a flame, pointing the way to God, the King of kings; the wise men saw the sign and brought their gifts in homage to their great King.**

All: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for He has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations shall call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name.

He has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation. He has shown the strength of His arm, He has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of His servant Israel for He has remembered His promise of mercy, the promise He made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

As it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.

All: **The star burned like a flame, pointing the way to God, the King of kings; the wise men saw the sign and brought their gifts in homage to their great King.**

P: Many shall come from Sheba.

All: Bearing gold and incense.

P: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come unto Thee.

P: Let us pray. O God, who by the guidance of a star did this day reveal your Only Begotten Son to the Gentiles, grant that we who know You by faith may be brought to the contemplation of the heavenly majesty, through the same Christ, Our Lord.

All: Amen.

All: Be enlightened and shine forth, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come, and upon thee is risen the glory of the Lord, Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary.

P: Nations shall walk in your light, and kings in the brilliance of your rising.

All: And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

House Blessing

P: Let us pray. O Lord, Almighty God, bless this house + that it may become a shelter of health, chastity, self-conquest, humility, goodness, mildness, obedience to the commandments, and thanksgiving to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Upon this house and those who dwell herein may Your blessing remain forever, through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Blessing of Chalk

P: Bless, + O Lord God, this creature, chalk, and let it be a help to mankind. Grant that those who will use it with faith in your most holy name, and with it inscribe on the doors of their homes the names of your saints, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, may through their merits and intercession enjoy health in body and protection of soul; through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

*The father of the family and the three "kings" take blessed chalk (one piece each) and proceed to the front door, accompanied by the priest. While all look on, the father reads the corresponding words as the kings inscribe their initials onto the lintel. (The initials CMB also stand for **Christus mansionem benedicat: Christ bless this house.**) The inscription should have the year number*

Final inscription on lintel should read: 2 0 + C + M + B + 1__

"The three wise men,

Caspar, [Caspar inscribes 'C' on lintel]

C

Melchior, [Melchior inscribes 'M']

M

and Balthasar [Balthasar inscribes 'B']

B

followed the star of God's Son who became man

two thousand [Dad inscribes the '2 0' on left]

2 0

_____ years ago. [Dad inscribes '1 _' on right]

1 _

"May Christ bless our dwelling, [Dad places + after '20']

+

and remain with us throughout the new year, [+ after 'C']

+

and grant that our comings and goings [+ after 'M']

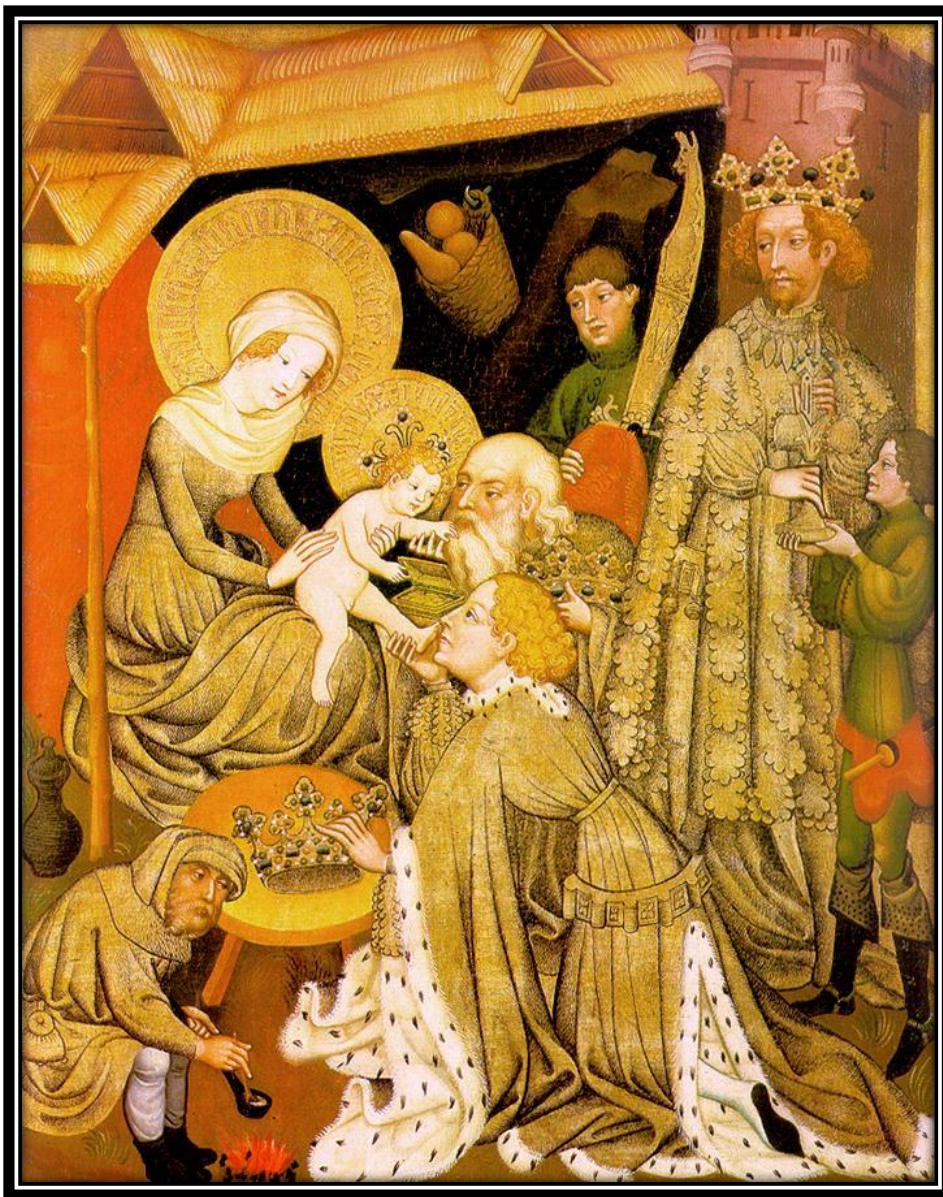
+

will be in search of truth [+ after 'B']

+

Priest or Father: Almighty God, incline your ear. May you bless us and all who are gathered here. Send your holy angel who will defend us and fill with grace all who live here. Amen

*The father and the "Three Kings" now accompany the priest as he blesses the house with holy water. Everyone sings: **We Three Kings of Orient Are.***



*The Adoration of the Magi, c. 1420, Unknown German Master
Tempera on pine*

Monday After Epiphany

In the US where Epiphany is celebrated on Sunday, we are given up to a week to contemplate the Epiphany before the final close of the season on Sunday, the Baptism of Our Lord.

The first readings for the week are taken from the 1st Letter of John and the Gospels unfold the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Now that we have celebrated Christ's Birth and His Epiphany, we are called to live differently, because our hearts should be changed. Think about what did the Magi do after leaving Jesus and returning home? What did the Shepherds do? Their lives were forever changed. We should be thinking about Jesus remaining in our hearts at all times. John summarizes this so well:

1 John 3:22-4:6 (excerpt) Beloved: we receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he remains in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.

The First Noel (Nowell)

1. The First Noel, the Angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as
they lay.
In fields where they lay keeping their
sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Refrain: Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel!

2. They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the East beyond them far
And to the earth it gave great light
And so it continued both day and night.
Refrain.
3. And by the light of that same star
Three Wise men came from country far
To seek for a King was their intent
And to follow the star wherever it went.
Refrain

4. This star drew nigh to the northwest
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest
And there it did both Pause and stay
Right o'er the place where Jesus lay.
Refrain

5. Then entered in those Wise men three
Full reverently upon their knee
And offered there in His presence
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense.
Refrain

6. Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord
That hath made Heaven and earth of
nought
And with his blood mankind has bought.
Refrain



*The Breslauer Epiphany, c. 1390s, Don Simone Camaldolese
Tempera and gold on parchment*

Tuesday After Epiphany

We continue our celebration after the Epiphany, focusing on how our hearts should be changed and transformed because we are focused on Jesus. Today St. John gives us a simple instruction that everyone in the family should try to follow:

1 John 4:7-10 (excerpt): Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.

During the Christmas season we are spending so much time with family, and this is a perfect reading to keep in mind “Love one another”, starting with our family members.

Let us pray the Collect prayer to ask for this grace to be transformed and love always:

Let Us Pray:

O God, whose Only Begotten Son
has appeared in our very flesh,
grant, we pray, that we may be inwardly transformed
through him whom we recognize as outwardly like ourselves.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Ding Dong Merrily on High

1. Ding dong! Merrily on high
in heav'n bells are ringing.
Ding dong! Verily the sky
is rent with angels singing.

2. E'en so here below, below
let steeple bells be swungen,
And io, io, io
by priest and people sungen.
Refrain.

Refrain: Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis.

3. Pray you, dutifully prime
your matin chime, ye ringers;
May you beautifully rhyme
your evetime song, ye singers.
Refrain



*The Adoration of the Magi, c. 15th century, Jean Bourdichon
Illumination on vellum*

Wednesday After Epiphany

The readings from St. John continues. He is called the “Beloved Disciple” or “the Disciple Whom Jesus Loved.” This title partially comes from St. John sitting so closely to Jesus at the Last Supper. But St. John also loved Jesus in return, and his writings all teach about Love. If today’s reading sounds familiar, it is St. John repeating himself – which means that Loving God is very important.

St. John 4:11-18 (excerpt): Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we remain in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit.

This is the prayer to say today, especially in the morning:

Prayer to the Holy Family

O Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I humbly pray that you will look on me with love and bless me all the day.
I offer you my thoughts and words and everything I do.
Watch over me at all times; keep me free from sin and close to you.
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming

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| <p>1. Lo, how a Rose e’er blooming from
tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse’s lineage coming, as men of
old have sung.
It came, a floweret bright, amid the
cold of winter,
When half spent was the night.</p> | <p>3. The shepherds heard the story
proclaimed by angels bright,
How Christ, the Lord of glory was
born on earth this night.
To Bethlehem they sped and in the
manger they found Him,
As angel heralds said.</p> |
| <p>2. Isaiah ’twas foretold it, the Rose I
have in mind;
Mary we behold it, the Virgin Mother
kind.
To show God’s love aright, she bore
to us a Savior,
When half spent was the night.</p> | <p>4. This Flower, whose fragrance
tender with sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor the
darkness everywhere;
True man, yet very God, from sin and
death He saves us,
And lightens every load.</p> |



*The Adoration of the Magi, c. 1445, Dieric the Elder
Oil on wood*

Thursday After Epiphany

These readings from the First Letter of John are such a treasure. Every one of us, no matter how young or old, should be living out his advice.

1 John 4:19-5:4 (excerpt): Beloved, we love God, because he first loved us. If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also. Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God.

Today let us act as Children of God. Let us think of different ways that we can love our family members: speak kindly to each other, let others go first, do a special act for a brother or sister.

Sleep, Holy Babe

1. Sleep, holy Babe!
Upon Thy mother's breast;
Great Lord of earth and sea and sky,
How sweet it is to see Thee lie
In such a place of rest,
In such a place of rest.

2. Sleep, holy Babe!
Thine angels watch around,
All bending low with folded wings
Before th'incarnate King of kings,
In rev'rent awe profound,
In rev'rent awe profound.

3. Sleep, holy Babe!
While I with Mary gaze
In joy upon that face awhile,
Upon the loving infant smile,
Which there divinely plays,
Which there divinely plays.

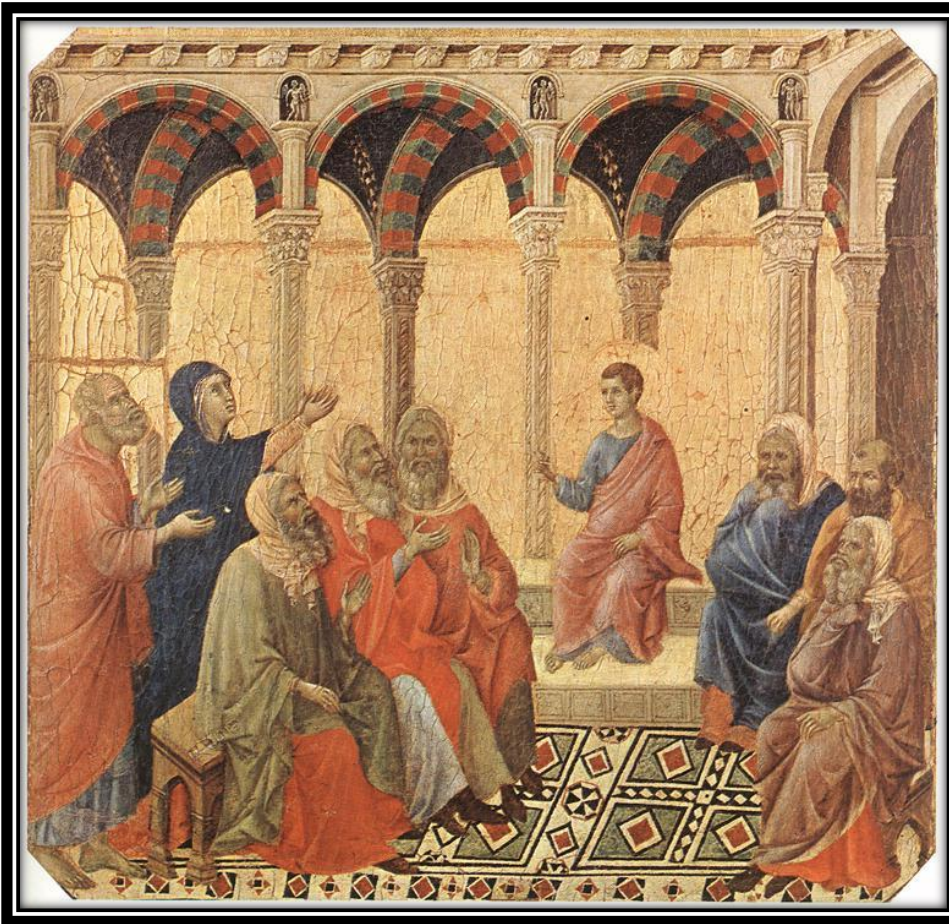
Friday After Epiphany

The Gospel today tells how Jesus healed a leper. Being “made clean” is not just on the outside, but our souls. Once we receive our First Penance, we should try to go to Confession often to be “made clean” by Jesus. It is a truly wonderful gift!

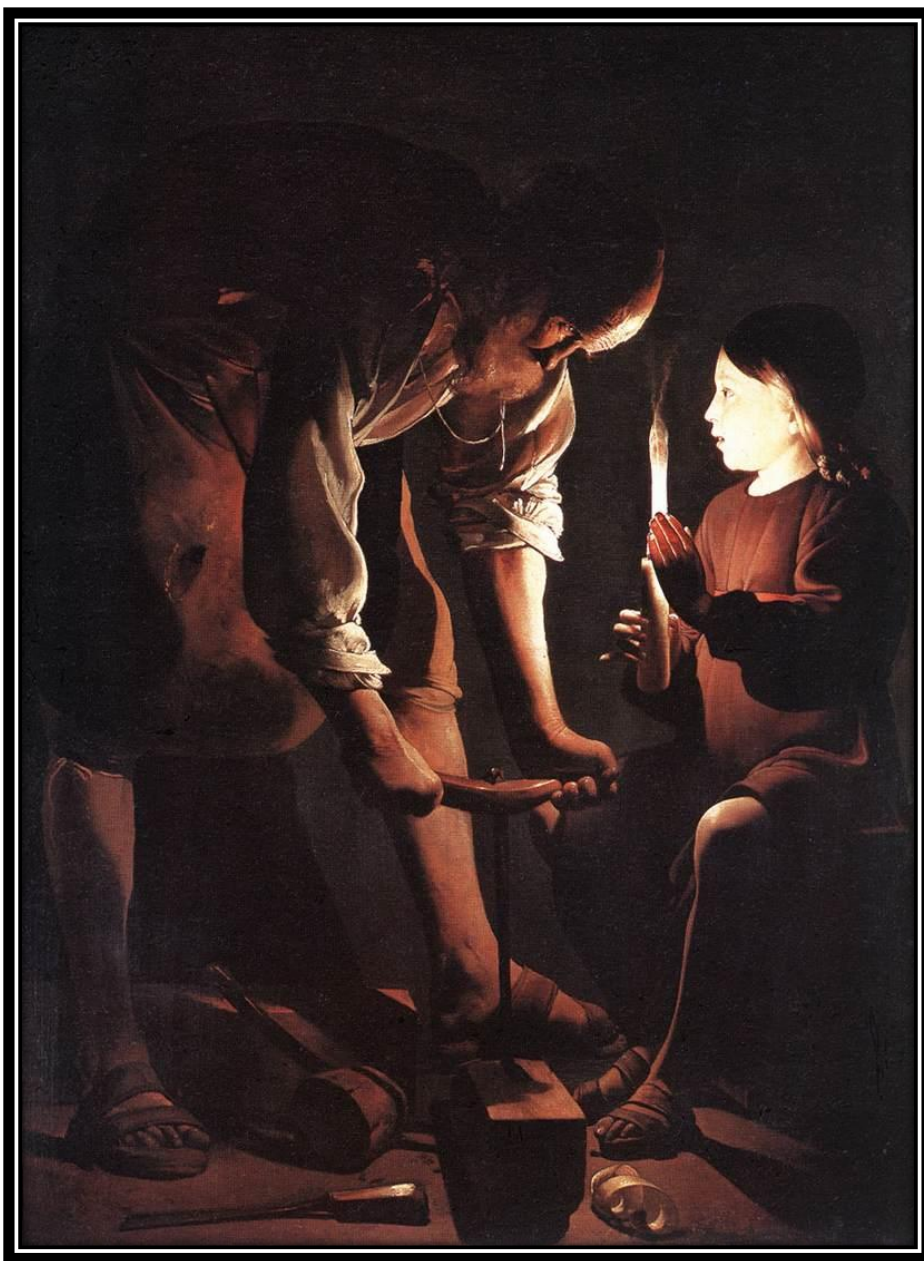
Luke 5:12-16: While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and besought him, “*Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.*” And he stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying, “*I do will it; be clean.*” And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one; but “*go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to the people.*” But so much the more the report went abroad concerning him; and great multitudes gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed.

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

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| 1. It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold:
“Peace on the earth, goodwill to men
From heavens all gracious King!”
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing. | 3. O ye beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow;
Look now, for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing;
Oh rest beside the weary road
And hear the angels sing. |
| 2. Still through the cloven skies they
come,
With peaceful wings unfurled;
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world:
Above its sad and lowly plains
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing. | 4. For lo! the days are hastening on,
By prophets seen of old,
When with the ever-circling years
Shall come the time foretold,
When the new heaven and earth
shall own
The Prince of Peace, their King,
And the whole world send back the
song
Which now the angels sing. |



Disputation with the Doctors, 1308-11, Duccio di Buoninsegna
Tempera on wood



Christ in the Carpenter's Shop, 1645, Georges de La Tour
Oil on canvas

Saturday After Epiphany

The Christmas season is coming to a close. Not all feast days follow Jesus' life in order. The Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry – with Jesus being a grown man.

Usually people make New Year's Resolutions around this time of year. Here are some rules to live by, from *Come My Jesus* by Rev. Patrick F. Shine:

My Little Rules

These little rules are to help me to be a true child of Christ.

Each Day I Must

Say my prayers.
Be good.
Help others.
Obey my father and mother.
Love my friends and enemies.
Save my soul.

In Church I Must

Pray the Mass with my prayer book.
Look at the altar.
Watch the Priest.
Think of Jesus.
Say my prayers.
Not Talk.

In School I Must

Learn my lessons.
Obey my teacher.
Study Hard.
Do better each day.

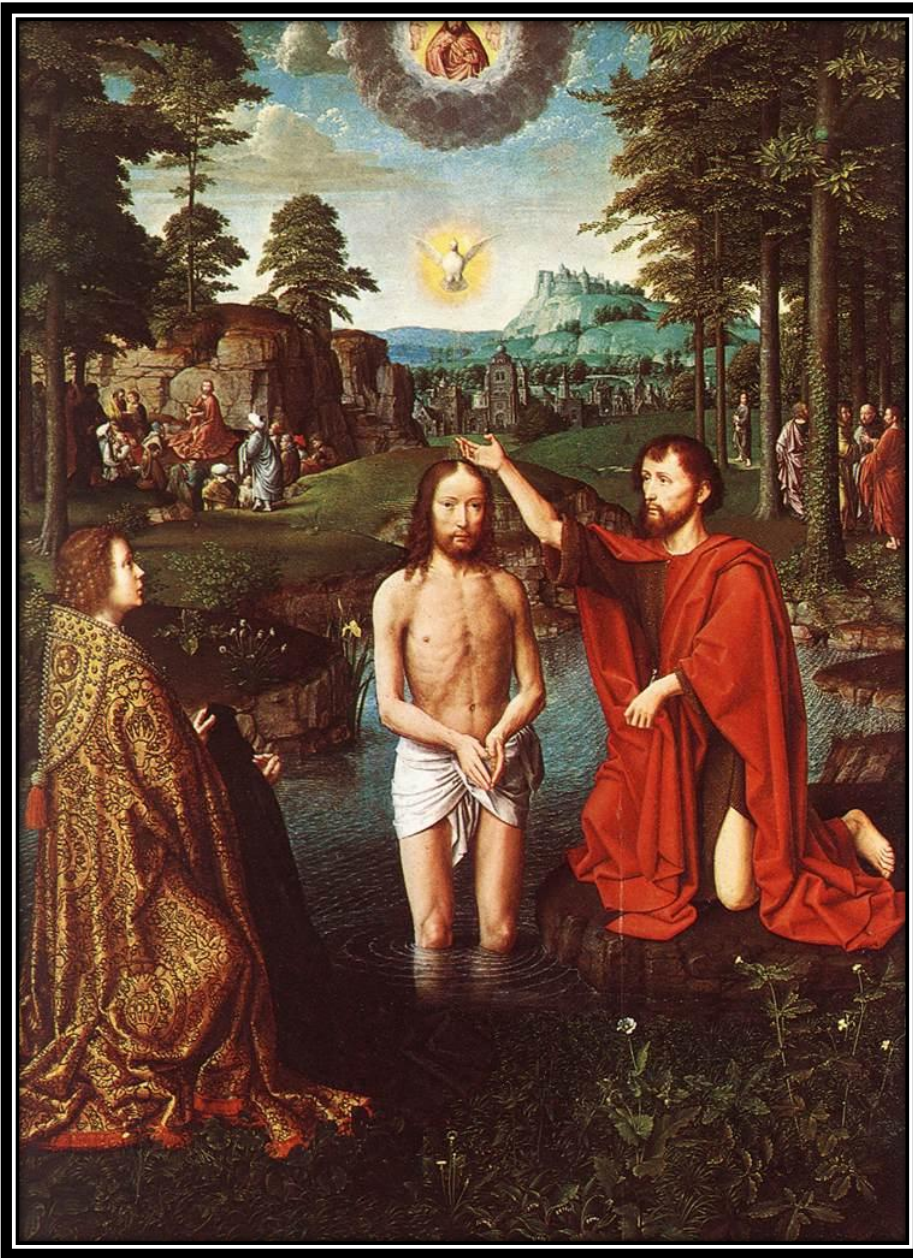
At Play I Must

Be fair.
Be a good sport.
Be a good winner.
Be a good loser.
Play square.
Think of the Child Jesus.

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

1. Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

2. Christ by highest heav'n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"



The Baptism of Christ

Triptych of Jean Des Trompes (central), 1505, Gerard David
Oil on wood

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

The Sunday that falls after Epiphany is the Baptism of the Lord. Today marks the final day of the Christmas season, the last day the priest wears white for Christmas. Tomorrow we enter Ordinary Time and green is the liturgical color.

If you didn't renew your baptismal promises on New Year's Day, today would be another appropriate feast to do it.

Remember to use holy water frequently. Today can be a day to refill the holy water bottles at church, clean (or hang) the fonts at home, and refresh them with new holy water. Holy Water is a reminder of your baptism. Say this prayer when making the Sign of the Cross:

**By this holy water, and by your Precious Blood,
wash away my sins, O Lord.**

**+In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Joy to the World

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature
sing. | 3. No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found. |
| 2. Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills
and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy. | 4. He rules the world with truth and
grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love. |