

Partners *in* FAITH™



Helping our children grow in their Catholic faith.

December 2024

St. James Church

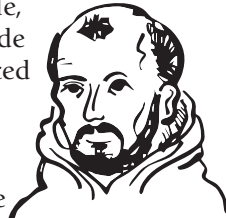
Andrea Sullivan, Director of Religious Education



Thoughtful Moments

St. John of the Cross

Born in Castile, Spain, St. Juan de Yepes experienced poverty and suffering throughout his life. In 1563, he entered the Carmelite Order. His friend, St. Teresa of Ávila, encouraged and supported him in reforming the Order, even when he experienced intense persecution for them. He was even imprisoned by his religious brothers for nine months. From this experience came the mystical poetry and inspired writings on the interior life that made him a Doctor of the Church.



True joy is found in Jesus

"Christ came to bring joy: joy to children, joy to parents, joy to families and to friends...In a true sense, joy is the keynote of the Christian message and the recurring motif of the Gospels." Pope St. John Paul II

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).



Embrace the promise of Advent and the wonder of Christmas

In the flurry of holiday preparations, adults can overlook the promise of Advent and the wonder of Christmas. Children never do. This year, try to experience Advent and Christmas through the eyes of a child.

Tie gifts with heartstrings. Give gifts that are simple and heartfelt. Craft personalized bookmarks for book lovers, homemade bread or cookies, or combine Epsom salts, essential oils, and natural ingredients in a small bag for a spa gift.

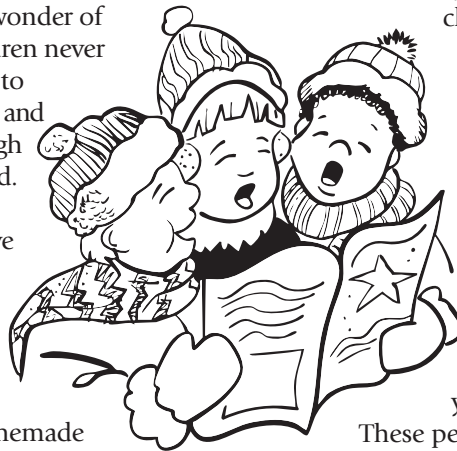
Offer your hearth. Young children know that everyone needs a friend. Yet, the holidays can be lonely for those separated from their loved ones. Invite anyone who needs a place to go to share the warmth of the season with you.

Listen for peace. Watch your favorite family Advent and Christmas classics and skip the ads. Or rent movies that inspire you spiritually. Better yet, turn off the TV, computer, and phone, and revel in the gift of silence.

Await the Babe. As a family, spend quiet moments in prayer or before the Eucharist as often as you can during Advent.

These peaceful pauses can convey to children the true meaning of Christmas.

Sing like the angels. Check local community events for concerts, Messiah sing-alongs, or other musical celebrations that lift the spirit. Or organize a caroling party and sing with all the joy of the season.



Why Do Catholics Do That ?

Why does the priest wear purple in Advent?

Purple – or violet – is traditionally associated with penance and penitential seasons such as Advent, a season marked by hope, simplicity, reflection, and preparation.

This season calls us to



repent of our sins and strive to become the individuals God intends us to be. It is a time to ready our hearts for Jesus' arrival, both at Christmas and at the end of time.

Purple is also a royal color, reminding us that the King is coming to rule our hearts!

Lessons from the Child in the manger

The image of Jesus lying in a manger is more than a beloved Christmas scene. Its lessons resonate all year long:

Generosity: In Jesus, God gave us everything. When children are tempted to keep the best for themselves, remind them of Jesus in the manger. God's gifts are meant to be shared, not just during the holidays, but in every season.

Humility: Jesus, the King of Kings, chose to be born in a humble stable. This was a profound



choice to be accessible to all of us. When children are hesitant to serve others, the Infant in the manger stands as a gentle reminder. God humbled Himself to serve us (Mark 10:45). How can we serve Him?

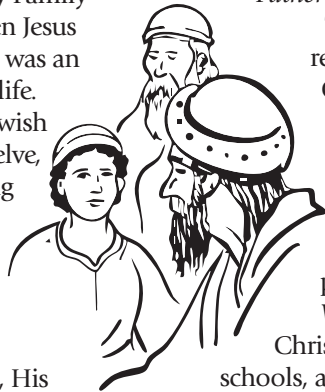
Love: True love seeks closeness. God, our divine Lover, came to us as a baby so that He could draw near to us, and we could draw near to Him. God has come close to us (James 4:8) and remains with us always in the Eucharist (Matthew 28:20), a testament of His boundless love.

Scripture LESSON

Luke 2:41-52, Going about the Father's business

In this reading, the Holy Family traveled to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old. This was an important event in Jesus' life. Then and now, when a Jewish boy reaches the age of twelve, he is celebrated as entering manhood in a ceremony known as a Bar Mitzvah.

Afterwards, the family started home but Jesus stayed behind. After three days of anxious searching, His parents discovered Him in the Temple, talking with the teachers, who were amazed by Him. Mary and Joseph were shocked: How could He just wander off? Jesus explained He was "about his



Father's business."

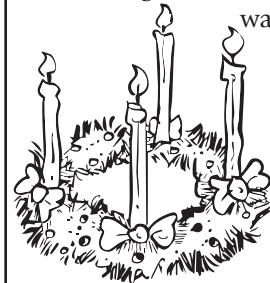
This was the first time Jesus referred to His identity as God's only Son. He realized His duties to His heavenly Father. Meanwhile, He returned obediently to Nazareth and fulfilled His duties to His earthly parents.

What can a parent do?

Christians live in neighborhoods, schools, and communities. We are subject to legitimate earthly authority but we can grow in holiness wherever God places us. Find ways to teach children to be holy while still living in the world.

Parent TALK

Our holidays were so hectic, I stopped enjoying them. Instead of celebrating on Christmas morning I wanted to stay in bed. Two years ago, I was so cranky and tired, I almost ruined everyone else's day.



So last year I asked the guests

we expected for Christmas dinner to each bring a side dish. That way I wouldn't have to spend the whole day cooking. Next, I drew up a list of our closest friends and family and bought small gifts for them, and the children and I spent a weekend baking cookies and wrapping gift baskets. People loved the homemade touch. Finally, I put the children's bedtime off each night by 15 minutes. We spent that time lighting the Advent wreath and praying the Rosary.

On Christmas morning, I cooked a special breakfast, sang joyfully at Mass, and celebrated Christmas Day. I finally had my blessed family Christmas.

Feasts & Celebrations

December 1 - First Sunday in Advent. We anticipate Christ's birth and His coming on the last day. Catholics everywhere light candles in an Advent wreath to signal the coming of the light of Christ.

December 7 - St. Ambrose of Milan (397). St. Ambrose was an effective pastor, bishop, and teacher, and was devoted to care of the poor in Milan. He guarded the Church against the Arians, who denied Jesus' divinity.

December 9 - Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

We commemorate that Mary was conceived in St. Anne's womb without original sin, preparing Mary to be the Mother of God. Pope Pius IX declared this doctrine in 1854. This year, it will be observed on December 9 and is a holy day of obligation.

December 21 - St. Peter Canisius (1597). Born in Holland, he became a priest in the Jesuit Order and worked through his writings and teachings to safeguard the Catholic faith after the Reformation. His work, *The Catechism*, is still used today.



Our Mission

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