

CONNECTIONS

Your Resource for Building a Strong Catholic Family

Jesus' Childhood



What do we know about Jesus' childhood? In the Bible we hear about Jesus' birth, the angels who sang, the shepherds who visited Him, and the wise men who came from afar to bring Him gifts. Then Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Egypt to avoid Herod who wanted to kill Him. Jesus was presented in the Temple, as was the custom for young Jewish children. At about the age of 12 we hear the story of Jesus teaching in the Jerusalem Temple. And then a simple but very important phrase: "And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man." Lk 2:52

Let's fill in the blanks about Jesus' early life. In Nazareth, the rural area where Jesus, Mary, and Joseph lived, Jesus grew up, was educated in the ways of the world and grew spiritually. He probably had the normal duties of a child, helping around the home, helping His dad, and enjoying friends. All this was in preparation for His adult ministry.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph make a very good model for our own families. Society is different today, but the spiritual learning and worldly learning we emphasize for our children is as important today as they were in the time of Jesus.

Praying with Jesus in the Womb



Christmas has arrived! We have welcomed the birth of Christ, and we are ready to start our New Year. Our liturgical year in the Church began in December with Advent, just as our calendar year begins with January 1st. Are you ready to introduce Christ? How would you explain to someone the significance of Christ in your life? We as Catholics sometimes don't recognize the importance of evangelization of our faith. With this New Year and new beginnings, it is a great time to reflect on how we can promote our faith with others. Are we proud to be a Catholic?

What does it mean to us to be Catholic? When we reflect on our faith, can we say we share it with those around us? This can be hard to do when the 'real world' is not ready for us

to promote our Catholic faith. However, in our daily actions through prayer, thoughtfulness, and devotion, we can demonstrate how important being a Catholic is to each of us. In our New Year's resolutions, along side the resolves to lose weight and exercise more, could we include a step further and incorporate daily mass into our lives? The commitment to go to daily mass once a week could be a resolution that enhances our spiritual life beyond our expectations.

Daily prayer can also be a wonderful addition to our lives. Imagine if Christ was standing before us...how would we react? If He asked us, "Why haven't you asked me for your needs?", would we be able to explain why praying hasn't been a daily part of our life? Christ came into our world, and between His birth and His

death, offered all to us. He gave everything including His life for us. We have celebrated His birth, however, are we continuing to place Him in the forefront of our life? It is only through the power of prayer, that we gain acknowledgment in Christ.

So as the New Year begins, both in the Church and on the yearly calendar, we can continue to grow in Christ through prayer. Promoting our Catholicism through our words, and our actions, is a direct reflection of our faith. This promotion can take many forms. We may vocally promote our beliefs and share it with those around us. We can also strive to follow in the words of St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary use words".

Symbol Key



Formation

Fills in the holes of faith knowledge that may have been missed growing up and highlights what makes Catholics distinct.



Prayer and Worship

Understanding what happens at Mass and incorporating prayer into family life.



Family (The Domestic Church)

Incorporating Catholic customs and traditions into family life.



Charity and Service

Highlights charity and service opportunities for the family within St. Francis Parish and the greater community.

Charity and Service



For many, Christmas marks a time for charitable acts and service.

In November and December, our parish is a whirlwind of service projects and acts of giving such as Coats for Kids, Thanksgiving and Christmas Food Boxes, the Giving Tree, and this year, a service project involving the Corporal Works of Mercy during Generations, Growing in Faith Together (GIFT). Seasonal events like these are important components of our faith, building on a foundation of our love for Jesus and our belief in the worth and dignity of each person.

But, what happens in January? Or June? Does the enthusiasm we have to lend a helping hand wane as we take down the Christmas tree and get back to our daily grind? Outreach ministries see less activity in volunteering and donations during the other 10 months of the year, although the need is often great year round. The hungry still need food in July. Those without homes find brutal heat in summer almost as unbearable as the cold in winter.

As Father Ysrael reminded us in a recent homily, the Catholic Church has a long history of charity and service, empowering others through education, social services and health care. When we make an effort throughout the year to serve others and help our fellow human beings, we honor the enduring traditions and teachings of our faith. And, we pass those values and teachings right down to our children when they serve alongside us.

The love, service and charity that occur during the Christmas season are not only vital contributions to the basic needs of others, but a beautiful expression of our Catholic faith. This Christmas, let's make a commitment to keep that expression of love going full force year round.



Mission Statement

The Strong Catholic Families initiative at St. Francis will provide support to help families pass on the traditions of the faith and share the love of Christ.

For more information visit: <http://www.stfrancissherwood.org/>
(Go to: Faith Formation then Strong Catholic Families)

The Holiday Season



As the holiday season comes to a close, we start putting everything away and anticipate getting back to normal life.

Ornaments are carefully packed up and trees taken down. Christmas cards from family and friends, some whom we haven't seen in ages, are filed or discarded. However, there is one aspect of Christmas that doesn't have to be packed up or tossed out- the spirit of giving to others and devoting time to our spiritual life. Christmas time can bring out the generosity in people that doesn't have to go away with the end of December. As mentioned in the Charity and Service article, helping the needy

is something that always needs attention. So, when making New Year's resolutions, why not add charity to the list of activities families can do together? To kick off the Advent season, Strong Catholic Families hosted an Advent wreath-making event in November. There is no reason why the prayerful time families set aside to light their Advent wreath has to end with the conclusion of Advent. Maintaining family prayer at mealtimes or bedtime is a wonderful way to strengthen the spiritual connection of the family throughout the New Year.



WORD SEARCH FIND THE HIDDEN WORDS

S	S	T	N	A	E	G	A	P	C	I	S	U	M	Y
T	M	S	E	A	S	O	N	R	E	Y	A	R	P	L
O	A	U	G	R	Y	L	O	H	C	M	N	O	E	L
C	R	S	D	E	Y	D	E	R	S	W	O	N	S	O
K	Y	E	L	L	D	W	E	E	U	B	I	R	T	H
I	T	J	I	A	N	I	H	C	S	T	A	R	H	P
N	U	M	H	D	A	L	Y	H	E	L	U	Y	G	E
G	A	D	C	V	L	L	A	E	L	M	O	D	I	S
F	E	O	R	E	R	G	D	V	C	J	B	R	L	O
L	B	R	U	N	A	T	I	V	I	T	Y	E	A	J
T	M	E	H	T	G	B	L	V	C	T	G	H	R	C
R	A	H	C	H	E	V	O	L	I	N	S	P	E	A
E	G	T	S	A	E	F	H	M	A	N	G	E	R	R
E	I	Y	R	R	E	M	S	L	E	I	G	H	F	D
S	A	T	N	A	S	P	T	C	H	R	I	S	T	S

Advent
Angels
Beauty
Birth
Cards
Carols
Census
Children

Christ
Church
Creche
December
Family
Feast
Festival
Garland

Giving
Goodwill
Herod
Holiday
Holly
Holy
Icicles
Jesus

Joseph
Joy
Lights
Love
Magi
Manger
Mary
Merry

Music
Nativity
Noel
Pageants
Peace
Prayer
Santa
Season

Shepherd
Sleigh
Snow
Star
Stocking
Trees
Yule