

Catholic Parenting Newsletter

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**Bits and Pieces
from
Here and There**

“You will find as you look back upon your life that the moments when you have really lived are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of love.”

Henry Drummond

“Blessed is the influence of one true, loving human soul on another. *George Eliot*

“May God give back to you in love all the love you have given, and all the joy and peace you have sown around you.”

Blessed Mother Teresa

December 28 is the feast of the Holy Innocents. Offer prayers for children who are victims of violence, war, or abuse, and light a special candle for them throughout the Christmas season.



Say “Thank You” to God

The month of November is filled with family gatherings and autumn activities. In the Church, this month is dedicated to the Holy Souls as we remember and give thanks for all believers who have gone before us.

Thanksgiving is a special holiday for many families because it is centered on gratitude rather than gift-giving. With the holiday rush just around the corner, why not spend the month of November giving thanks?

Gratitude is good for us and for our families. Gratitude helps us to stop worrying. When we are worried about what might happen tomorrow, thinking about all the things we are grateful for today pushes aside fear of the future.

At dinnertime, encourage every member of the family to mention one thing that

made them feel grateful during the day.

Gratitude is an antidote to jealousy. When we start to compare what we have with what other people have, thinking about all the things in our lives that we’re grateful for chases away envy.

At breakfast and at bedtime, encourage everyone in the family to thank God for the special people in their lives.

Gratitude helps to relieve stress. When we feel as if we can’t cope, thinking about how grateful we are for everything that is going well in our lives helps to restore a sense of peace.

Encourage your children to be grateful for the gift of nature, the air we breathe, the light of the sun and the beauty of the stars.

Adapted from OSV, Take Out

Recommended Reading: *Raising Good Kids: Back to Family Basics* by Ray Guarendi

If the last thing you need is another parenting book, *Raising Good Kids: Back to Family Basics* is the parenting book for you. Tell-it-like-it-is radio host Dr. Ray Guarendi is a firm believer that the secret of good parenting isn’t about knowing what to do. It’s doing what you already know.

With examples from his own experience as a father of 10, insight from his years as a clinical psychologist and radio host, as well as a healthy sense of self-deprecating humor, Dr. Guarendi provides a practical outlook that can help other dads and moms identify and follow through with the basic building blocks of successful parenting:

- Time
- Communication
- Discipline
- Respect
- Morality

Dr. Guarendi gives you the tools to get back on track, effective immediately, with common sense, common purpose, and good old fashion stick-to-it-tiveness.

Celebrating Advent as a Family

The season of Advent is the time of preparation for the birth of Christ. It is a time of longing and waiting for his “coming.” It should be a time filled with joy, when we ponder the gift of God’s love, open our hearts to receive and open our hands to give. *Advent begins on Sunday, December 3.*

Advent traditions are numerous. When traditions are lived and understood, they can bring families closer to Christ and transform the hearts of those who participate in them. How can we introduce some Advent traditions into our families this season?



Advent Wreath—The wreath is circular and made of evergreens symbolizing the eternity of God. There are four candles on the wreath, each representing one week of Advent. The three purple candles stand for prayer and penance, and the rose candle symbolizes joy, as we draw closer to the birth of Christ. Light the candle during your evening prayer or at meal times.

Nativity Scene—Saint Francis of Assisi began the custom of the nativity scenes. Children take great joy in helping to set up a nativity scene. Simplicity and beauty go hand in hand. You may set up your entire scene at the beginning of Advent, leaving the crib empty for the Christ Child to arrive on Christmas Eve. You can also set up the scene slowly, day by day. Joseph and Mary arrive to Bethlehem last. The family can place the figure of Baby Jesus in the crib together.

Advent Angels—At the beginning of Advent each family member can blindly pick a name of another member of the family and become his or her Advent angel. Prayers, sacrifices and acts of kindness can be offered and exercised daily.

Preparing our homes—Our homes should reflect our readiness for Christ’s birth. Clean your home together, simplify, share. Children can help to prepare a box for the poor and the lonely. You can donate extra clothing and household items, bake cookies together and share them or save them for the joyous time of Christmas.

Preparing our hearts—Just as we prepare our homes, we should prepare our hearts. This is the time for frequent sacrament of reconciliation, for longer family prayer, and for lots of Advent reading together. This is the time when your family can draw closer to the mystery of Christ’s Incarnation.

Adapted from www.foryourmarriage.org



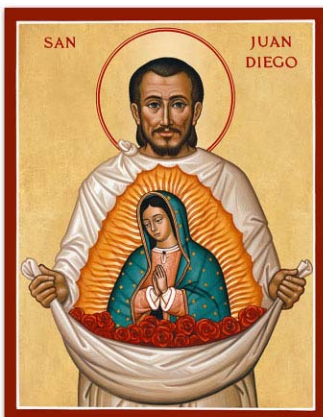
We celebrate the feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph on December 31. This feast reminds us that Jesus grew up in a family long after his birth in the manger. The Holy Family is a model for all Christian families as we walk through life's joys and trials together.

O God, who were pleased to give us the shining example of the Holy Family, graciously grant that we may imitate them in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity, and so, in the joy of your house, delight one day in eternal rewards. 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

Principles of Effective Parenting

- ⇒ **There's no such thing as a perfect parent.** Being a parent is about making mistakes and learning from them. Parents are seldom rewarded for their successes. What you hear about are the times your efforts fall short—and that's how you become better parents. So don't expect to do it perfectly. Nobody does.
- ⇒ **Try to be a "present parent."** This means not only listening to your child, but also reading the real message behind his words. When a question is asked, stop what you are doing and focus on what the child needs from you. Showing him this respect gives him a sense of being important. A child needs to be supported through all the trials and tribulations of growing up. When he's snubbed by his best friend or fails to make the team, let him feel your empathy. Let the child know that you're there to listen, console and help in any way you can.
- ⇒ **Rituals enrich kids' lives.** Family traditions are important to a child, especially sitting down together for breakfast and dinner as often as you can. Mealtimes offer a chance for everyone to connect, share experiences, feelings, and discuss family values. Honoring holidays in your own unique way while involving the child in the preparation makes them memorable. Sharing the holidays with extended family gives the child the opportunity to feel embraced in an even wider circle of love. Excerpted from "The Parent Networker"

SAINT JUAN DIEGO



Saint Juan Diego's feast day is December 9. He was born in 1474 and died May 30, 1548. Saint Juan Diego is the first indigenous saint from the Americas. While on his way to church, he was visited by Our Lady, who instructed him to have a church built in her honor on the hill at Tepeyac (Mexico City). When the local bishop asked for a sign, Juan Diego filled his *tilma* (cloak) with out-of-season roses that Mary showed him. When he unrolled his cloak before the bishop, the famous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was imprinted on it. He was widely regarded as a saint for centuries, and was canonized on July 31, 2002, by Pope St. John Paul II.

Remember Our Lady's words to Saint Juan Diego:

"I am the compassionate mother of you and of all you people here in this land, and of the other various peoples who love me, who cry out to me!"

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**Catholic Parent
Newsletter**

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Thanksgiving is our opportunity to share love and gratefulness. It is an opportunity to open our hearts and our homes to send warm greetings on this abundant harvest festival. It is an opportunity to send a prayer of gratitude to all who are part of our lives.

A Prayer of Gratitude

We are grateful for the gift of life and for all the gifts of friendship, love, devotion, and forgiveness that we have shared.

We give thanks for the presence of our loving God—visible to us in one another, in countless daily gifts, and in the miracles and wonders of creation.

May we remember to express our gratitude each day through lives of service, generosity, kindness, care, and compassion.

Prayer of Gratitude adapted from a prayer by Salle Latkovich, CSJ