

family MATTERS

THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

Although too often many consider the month of December as the "Christmas Shopping Season", our church reminds us, it is *Advent*, a time to prepare, be watchful, and alert. As a family, be watchful and look for symbols of the season. Lights, stars, candles, bells, wreaths, holly, nativity scenes and candy canes. These familiar symbols of *Advent* and Christmas are tangible ways for us to embrace, learn and anticipate our spiritual journey as we prepare for Christmas. Let us prepare Him room in our hearts, in our church and in our families as we journey through this *Advent* season.

Saint Nicholas and Your Shoes! A St. Nicholas Day Tradition

Children's Prayer to St. Nicholas
 God Our Father we pray,
 That through the intercession
 of St. Nicholas,
 You will protect our children.
 Keep them safe from harm,
 And help them grow,
 And become worthy of Your
 sight.
 Give them strength,
 To keep their Faith in You,
 And to keep alive their joy,
 In Your creation.
 Through Jesus Christ Our
 Lord.
 Amen.



December 6th is the feast day of Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of Children, which appropriately falls during the Advent season. One of the old Christian traditions surrounding his feast day was for kids to leave their shoes out overnight in front of the fireplace on the windowsill, or outside their bedroom door so that St. Nicholas could fill them with special fruits, candies and other small gifts and treats. While Catholics in America aren't as big on celebrating this feast day with their children, more and more American Catholic families are adopting St. Nicholas Day as a special Advent family tradition. Continue this Advent tradition with your family and teach your children to venerate the saints and deepen their knowledge of love for their Catholic Faith. Ideas to fill your children's shoes may be chocolate coins, a small toy, new socks, an orange, rosary and a prayer card.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8th, go to Mass as a family and listen carefully. Make a Mary Candle, listen to music about Mary, pray a Marian Prayer (Hail Mary, Hail, Holy Queen, or the Magnificat).

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, free from original sin.

Make a Mary Candle

You will need a large white pillar candle. Decorate it with symbols of Christ, such as *chi rho* (the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek, it looks like a large letter P with an X across the bottom part of the stem). Place it in a special part of your home and cover it with a white cloth or lace for the remainder of Advent. The candle represents Christ, the white cloth represents Mary. On Christmas, remove the cloth to reveal Christ, and light the candle all through the Christmas season.



DECEMBER 12 OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE: PAY A VIRTUAL VISIT TO HER SHRINE
 IN MEXICO CITY
www.sancta.org/basilica.html



DECEMBER 17 HAPPY BIRTHDAY POPE FRANCIS! SEND HIM A BIRTHDAY CARD
 HIS HOLINESS, POPE FRANCIS
 APOSTOLIC PALACE
 00120 VATICAN CITY



DECEMBER 25 **Merry Christmas**

Leave your Christmas decorations and Nativity up long into January, Christmas does not end when the last present has been opened.

Christmas Tree Blessing

Holy Creator of Trees, Bless with your abundant grace this our Christmas tree as a symbol of joy. May its evergreen branches be a sign of your never-fading promises. May its colorful lights and ornaments call us to decorate with love our home and our world. May the gifts that surround this tree be symbols of the gifts that we have received from the Tree of Christ's Cross. Holy Christmas tree within our home, may Joy and Peace come and nest in your branches and in our hearts.
 Amen.