



CELEBRATING

the Christmas Season

The Church year continues with the joyful Christmas season. With a bit of advance preparation you can offer stories, prayers, and activities to help families celebrate this season in their homes.

Begin by preparing a letter to parents. Wish them a blessed Christmas season. Highlight for them parish Mass times and any special concerts or celebrations to be held at the parish or school during the Christmas season.

The Church year celebrates several major feasts during the Christmas season, namely:

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas Day)
The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Mary, the Holy Mother of God
The Epiphany of the Lord
The Baptism of the Lord

Encourage families to celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas, which begin on December 26 and end on January 6, once the assigned date for the Epiphany of the Lord. (The Epiphany is sometimes referred to as "Little Christmas.") Invite them to make a Christmas calendar or a Christmas chain out of construction paper loops. On each of the twelve days, they should decide upon and list one thing they can do as a family to keep alive the spirit of Christmas.

In addition, RCL Benziger is pleased to provide you with the following resources, created for use in the home and/or classroom: **The Blessing of the Christmas Tree; The Blessing of the Family Nativity Set; Prayer for the New Year; and The Blessing of the Home on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.**

There are also many important saints whose feasts and memorials the Church celebrates during the Christmas season. Encourage families to visit **SaintsResource.com** to learn more. Below is a list of the saints, along with a suggested carol of the day to sing in honor of the saint and the season.

December 26: Saint Stephen, The First Martyr

This is a great day to sing "Good King Wenceslas" in honor of Saint Stephen, who had a special concern for the poor.

December 27: Saint John, Apostle, Evangelist

Sing the Christmas spiritual "Go, Tell It on the Mountain" in honor of the Apostles and Evangelists who spread the Good News to all.

December 28: The Holy Innocents, Martyr

The infant boys, killed by a jealous Herod, professed their faith not by speaking, but by dying. Listen to a recording of or sing "Coventry Carol," which tells the story of the Holy Innocents.

December 29: The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

On this feast, which normally falls on a Sunday within the Christmas season, pray for all families (see "Prayer for a Family" in Our Family Prays, published by RCL Benziger). Sing or listen to "The Aye Carol."

January 2: Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops, Doctors of the Church

In celebration of the friendship shared by these two great leaders of the Church, sing a verse or two of "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" today.

January 3: The Most Holy Name of Jesus

Names tell others who we are and whose family we are a part of. The name Jesus means "God saves." Today, think about the gift of salvation and honor the name of Jesus as you sing "Away in a Manger."

January 4: Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton is known for many “firsts”—she was canonized as the first American saint, she founded the first religious community of women in the United States, and she opened the first Catholic school in the United States. In celebration of her devotion to children, sing “What Child is This?”

Engage children in preparing a family Christmas season take-home pack. Begin by inviting them to fold in half and decorate a sheet of drawing paper or the front of a two-pocket folder. Encourage them to use words, symbols, and images appropriate for the Christmas season.

Keeping your school and parish faith formation schedule in mind, either help the children or invite them to carefully remove from their books the liturgical year lessons for the solemnities and feasts that are celebrated during their Christmas break.

Send home the folder of liturgical suggestions, prayers, and resources for family use during Christmas vacation. Upon the children’s return, ask what prayers they prayed, what saints they discovered, what carols they sang, and what they learned about the solemnities and feasts of this wonderful season of the liturgical year!

Joy to the world!