

# Catholic Parenting Newsletter

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Bits and Pieces  
from  
Here and There

“The letters of St. Paul often begin and end with thanksgiving, and the Lord Jesus is always present in it: “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”: Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2638*

“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today, let us begin.”

*Blessed Mother Teresa*

“In forgiving, you experience the radical love of God.” *Allen Hunt*

“Talents are gifts that God gives us to enjoy, but we enjoy them even more once they're shared. Every gift we have been given is meant not just for ourselves, but to be passed along to others.” *Carrie Gress*

“Think of the person you most respect—you can become that for someone else.”

*Frank J. Hanna*

## Advent begins on Sunday, December 2

Families are encouraged to celebrate the season of Advent in your homes. Faith practices are essential for family Catholic identity. Make memories and traditions that will last a lifetime and form the faith of your family. Here are three steps to prepare for the season of Advent:



Set up a place to pray together in your home, the kitchen or dining room table, a table in a corner, on top of a bookshelf or mantle.

Use a symbol of Advent such as an advent wreath (the wreath is an old German tradition). It is a wreath or a circle of evergreens, made in various sizes. The devotion is usually incorporated during the family meal, or during family night prayers. Fastened to the wreath are four candles standing upright, at equal distances. These

candles represent the four weeks of Advent. Three of the candles are purple, reminding us of the penitential nature of the season. A rose or pink candle is lit for the Third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete (rejoice) Sunday. It is reminding us that the end of Advent is almost here, and we can hardly contain our joy.

Choose a time that the family can gather regularly in the evening or morning or at a meal.

### Advent Prayer—

Heavenly Father, your son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us, a great sign of your love. Guide us as we strive to walk in that love together as a family this Advent. As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, bring us closer to each other and to your son. Give us the grace and strength we need every day. Help us to always trust in you. Come, Lord Jesus, lead all people closer to you. Come and dispel the darkness of our world with the light of your love. Amen.

### Recommended Reading: “Small Steps for Catholic Moms: Your Daily Call to Think, Pray, and Act.” by Danielle Bean and Elizabeth Foss

Danielle Bean, editor of *Catholic Digest*, and Elizabeth Foss, an award-winning blogger, team up to offer daily doses of inspiration, wisdom, and hope for Catholic moms. Now back in print in response to high demand, *Small Steps for Catholic Moms* gives busy mothers a year's worth of sustenance, in the form of brief daily challenges about which to think, pray, and act.

*Small Steps for Catholic Moms* offers daily prompts and suggestions--small steps--for every day of the year to encourage Catholic moms to attain that elusive balance between action and contemplation in everyday life. Each day's entry includes a short prayer from a saint, a personal prayer composed from the hearts of two mothers, and a small call to action, making this the perfect prayer companion for the busy mom looking for bite-sized spiritual nourishment.

(“Amazing Grace for Fathers” will be the recommended reading suggestion in the next newsletter.)

# How to be a Welcoming Family

Jesus tells us that when we welcome a stranger, we welcome him (Mt. 25:35). But it's not always easy to be welcoming. Sometimes, we just aren't sure what to say or what to do. Our children are always watching, however. The way we interact with strangers forms a deep impression on them. How can we help our children recognize the presence of Christ in other people?



**In our Homes**—Homes are sacred, a place of comfort, safety, nurturing, and love. How do we welcome people in our homes?

- Whether it is a delivery person, a salesperson, a politician, or a missionary, we can treat a person who knocks on our door with kindness and respect.
- We can make people who marry into our family feel valued and accepted—even if our personalities clash or we don't always agree with that person.
- We can treat workers who come to repair, renovate or maintain our homes with kindness by offering them coffee in the morning or water on a hot day.

**In our Neighborhoods**—Our neighborhoods are an extension of our homes and our lives. Jesus tells us to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mk 12:31). How can we love our neighbors as Jesus asks?

- Encourage your children to make a welcome card for people who move into the neighborhood.
- We can ask where they came from and why they chose to live here.
- We can check on new neighbors to make sure they are getting settled and offer to help them getting to know the neighborhood.

**In Our Parishes**—Strangers show up in our parishes at every Mass. How we treat them could make a difference in whether or not they ever come back.

- Smile and introduce yourself to people you don't know.
- We can also move into the pew more or step aside into the aisle instead of making people crawl over us.
- Talk to people who are standing alone at the parish coffee hour.

**In Our Community**—If we live in an area where there are homeless shelters or refugee centers, we can help our children understand that when we reach out to someone in need, we are doing what Jesus wants us to do.

- Take your children to buy nonperishable food, and deliver it to the local food pantry/soup kitchen.
- Help to instill in children a sense of empathy by talking about how refugees might feel.
- Remind your kids that all are children of God, with the same kinds of emotions, struggles, joys and sorrows. We may have different ways of thinking or living, but God wants all of us to love one another.

*“Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.” Hebrews 13:2*

*Adapted from Take Out, Family Faith on the Go*

## Five Ways to Stay Calm during the Holiday Rush

It's the most wonderful time of the year—and sometimes the most stressful. Many American families today have such busy schedules and limited energy that the holiday season can put us over the edge. How can we, as Catholic families, keep the spirit of tranquility and peace that should characterize the season of Our Lord's birth?



1. **Be Realistic:** Don't overcommit to Christmas parties, programs and events. Sometimes we can get so busy we forget what it's all for. Commit to a couple of holiday events and be present, so you can truly celebrate.
2. **Maintain Healthy Habits:** Be sure to eat, sleep and take care of yourself in the midst of the hustle and bustle. This will help keep you well for the holidays and your whole family will benefit.
3. **Keep the Kids in a Routine:** Both before the holidays and during holiday travels we have a tendency to let schedules and routines go by the wayside, but this isn't always good for kids. Many behavioral problems can arise when structure falls apart (just ask any teacher what things are like just before Christmas and summer breaks)! Try to stick to regular bedtimes, mealtimes, and other family routines as much as possible.
4. **Plan for Family Stress:** If there are relatives who can be negative influences on the kids or family environments that bring out the worst in you, have an escape plan before venturing on holiday travel. For example, is there a movie theater or library near the house where you are staying? Plan to get away for a while when you and your own children need to take a break.

Adapted from *Take Out, Family Faith on the Go*.

## Fun Facts for Kids—Snowflakes



Snowflakes are made of ice crystals. Each snowflake is six-sided and made of as many as 200 ice crystals. Snowflakes form in clouds where the temperature is below freezing. The ice crystals form around tiny bits of dirt that has been carried up into the atmosphere by the wind. Study some snowflakes this winter. You can catch some flakes by catching them on black paper that was either frozen or placed outside several hours before catching to assure that the paper will be cold. Let some flakes land on the paper and examine them with a magnifying lens.

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## Catholic Parent Newsletter

Place your parish logo,  
and/or contact person  
information here!

*Thanksgiving is the time when families pray and offer thanks to the Lord for His continuous grace.*

### **Thanksgiving Day Prayer**

Heavenly Father, on Thanksgiving Day  
We bow our hearts to You and pray.  
We give You thanks for all You've done  
Especially for the gift of Jesus, Your Son.  
For beauty in nature, Your glory we see.  
For joy and health, friends and family,  
For daily provision, Your mercy and care  
These are the blessings You graciously share.  
So today we offer this response of praise  
With a promise to follow You all of our days. Amen.

*Mary Fairchild*

