

Catholic Parenting Newsletter

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“I am a little brush that Jesus has chosen in order to paint His own image in the souls... entrusted to my care.

St. Therese of Lisieux

“As Christmas approaches, help your children prepare by urging them to choose at least one of their possessions to give away to someone who needs it more than they do.” *Susan Vogt*

“The most rewarding things you do in life are often the ones that look like they can't be done.”

Arnold Palmer

“Parenting children is about self-indulgence, fraternal jealousy, and forgiveness—all typical family dynamics. No matter the faults in your own family, remember to forgive. It doesn't mean reparation is never needed, but let forgiveness be the foundation.”

Susan Vogt

“Dear parents, teach your children to pray. Pray with them.”

Pope Francis



“Express Gratitude Every Day”

As families gather around the table this Thanksgiving, many will take turns telling one another what they are grateful for in their lives. For many, the list will probably be familiar and similar—family, health, job, and of course, the food on the table.

No matter your background, family or station in life, true gratitude and joy comes from knowing that we are loved by God.

As parents, one of our most important tasks is to encourage our children to fill their hearts and minds with the knowledge of God's love. Think about the moments in your life when you were taught about God's love. Perhaps it was a parent or grandparent or a teacher who prayed with you. In fact, important teaching moments can occur when we least expect it: a meeting gets cancelled, so you get to come home early from work; your daughter learns how to make pancakes; your favorite song begins playing while shopping for groceries. Intentionally noticing these small joys enriches the walk through life. When you share them with your family,

it teaches them that they, too, can recognize blessings in their lives.

When we are able to be grateful for small things, we learn to seek the light of gratitude tucked in the darkest moments. This is the most important lesson to share with our family; even in the darkest, most challenging times, *God is with us*. When we carry God in our hearts, even in the face of struggle and hardship, we fortify ourselves. The recognition of God's presence in our lives helps us move through the times that may otherwise feel hopeless. When our children witness this courage, they learn that God's love will carry them through.

Thanksgiving Dinnertime Prayer —

Our Father in heaven, we give thanks for the blessing of gathering together for this occasion. We give thanks for this food prepared by loving hands. We give thanks for life, the freedom to enjoy it all and all other blessings. As we partake of this food, we pray for health and strength to carry on and try to live as you would have us. Amen.

“Don't Let the Culture Raise Your Kids” by Marcia Segelstein

As a journalist, television news producer, writer, and editor, Marcia Segelstein has spent decades reporting on family-related issues. Her work has brought her face to face with troubling shifts in our culture away from Christian values - and the impact these trends are having on our children. As a mother, Marcia recognizes that these are more than news stories: they are a personal battle. And this is a battle every Christian parent today must be equipped to fight.

In *Don't Let the Culture Raise Your Kids*, Marcia shows us how today's parents need to be different - and why. She coaches parents to lead their children with confidence and authority, eyes wide open to the pitfalls and dangers that surround them, whether in the media, in school, or among their peers.

It's not too late to raise Christian kids. It's this simple: *Don't Let the Culture Raise Your Kids*. Armed with the information provided in this book, you can start today.

Gather Around the Table at Thanksgiving



As Thanksgiving approaches, we are reminded about the importance of gathering together for meals. Today's research shows that families who eat together are more connected and healthy. Meals are the anchor in our family lives, just as the Mass provides us the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of our Catholic faith. The Mass is a sacrificial meal and gathering of the family of God. As we gather around the table of the Lord at Mass, we celebrate the Body of Christ as together we come to be nourished, strengthened, renewed, inspired and unified. Thanksgiving is at the heart of this sacrament as we can see in its very name, Eucharist, meaning "to give thanks."

Ways to make Family Meals a Habit...

- Share family schedules and talk about the days that work for family meals.
- Put these meals on the family calendar where everyone can see them.
- Turn off the gadgets! Establish the dinner table as an area free of electronic devices.
- Think of mealtime as the Family News Hour. Turn off the TV and take turns sharing your news.
- Include everyone in getting the meal on the table.
- Begin each meal with a prayer. Say grace and say, "Thank you for this food and this family."
- Try to have one conversation going at a time at the table. This teaches little ones to listen and older kids to listen to them. Everyone has a contribution to make.

A family meal is so much more than simply consuming food. It feeds our heart and soul as well. It is a time to make family memories. Adding small, special touches to your meals can turn a simple meal into an event.

- Encourage kids to get involved in meal planning. Go grocery shopping and pick out special foods together.
- Check out recipes to find foods the whole family will love. Get adventurous and design meals using foods and recipes from a country you want to visit, or try cooking a whole meal with local food grown in your area.
- Decorate placemats with a theme.
- Light candles occasionally to make an ordinary dinner feel sacred and special.

Adapted from Take Out

The best gifts parents can give their children.

This is the season for gift giving. Most parents carefully select the most appropriate presents for their children. They search, shop for, wrap, and prepare the gifts to be opened with excitement at the right moment. Much emotional, mental and physical energy is expended to delight and benefit the youngsters.

Yet, the biggest gifts you can give your children do not come wrapped in bright holiday paper. They do not take space, and are not given once a year. And, they may not cost anything. Yet, their value is immeasurable.

The best present for children is the commitment to spend quality time with them throughout the year. This is truly the gift that keeps on giving. Children who get daily attention of at least twenty minutes of shared interaction with their parents, tend to thrive.

The best gifts you can give your children are: *Full, loving attention, care and guidance.* As you give your children their holiday gifts this year, please ask yourself if you are also giving them the most important gifts they need throughout the year.



“Great Expectations” for Parents during Holidays

DOES THE THOUGHT OF THE COMING CHRISTMAS SEASON OVERWHELM YOU?

Don't let the holidays zap your joy! Celebrate the Lord's birth by learning what to accept, instead of what to expect.



Involve the whole family. Ask your family what makes the holidays special to them. “Talk about your plans,” says psychologist Dr. Marilyn Marshall. “There is no need to work at doing things people don't want.” Let each family member choose a Christmas activity or event that is most important to him or her. Stick to your list and forget the rest.

Look for shortcuts. Find fast alternatives to some tasks. Rather than spending hours in the kitchen, treat your kids to a bakery visit and allow them to select the family's holiday sweets while you enjoy a relaxing cup of coffee.

Be spontaneous! If you are stuck in a rut of doing the same old thing every Christmas, you probably aren't finding joy in some of those activities any longer. Play in the snow or cuddle

together over a holiday-themed movie instead.

Invite neighbors. Have a tree trimming party with neighbors, friends or relatives and serve cookies, cider and eggnog. Your house will be decorated in no time.

Keep a schedule. Maintain the children's sleeping and eating schedules as much as possible. That last Christmas shopping trek will be worthless if you're doing it with tired, hungry children.

Keep the main thing the main thing. Help your children understand the purpose of Christmas by using an Advent calendar. You might also want to place an empty manger in your Nativity scene. Each time someone in your family does a good deed, he or she gets to place a piece of straw in the manger. When Christmas arrives, the manger will be full!

The spirit of Christmas is found in the time you spend with those you cherish. Whether you're snowed in without power on Christmas morning, on an airplane flying across the country, or at the table surrounded by family and friends, accept the time together as the gift that it really is.

Adapted from, “Our Sunday Visitor”

Saint Juan Diego, Feast Day December 9



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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**Christmas Devotion to the Holy
Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph**
(Feast of the Holy Family is
Sunday, December 29)

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
From the heavenly household on high
Look upon our earthly households today.

Pray for us!

Holy Family,
You were not welcome in Bethlehem;
Embrace those rejected by the world

Pray for us!

Holy Family,
You were sheltered in a stable;
Protect those who have no home.

Pray for us!

Holy Family,
You heard the angels' song;
Sing to us of heaven's joy.

Pray for us!

Holy Family,
You faithfully observed the divine law;
Show us how to do the will of God.

Pray for us!

Holy Family,
Protected and guided
By St. Joseph,

Pray for us!

Holy Family,
Cared for, looked after
By Holy Mary,

Pray for us!

Holy Family,
Fulfilled by the
Presence of Christ,

Pray for us!

Be our strength in life,
Be our hope in the hour of death.

Pray for us.

Amen