

BUILDING A CIVILIZATION OF LOVE

Official Family Newsletter of the Archdiocese of KCK



THE ART OF SIMPLICITY IN ADVENT

BY LIBBY DUPONT

One year, when my oldest son was in pre-school, I was adamant about observing Advent as a season of waiting. This attitude, coupled with a busy work schedule, made for a hectic Christmas Eve. While the snow gently fell outside, I was frantically trying to clean the house, bake cookies for Santa, prepare our traditional Polish meal, put up the tree, wrap presents and bake a birthday cake for Jesus... all in time to show up at Mass in our beautiful, matching outfits.

It did not go well. My son spent the day begging me to go sledding with him and I spent the day crabbingly chasing him away, telling him we'd go tomorrow. By bedtime, I was exhausted. Then, overnight the snow turned into a disgusting slush, so we never got to go sledding.

Since then, I've realized that holiday traditions should be at the service of my relationships, not the other way around. My husband and I started by picking a few things every year that are important to us. We do a simple Jesse Tree and light Advent candles. We watch Elf and A Christmas Story. We eat bacon-wrapped shrimp and homemade pierogi on Christmas Eve and take votes on 2-3 varieties of "can't miss" cookies to bake. We give gifts. Then, we let ourselves off the hook if we can't get to the rest. There aren't any elves on our shelves, but that's okay!

Next, I have tried to be content with imperfection. We often miss a day (or five!) on the Jesse Tree. The kids make a mess with purple and pink candle wax. The cookies they help with won't win any prizes. But every effort I've made to value relationship over perfection has paid huge dividends.

We also try to take advantage of the whole season. In the Catholic Church, Christmas Day lasts for eight days, and the liturgical season goes into January. The week between Christmas and New Year is a great time to do many of the things we used to stress about finishing before the 25th. Likewise, though we try to keep the penitential purpose of Advent, we found that our strict observation was killing some of the expectant joy. Our compromise has been making the third Sunday of Advent a celebration where we decorate our tree and listen to more Christmas music.

Finally, when I'm tempted to think I'm failing to meet the expectations of the season, I try to remember how outwardly imperfect the First Christmas was. Our God chose to be born into poverty because he valued His relationship with me above all else. May He find welcome in my messy home and hectic life!

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BEING A “BAILEY” IN A “POTTER’S” WORLD

BY ANNIE KYLE

Anyone who knows me knows that ‘It’s a Wonderful Life’ is my favorite movie of all time. Not only have I dressed up as Mary and George with my husband for Halloween but I insist on making my friends watch it with me every year as we decorate our Christmas tree. It is also the only movie (besides ‘The Passion’) that can make me bawl like a baby no matter how many times I have seen it. The themes and messages are a constant inspiration in my daily life and when times are rough my husband and I often jokingly call each other Mr. and Mrs. Bailey to lighten the mood! We figure if the Baileys can get through hard times, then so can we!

The main reason this movie has had such an impact on me however, is how relatable it is even years after the 1940’s. Try as we may, we seem to always find ourselves living in a Potter’s world. In fact, we often see our fallen society follow Mr. Potter’s strategies and obsession with profit and progressiveness. A world that never rests and sacrifices peace for productivity. A world where toiling is encouraged, the innocent are crushed, wars are funded, and anxiety engulfs its citizens. In the movie, it is this mentality which drives Potter into his own miserable existence of isolation, regardless of the fact that he practically has everything he has even wanted.

However, it is not the ending of this successful business man that is focused on. The ending we are interested in instead takes place at the humble abode of the Bailey’s. We see a brother fly through a blizzard just to be there for his sibling, a wife honor her wedding vows of ‘for richer for poorer’, friends giving what little they have for the wellbeing of another in need, and a ‘down on his luck’ man learn to hope once again. The film not only upholds the dignity of man but reminds us of the power that simple acts of kindness, sacrifice, and love can have on our society.

These small but courageous virtues are displayed constantly by each member of the Bailey family, despite the odds they face! A character who I believe inspires this way of fearless living however, is none other than patriarch of the family Peter Bailey, who lived his life solely for the poor and common man. In fact, the lifestyle and ending of this amiable father figure beautifully contrasts the isolation of Potter’s. When Peter dies, he is surrounded not only by loved ones, but leaves behind his simple family business that’s sole purpose was to help others. The office is not lavish like Potter’s but carries a sign on the wall that reads, “All you can take with you is that which you have given away.” This small detail of the movie has always pierced my heart due to the way it illuminates the legacy and impact this earnest man had on his family and community. It was his example that inspired Harry’s bravery, Mary’s unconditional love, and George’s hope.

Oftentimes in our world, it is difficult to wonder whether our actions have meaning or truly matter. We can get caught up in the hustle and bustle of life and find ourselves stuck in fear and anxiety. It is in these times that we must remember our love, kindness, and true communion never go to waste. This advent I hope that we are encouraged to reconnect with our communities and sow compassion into our world one day at a time. It is truly these brave and often unacknowledged choices that will continue to fight the darkness of our own Potter’s world today.

“Strange, isn’t it?

Each man’s life

touches so many

other lives.

When he isn’t

around he leaves

an awful hole,

doesn’t he?”

-ITS A WONDERFUL LIFE





WHEN THE HOLIDAYS ARE HARD

It's the most wonderful time of the year... unless you're grieving, have difficult family dynamics, mental health issues or financial struggles! Already painful circumstances can be exacerbated by the perception that everyone else is merry and bright. We are here to remind you that you are not alone!

The holidays can be extremely difficult for so many people and there is no shame in tending to our wounds and emotions during this time. In fact, we encourage you to not be afraid of scaling back or opting out of what others are doing this season. Instead of pushing through, consider taking time to slow down, invest in self care, and above all to allow our Lord to comfort and restore you. While it may seem that others simply want you to put on a happy face, our Lord desires your heart and wishes to bring it the healing and joy that only He can offer. Above all do not hesitate to reach out for the support that you need. The best gift you can give yourself and your loved ones this year is to make sure you are well taken care of!

The following are a few resources that may be helpful to you this Advent and Christmas season:



-Life-Giving Wounds: Support for adult children of divorced or separated parents. Register now for our 2024 retreat, January 12-14. Click [HERE](#) for info!



-KCK Catholic Counselors List: A list of counselors who are faithful to the Catholic faith. Click [HERE](#) for list!



-Stephen Ministers: Check with your parish to see if they offer this ministry of accompaniment. Learn more about the ministry [HERE!](#)

-[Retrouvaille](#): Help for struggling marriages. Next session January 26-28, 2024. Register [HERE!](#)

-Various mental health resources: [Mental Health - Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas \(archkck.org\)](#)



ADVENT IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

PREPARING THE MANGER

One of our favorite childhood advent activities is preparing the manger for Jesus' birth. This is an excellent way to encourage children to not only understand the meaning of Christmas to find ways themselves to spread acts of love and kindness in the home. The practice is to place a piece of hay in the manger for every good deed or sacrifice that we offer during Advent in hope that our love with warm baby Jesus when he arrives on Christmas. This project can be enjoyed by the entire family and can easily be purchased online or created by yourself with just a few crafts! You can even fill a cup with pieces of paper that have ideas of good deeds on them to help your children get started. On Christmas day you can gather as a family to place the Christ Child in the manger and welcome him into your home!

HOLY HEROES- "ADVENT ADVENTURE" (5-12 YRS).

A fun, faithful, and FREE set of activities for every day of Advent to be enjoyed with kids 5-12 yrs. Holy Heroes does all the work then sends you daily emails full of fun! You just click-and-watch short videos ... click-and-print off fun activities ... click-and-pray along with them! Sign up and join today [HERE!](#)

ADVENT WREATH AND CANDLES

The lighting and use of Advent candles is a longstanding Catholic tradition! Each Sunday of Advent, a candle that represents a different virtue is lit for that week. The first purple candle, symbolizes hope and our anticipation as we wait for our Savior to finally arrive. The second candle, also purple, represents faith. It is also called the "Bethlehem Candle" as a reminder of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. The third candle, lit on Gaudete Sunday, is the color rose which is the liturgical color for joy. It is meant to remind us of the joy that the world experienced with Christ's birth. Finally the fourth and final candle is purple once again and represents peace. This marks the final week of penance and prayer and reminds us that Jesus brought "Peace on Earth and Good Will Toward Men".

**WE WISH YOU A BLESSED ADVENT AND A JOYFUL CHRISTMAS!
MAY THE CHRIST CHILD BRING PEACE TO OUR HOMES AND TEACH
US HOW TO LOVE AS HE DOES!**

Advent Speculaas Cookies by Catholic All Year

For the Cookies

- 3 1/2 cups All-Purpose Flour
- 1/2 tsp Baking Soda
- 1/2 tsp Salt
- 1 1/2 tsp Ground Cinnamon
- 1 tsp Ground Ginger
- 1/4 tsp Ground Nutmeg
- 3/4 tsp Ground Cardamom
- 1/4 tsp Ground Mace
- 1/4 tsp Freshly Ground White Pepper
- A Pinch of Ground Cloves
- 6 oz. (1 1/2 sticks) Unsalted Butter, softened
- 1 cup Light Brown Sugar, packed
- 1/3 cup Water
- Confectioners' Sugar, for surface

For the Royal Icing

- 3 Egg Whites (3 ounces pasteurized egg white)
- 1 tsp Vanilla Extract
- 4 cups Confectioners' Sugar

For Instructions and link to recipe
Click [HERE!](#)

ADVENT DATES FOR COUPLES

BY MARISSA BROWN

ADVENT MOVIE MARATHON

- Pick a cozy evening to watch a series of Advent-themed movies or Christmas classics. Before each movie, take a few moments to read a relevant Bible passage or Advent devotional together.
- During intermissions, discuss the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love, connecting them to your own lives and experiences.
- Conclude the evening with a prayer thanking God for the gift of each other and the anticipation of the Christmas season.

CANDLELIT DINNER AND ADVENT DEVOTION

- Prepare a special dinner and set the table with candles. Create a warm and intimate atmosphere.
- Begin the evening by lighting the first Advent candle. Each week, as you progress through Advent, light an additional candle, taking time to reflect on the corresponding theme.
- Incorporate Advent devotions or readings into your mealtime, focusing on the significance of the season and the messages of hope, peace, joy, and love.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WALK

- Choose a night to take a stroll through a neighborhood known for its Christmas lights. Enjoy the festive decorations and the sense of community.
- As you walk, discuss the symbolism of light during Advent and its representation of the coming of Christ into the world.
- Find a quiet spot along your route to pause and pray together, expressing gratitude for the light of Christ in your lives and asking for guidance in the coming season.

DIY ADVENT CALENDAR OF GRATITUDE

- Create a homemade Advent calendar with small notes or activities for each day leading up to Christmas. Include expressions of gratitude, acts of kindness, and moments of prayer.
- Each evening, open a new compartment and engage in the activity or reflection together. This could include writing thank-you notes, praying for specific intentions, or recalling shared memories.
- Conclude each evening with a prayer of gratitude for the blessings you've experienced and a prayer for those in need.
- Remember, the key is to create intentional moments for reflection, prayer, and connection while celebrating the anticipation of Christmas. Adjust these ideas based on your preferences and make them personal to your relationship.

Christmas Cranberry Bourbon Cocktail:

- 2 ounces bourbon
- 2 ounces cranberry juice 100% juice, unsweetened
- 1/2 ounce rosemary sage simple syrup*
- Splash of lemon juice freshly squeezed
- Fresh rosemary and sage for garnish

Rosemary Sage Simple Syrup:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 3 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 3 sprigs fresh sages

Instructions

- In a glass filled with ice, add the bourbon, cranberry juice, rosemary sage simple syrup*, and a splash of lemon juice.
- Stir to combine.
- *Rosemary Sage Simple Syrup: In a medium saucepan, combine one cup of sugar and one cup of water. Toss in a couple sprigs each of fresh rosemary and sage. Bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar has dissolved. This will take 5-8 minutes. Strain the herbs from the simple syrup and allow it to cool completely before using.

KEEP THE FEAST!

"ON THE FEASTS OF THE SAINTS CONSIDER THEIR VIRTUES, AND BESEECH GOD TO DEIGN TO ADORN YOU WITH THEM."

-ST. TERESA OF JESUS

December 3rd, St. Francis Xavier

- Celebrate this saint by making [Xaver Suppe](#). Also known as Xavier Soup, this dish is a light broth with simple dumplings added to it! Make it with your family for a cold December night!

December 6th, St. Nicholas

- On the eve of St. Nicholas' feast, it is tradition for children to put out their shoes in front of the fireplace in hopes that St. Nicholas will leave them goodies! This custom comes from St. Nicholas' known generosity to those around him, especially those less fortunate. Shoes are traditionally filled with things like oranges and golden chocolate coins but any small treat will do!

December 7th, St. Ambrose

- There is a legend that as baby in his cradle, St. Ambrose was swarmed by a cloud of bees that settled on his face. The bees did him no harm but left behind a drop of honey on his tongue. The saint's father took this as a sign of his son's future "eloquence" and "honeyed tongue". Celebrate this saint by making [honey cookies](#) or some other kind of sweet honey treat!

December 8th, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (Holy day of Obligation)

- On this feast we celebrate the miraculous event of Mary being conceived without sin! To celebrate, consider bringing flowers to lay under a statue of Mary when attending mass. Spend time together either praying a rosary or a few memorares for her intercession in your family. You can also eat a "white" dessert to represent her purity. Try [meringue cookies](#), [angel food cake](#), or even [blueberry muffins](#) (blue after all is the color of our lady)!

December 9th, St. Juan Diego

December 12th, Our Lady of Guadalupe

- Celebrate Our Lady and her appearance to St. Juan Diego by implementing your favorite Mexican foods into your meals on both of these feasts! Pray a rosary for our Lady's intercession and then end the night by eating this delicious [Mexican Chocolate Cake](#) or a cup of [Mexican Hot Chocolate](#)!

December 13th, St. Lucy

- A Swedish tradition of this feast is eating sweet buns at the first light of the day! Traditionally, the oldest daughter wakes up early to prepare and serve the sweet bread to her family while wearing a white gown (signifying St. Lucy's purity), a red sash (martyrdom), and a green wreath (God's eternity) often with candles on her head as a crown. The candles bring "light" to the darkness of the early morning, and point us to the meaning of her name Lucy (Lucia). You can make traditional Swedish [Lussekater](#) or [cinnamon rolls](#)!

December 15th, St. John of the Cross

- Known as one of the great writers of the church, this saint along with St. Teresa of Avila, founded the Discalced Carmelites, an order devoted to service of the Blessed Mother through prayer and penance. Celebrate him by making these homemade [caramels](#)!

December 25th, Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Holy day of Obligation)

December 27th, St. John the Apostle

- There is a legend of St. John blessing poisoned wine given to him in attempt to kill him. His blessing however caused the poison to leave the cup and slither away like a snake. In remembrance, there is a tradition of bringing wine to a priest to bless after mass. The wine is then turned into a sacramental called the "Love of St. John." This wine can be used for special occasions throughout the year, or be given to the sick. Read more [here](#)!

December 31st, Feast of the Holy Family

- We highly suggest you spend this feast with your family! Go see a movie, have a board game night, or simply sit and enjoy your family's favorite meal! You can honor the Holy Family by praying for their intercession or possibly even making bread together like they probably did years and years ago!

January 1st, Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation)

The Striving Saint: Resources that Inspire the Road to Sainthood

FEATURED PODCAST



RESTORE THE GLORY PODCAST

“A practical discussion where two former therapists share what they learned professionally and experienced personally about the healing and restoration of our God-given glory. Dr. Bob Schuchts & Jake Khym, MA are Catholic therapists with over 50 years combined experience teaching and accompanying people into fuller life and freedom.”

FEATURED BOOK

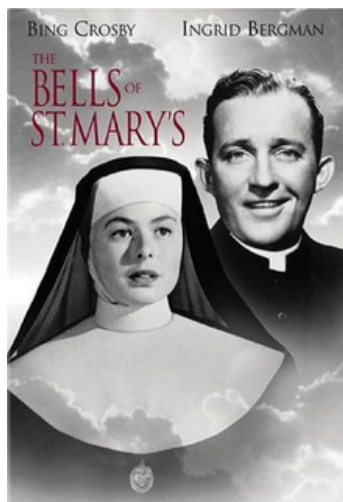
BEHOLD: A GUIDED ADVENT JOURNAL FOR PRAYER AND MEDITATION

“Let the Holy Family be your light through Advent as you receive the healing power of Christ. In this beautiful guided journal for prayer and meditation, Sr. Miriam James Heidland, SOLT—author of the bestselling book *Restore*—will walk with you as you explore familial wounds with the help of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Free weekly companion videos, a downloadable discussion guide, and other resources make this book perfect for parish-wide, individual, and book club use leading up to Christmas.

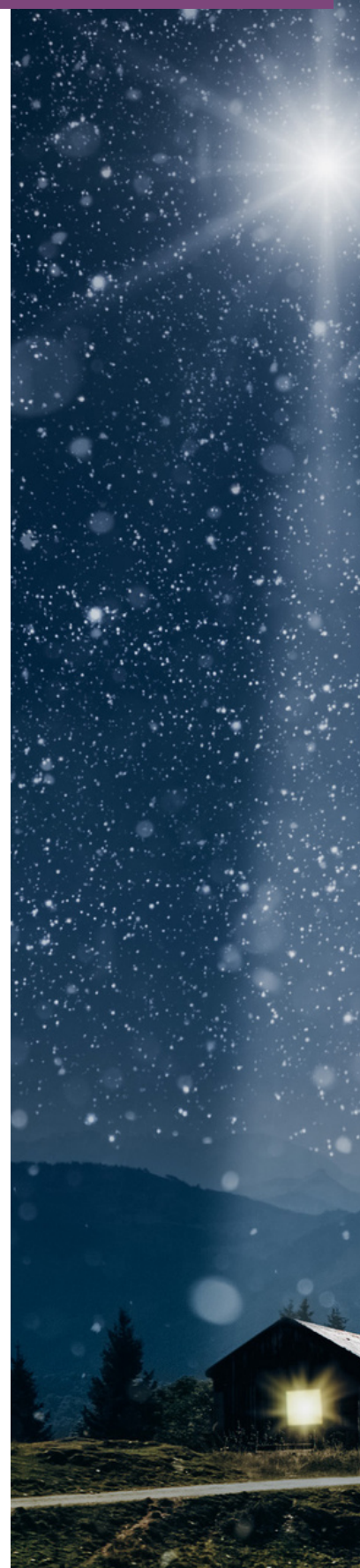


FEATURED MOVIE

THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S



“Father O'Malley, the unconventional priest from 'Going My Way', continues his work for the Catholic Church. This time he is sent to St. Mary's, a run-down parochial school on the verge of condemnation. He and Sister Benedict work together in an attempt to save the school, though their differing methods often lead to good-natured disagreements.”





FEATURED ADVENT ACTIVITY

MARY ON THE MANTLE

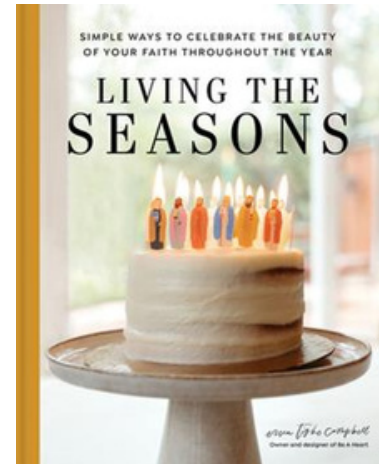
“Your new favorite family Advent tradition: a fun, interactive way to help kids prepare for the arrival of baby Jesus. Mary on the Mantel has everything you need to simplify your Advent without losing any of the meaning.”



FEATURED BOOK

LIVING THE SEASONS

“Erica Tighe Campbell, owner and designer of Be A Heart, created this stunning, full-color guide to creatively celebrating the faith throughout the year. Living the Seasons is brimming with clever, doable, and beautiful crafts and activities; vivid photographs; brief introductions to the seasons and the lives of the saints; heartfelt notes of encouragement from Campbell; and original Be A Heart illustrations. This gorgeous companion will become your favorite resource for living your faith at home for years to come.”



FEATURED MOVIE

ANGELA'S CHRISTMAS

RATED G

“Set in Ireland in the 1910s, 'Angela's Christmas' is a funny, heart-warming and poignant story about the power of family and the innocent desire of a child to ensure everyone is safe, warm and loved at Christmas time.”



UPCOMING EVENTS

HEAR WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE LIFE GIVING WOUNDS RETREAT

“ Life Giving Wounds provided me the opportunity to reveal my wounds, especially the trauma of my parent’s separation, to God. The more I uncovered the depths of my wounds with Christ, the more I experienced the depth of the Father’s love for me. ”

THE OFFICE OF MARRIAGE & FAMILY LIFE



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FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM!
@MARRIAGEANDFAMILYLIFEKCK

♥ -SCHOOL OF LOVE’S DATE NIGHT
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2023 AT 6:30PM
School of Love’s date night is back! This time at the restaurant at Classic Cup. Date Night is a **free** event for Catholic married couples of all ages. We start your date with drinks, free appetizers, and a short talk on faith, marriage, family... You finish your date at home or out on the town. Email info@schooloflovekc.com to put in your request for a great post-event dinner reservation option for you!
<https://www.schoolofloveusa.com/date-night>

♥ -LIFE GIVING WOUNDS RETREAT: SAVIOR PASTORAL CENTER, KCK
FRIDAY-SUNDAY, JANUARY 12-14, 2024
Retreat for Adult children of divorced or separated parents. The weekend is presented by trained peer leaders and includes insightful talks, Reconciliation/Adoration, time for prayer and optional small groups. Limited scholarships are available upon request for residents of the Archdiocese of KCK! Spots are limited!
Register today at: archkck.org/LGW

-RETOUVAILLE KC MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT WEEKEND
FRIDAY-SUNDAY, JANUARY 26-28, 2024
Retrouvaille is now taking reservations for their Marriage Enrichment Weekend event in KC from January 26-28! Retrouvaille is a lifeline for marriages...a program to help couples heal and renew their hurting marriages. A Christian program, Catholic in origin, where couples of all faiths or no faith background are encouraged to attend. Primarily a practical program to improve communication, build stronger marriages, and help couples reconnect. Presenters are not trained marriage counselors, but rather couples sharing their personal stories of marital struggles and the tools they used to rediscover their love. Registration closes January 24th!
Register today at www.retrokc.com

♥ -"EVER MORE IN LOVE" MARRIED WEEKEND IMMERSION
SACRED HEART OF JESUS CATHOLIC CHURCH- SHAWNEE, KS
FEBRUARY 24-25, 2024
Formerly called the Living in Love retreat, this weekend is packed with insights and exercises that will help you experience the wonder of being more in love! We are excited to see you in person in Shawnee, KS. Cost is \$150 per couple and registration ends February 23rd!
Use Discount Code **ARCHKCK** at checkout to register for only \$50!
Register [HERE!](#)

MINI MARRIAGE RETREATS

♥ -SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2023
AT HOLY SPIRIT, OVERLAND PARK
For more information contact Jennie Punswick:
jpunswick@hscatholic.org