




# CELEBRATING the *Joy* of CHRISTMAS

A Christmas Resource to aid the faithful  
in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

# Christmas is an Eight Day Celebration



*W*e've got some good news: the Church is asking you to have a bigger party!! That's right, the Church invites us to celebrate the feast of the Nativity for not just one day, but for eight full days. In the current liturgical calendar, Easter and Christmas are the only feasts that have octaves attached to them. This means that the Church recognizes that the eight days of the Christmas Octave repeat the solemnness of Christmas. This period of time ends with another solemnity that is connected to the solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord.

The natural question is why an octave? (or why eight days?)

By taking eight days we have the time to truly enjoy the mysteries, joys, and graces of the principal feasts of the Church year. Eight days has its origin back in Jewish festival customs. The feast of Tabernacles lasted seven days and ended with a solemnity (making 8 days) and the feast of the Dedication of the Temple by Solomon lasted 8 days. Also, the circumcision of the Christ child was on the eighth day after he was born. Also, in Church tradition it is said that Jesus rose on the "8th" day. (The week starts on Sunday so the following Sunday is also the 8th day.)

Celebrating for eight days does not just magically happen-it takes some thought and intention, and that is why this resource is here. It can be a lot of work to keep the party going and we want to help you celebrate.

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How To

# Celebrating Christmas at Home

This resource will help you to celebrate the Joy of Christmas at home, with a prayer, reading, reflection and activity for each of the eight days. Some activities are perfect for families with young children, while others appeal more to adults. Choose whatever works best for you!

## What to Do Each Day

- **Opening Prayer:** Taken from the “Collect” prayer said at Mass, the opening prayer highlights the saint or theme of the day.
- **Gospel Reading:** God speaks directly to us through Sacred Scripture, taken from the Gospel of the day.
- **Short Reflection:** We learn more about the saint or theme of the day.
- **Closing Prayer:** We remember to celebrate the Joy of Christmas.
- **Celebration:** A different activity each day to help us celebrate Christmas. (See Appendix A)

## Get the Most Out of This Resource:

### Check out the Appendix for:

- More daily celebration ideas.
- Lectio Divina guide for deeper reflection and journaling.
- A Family Nativity Play.

## Plan your Christmas Octave Daily Celebrations:

Refer to Appendix A on page 13 for a list of suggested ideas for celebrating. You can use these ideas or ones you create on your own to fill in each date.

- Decide what time you will do your prayer and activity.
- Choose which activity you will do each day.
- Write it in the space provided.

December 25 \_\_\_\_\_

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December 26 \_\_\_\_\_

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December 27 \_\_\_\_\_

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December 28 \_\_\_\_\_

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December 29 \_\_\_\_\_

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December 30 \_\_\_\_\_

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December 31 \_\_\_\_\_

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January 1 \_\_\_\_\_

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# Christmas Day Prayers

## Prayer before bed on Christmas Eve

O God, who gladden us year by year  
as we wait in hope for our redemption,  
grant that, just as we joyfully welcome  
your Only Begotten Son as our Redeemer,  
we may also merit to face him confidently  
when he comes again as our Judge.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever

## Prayer for Christmas Morning

Grant, we pray, almighty God,  
that, as we are bathed in the new radiance of your incarnate Word,  
the light of faith, which illumines our minds,  
may also shine through in our deeds.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

## Prayer for Christmas During the Day

O God, who wonderfully created the dignity of human nature  
and still more wonderfully restored it,  
grant, we pray,  
that we may share in the divinity of Christ,  
who humbled himself to share in our humanity.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. .

## Christmas Dinner Prayer

God of all gifts, we thank you for the many ways you have blessed us this day. We are grateful for each of those who are gathered around this table. We ask you to bless us and our food and to bless those we love who are not with us today. In our gratitude and love, we remember your humble birth into our lives and pray for those who are without enough to eat. We remember the stable in which you were born and pray for those who have no place to live. We remember your challenging message of caring and giving and we pray for peace in families and nations throughout the world. We bless you and give you thanks in your Spirit who brings our hearts to life this Christmas Day and forever. Amen.





Day 1

# December 25 - Christmas Day

## Opening Prayer

*Collect from the Christmas Vigil Mass*

O God, who gladden us year by year as we wait in hope for our redemption, grant that, just as we joyfully welcome your Only Begotten Son as our Redeemer, we may also merit to face him confidently when he comes again as our Judge. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Gospel - Luke 2: 1-14

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

## Reflection

Today we celebrate the gift of God become man. What an extravagant sign of love! God humbled himself into a tiny baby to come live among us. Rejoice, again I say rejoice! "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15) God became man means that no matter what you have been through or what you will go through God knows the pain, joy, excitement or sadness that comes with life on earth. He chose to enter into the brokenness of humanity to walk with us through every moment of life. Rejoice today that God is not some far off being beyond our understanding, but that He became a human, just like you, to sanctify all that we do.

On this Christmas day, let us sit with the Holy Family as they soak in the joy of the moment. Mary and Joseph had overcome many obstacles prior to Jesus' birth and scripture shows us that they have many more obstacles ahead. But for the moment, the birth of Christ offers the joy they need. Let us enter that moment and allow today's joy to be enough. May you and your family have a very Merry Christmas!

## Closing Prayer

**Leader:** At the birth of Jesus, angels proclaimed peace to the world. We worship him now with joy, and we pray with hearts full of faith.

**All:** May your birth bring peace to all. Amen.



# December 26 - St. Stephen, The First Martyr

## Opening Prayer

Grant, Lord, we pray, that we may imitate what we worship, and so learn to love even our enemies, for we celebrate the heavenly birthday of a man who knew how to pray even for his persecutors. Through our Lord, Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the Unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

## Gospel - Matthew 10: 17-22

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Beware of men, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved.”

## Reflection

On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me... One holy martyr?

Yesterday we celebrated the Solemnity of Christmas. What a joy! And today, we honor St. Stephen, the Church's first martyr. While it may seem misplaced to reflect on martyrdom at this point in the Church calendar, fear not, the joy of the Christmas remains.

Who was Stephen and why does he hold such a prominent place in the Christmas season? Stephen was one of the first ordained deacons of the Church. Great preaching and miracles were attributed to Stephen. It reads in Acts that Stephen “full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.” His most notable witness though was the moment of his death. As Stephen was rushed upon and carried out the of the city, and eventually brutally stoned to death, he spoke his last words, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” Stephen's life and witness in martyrdom echoed into the first Christian communities and doing so, into eternity.

Why Christmas and martyrdom? The Church calls the day of martyrdom the day of one's birth. The death of the martyr is a birth in Heaven. What a beautiful truth to reflect upon. As St. John Paul II says, “This is why it is so meaningful to celebrate the first martyr the day after Christmas: Jesus who was born in Bethlehem gave his life for us so that we too, reborn ‘from on high’ through faith and Baptism, might be willing to give up our own lives for love of our brothers and sisters” (John Paul II, Angelus, Feast of St. Stephen, 2002).

We are not all called to martyrdom like Stephen, but we are indeed called to live the meaning of the word martyr, and that is witness. As we continue into the Christmas Season, how can we witness to the joy of the Incarnation of God? How can we, like Stephen, witness with the joy that accompanies loving those in our life, especially those whom we may consider enemies? How can we live in such a way that witnesses to the joyful expectation of our own birth into Heaven?

## Closing Prayer

**Leader:** At the birth of Jesus, angels proclaimed peace to the world. We worship him now with joy, and we pray with hearts full of faith.

**All:** May your birth bring peace to all. Amen.



Day 3

# December 27 - The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

## Opening Prayer

O God, who were pleased to give us the shining example of the Holy Family, graciously grant that we may imitate them in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity, and so, in the joy of your house, delight one day in eternal rewards. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Gospel - Luke 2: 22-40

When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord, and to offer the sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord. Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, He took him into his arms and blessed God, saying: "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel." The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted—and you yourself a sword will pierce—so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

## Reflection

Today we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family – Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! Jesus, the Messiah, God become man, entered into the world just like each of us—as a baby, born into a family.

At times our families may just seem to be the people we share a home with, or get together with on the holidays; they may be people we struggle to get along with as we grow older. Whether you are married and have a family of your own, share a home with roommates, or simply share life with close friends, this shared life is sacred... even if it doesn't always feel like it! In the midst of the everyday relationships and mundane tasks, is something beautiful. When Jesus was born into a family, he sanctified family life. He showed us that everything is sacred. Every task, every chore, every conversation, every meal.

The family is critical because it is the primary school of the human person—for children, but also for parents. It is where we learn to love and practice selflessness. It is easy to miss the invitation to holiness that awaits in family life, but Father Jacques Philippe has some powerful words to share in his book, *Interior Freedom*, "Even when what we're doing is genuinely trifling, it's a mistake to rush through it as though we felt we were wasting our time. If something, no matter how ordinary, needs to be done and is part of our lives, it's worth doing for its own sake, and worth putting our hearts into."

Take a moment to ponder how family life has made you a better person. How might you better love and serve your family, roommates, or close friends?

## Closing Prayer

**Leader:** At the birth of Jesus, angels proclaimed peace to the world. We worship him now with joy, and we pray with hearts full of faith.

**All:** May your birth bring peace to all. Amen.



Day 4

# December 28 - The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

## Opening Prayer

O God, whom the Holy Innocents confessed and proclaimed on this day, not by speaking but by dying, grant, we pray, that the faith in you which we confess with our lips may also speak through our manner of life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Gospel - Matthew 2: 13-18

When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, out of Egypt I called my son. When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet:

*A voice was heard in Ramah,  
sobbing and loud lamentation;  
Rachel weeping for her children,  
and she would not be consoled,  
since they were no more.*

## Reflection

With the song of the Angel's "Glory to God in the Highest" still ringing in the air, and the three wise men all packed up and back on their camels for the journey home... there were also forces of evil at work trying to destroy the baby Jesus and everything he stood for. Today we remember the Holy Innocents, who were persecuted and killed because they might be the baby Jesus. Even though they were infants, their lives pointed to Jesus, and we remember them in a special way today.

Let us remember how important it is to protect all human life and let us pray for the grace to live lives that point to Jesus. Even though King Herod is not chasing the baby Jesus today, there are still times that people do not want to hear about Jesus. So, let us celebrate Christmas joyfully this year and share the good news that Jesus was born in Bethlehem to save us!

## Closing Prayer

**Leader:** At the birth of Jesus, angels proclaimed peace to the world. We worship him now with joy, and we pray with hearts full of faith.

**All:** May your birth bring peace to all. Amen.





Day 5

# December 29 - Saint Thomas Becket, Bishop and Martyr

## Opening Prayer

O God, who gave the Martyr Saint Thomas Becket the courage to give up his life for the sake of justice, grant, through his intercession, that, renouncing our life for the sake of Christ in this world, we may find it in heaven. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Gospel - Matthew 16: 24-27

Jesus said to all,

“Whoever wishes to come after me, must deny himself,  
take up his cross, and follow me.

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it,  
but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world  
and forfeit his life?

Or what can one give in exchange for his life?

For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father’s glory,  
and then he will repay each one according to his conduct.”

## Reflection

On this Fifth Day of Christmas, we celebrate the life of Saint Thomas Becket! Today may we be inspired by his courage and martyrdom to take up our crosses to follow Jesus in our own lives. In the most crucial point of his life, Thomas chose to put his faith and ministry above all else. Thomas was a close friend of King Henry II of England. Together, they went to war, enjoyed lavish lifestyles, and participated in plenty of misadventures. As time went on in their friendship, the one thing that Henry and Thomas couldn’t agree on was whose authority was greater. When Thomas was appointed as the Archbishop of Canterbury, his demeanor changed. He resigned as Henry’s chief minister and began to live a more simple, prayerful life. Soon, as king, Henry sought to have more power and authority over England than the Church and when Thomas contradicted the King, he paid with his life.

In Thomas’s life, he chose to carry his cross. He chose to put God and the Church ahead of everything else, including the wishes of his King and friend. Today, we are challenged to pick up our own crosses, to abandon our worldly desires, and to follow Jesus.

## Closing Prayer

**Leader:** At the birth of Jesus, angels proclaimed peace to the world. We worship him now with joy, and we pray with hearts full of faith.

**All:** May your birth bring peace to all. Amen.



# December 30 - St. John the Evangelist

## Opening Prayer

*Collect from the Feast of St. John*

O God, who through the blessed Apostle John have unlocked for us the secrets of your Word, grant, we pray, that we may grasp with proper understanding what he has so marvelously brought to our ears. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Gospel - John 20: 1a, 2-8

On the first day of the week,  
Mary Magdalene ran and went to Simon Peter  
and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them,  
“They have taken the Lord from the tomb,  
and we do not know where they put him.”  
So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb.  
They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter  
and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial  
cloths there, but did not go in.  
When Simon Peter arrived after him,  
he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there,  
and the cloth that had covered his head,  
not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.  
Then the other disciple also went in,  
the one who had arrived at the tomb first,  
and he saw and believed.

## Reflection

Although today is not St. John the Evangelist's feast day (that is on December 27th – which was Holy Family Sunday this year) we wanted to take a day to recall this most wonderful saint. St. John was as close to Jesus as anyone ever could be. Jesus often chose him to accompany him for exceptionally noteworthy moments in ministry like the raising of Jarius's daughter or the Transfiguration. John was the one who rested his head on Jesus' chest as the Christ revealed that one among them would betray him. In the Gospel read on his feast day, John is the “other disciple” who “saw and believed” (John 20:8), when he entered the empty tomb on Easter morning. It makes sense that we would celebrate someone who knew Jesus so well during an Octave where we are celebrating that God came into our world so we could know him. In many ways, John embodies what God desires for each one of us. God wants us to see how much he loves his creation and he wants us to love him so much that we begin to love what He loves.

In his great old age the church would beg John to say something they had not yet heard about the Lord. But John the Beloved would only repeat over and over again: “Little children love one another.” The gathered Christians would then complain: “Tell us something new.” But John would only answer: “If you have not learned the lesson of love you have learned nothing about the Risen Christ.” During this celebration of when Christ came into our world, let us all hear and learn the instruction of John so may we then become convincing witnesses to the life changing power of God in our life. As the song says, “they will only know we are Christians by our love.”

## Closing Prayer

**Leader:** At the birth of Jesus, angels proclaimed peace to the world. We worship him now with joy, and we pray with hearts full of faith.

**All:** May your birth bring peace to all. Amen.



Day 7

# December 31 - Memorial of Pope Saint Sylvester I

## Opening Prayer

O Lord, to the help of your people, sustained by the intercession of Pope Saint Sylvester, so that, running the course of this present life under your guidance we may happily attain life without end. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Gospel - Matthew 16: 13-19

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples,

"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter said in reply,

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah.

For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.

And so I say to you, you are Peter,

and upon this rock I will build my Church,

and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven.

Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;

and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

## Reflection

Today we celebrate St. Sylvester I who became pope in 314 AD. One of the stories about Pope Sylvester is that he baptized the emperor Constantine after he dreamed that saints Peter and Paul appeared to him telling him to seek out Pope Sylvester and be baptized. Pope Sylvester was known for his hospitality and for living a life completely given to Christ. Those who knew him gave him the title of "Confessor" which meant that even though he did not die as a martyr, he lived totally for Jesus in his words and actions.

In today's Gospel, Simon Peter confesses that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus says to him, "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church." Let us pray for our own pope today, and let us follow the example of St. Peter and St. Sylvester I who proclaimed Jesus with their whole lives.

## Closing Prayer

**Leader:** At the birth of Jesus, angels proclaimed peace to the world. We worship him now with joy, and we pray with hearts full of faith.

**All:** May your birth bring peace to all. Amen.



Day 8

# January 1 - Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

## Opening Prayer

God, who through the fruitful virginity of Blessed Mary bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation, grant, we pray, that we may experience the intercession of her, through whom we were found worthy to receive the author of life, our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Gospel - John 20: 1a, 2-8

The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

## Reflection

As a Catholic Church, we celebrate every year on January 1, the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. It is considered a holy day of obligation. A lot of times January 1st, the day after New year's eve, is a difficult day to go to Church and celebrate this solemnity. Let us remember why we should strive to do our best and participate in this liturgical celebration. This feast is also called "Theotokos". This term has caused some controversies among Catholics, especially among other Christian denominations and even within our Orthodox brothers and sisters. Indeed, it is difficult to ponder on the idea that God has a mother, since we know that God is eternal and has no beginning.

The issue with the "Theotokos" had more to do with Jesus than with Mary, specifically, the inseparability of their human and divine natures from the moment of conception. This is an important principle to remember: any authentic study of Mary (Mariology) is necessarily connected to the study of Jesus (Christology). Mary exists in relationship to Jesus and must always be understood in the context of that relationship.

If we go back to history, to the year 431, in the city of Ephesus (near present day Turkey), The bishops who gathered at the Council affirmed the inseparable unity of the divine and human natures of Christ from the moment of Jesus' conception, and that, due to the divine nature present in the unborn child Jesus, Mary could be properly and correctly called Theotokos, which literally means "Carrier of God" but is more commonly translated as "Mother of God." Thus, to be clear, the council fathers were not suggesting that Mary was the source of Jesus' divine nature, which would be a clear mistake. Rather, we were to refer to our Most Holy Mother as the one in whom and from whom the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, became flesh and dwelt among us. (Cf John 1,14).


Let's not forget this wonderful celebration, because within the divine plan of creation, Mary is the most perfect creature. She is a symbol of all redeemed humanity, we can affirm that what God has accomplished in Mary in a unique and perfect way, he wishes to accomplish in all people. This year looks different, but it is the same God that invites to love his Son and honor the maternal care that she provided and continues to provide for us.

## Closing Prayer

**Leader:** At the birth of Jesus, angels proclaimed peace to the world. We worship him now with joy, and we pray with hearts full of faith.

**All:** May your birth bring peace to all. Amen.

# Appendix A: Ideas for Celebrating



For ideas of how to keep the Christmas celebration going for all 8 days of the Octave, refer to the list below. Feel free to come up with your own ideas.

## Ideas for around your home:

- Keep your Christmas tree, Nativity, lights, and decorations up!
- Keep opening presents!!! Open one each day of the Octave instead of opening them all on Christmas Day.
- Read Christmas Books together as family each day.
- Have 8 days of special meals, or have family dinners all 8 days.
- Drive or walk around to look at Christmas Lights.
- Wear Christmas Pajamas.
- Hang a brand new ornament on your tree each day.
- Light candles at each dinner.
- Have special drinks and/or desserts each day. (sparkling grape juice for kids).
- Sing *Gloria In Excelsis Deo* each day.
- Have a family dance party.
- Put on a Family Nativity play. (See Appendix C for a full script.)
- "Visit" extended family - play a zoom game with them!
- Watch one (or many) Christmas movies!

- Make and enjoy a birthday cake for Jesus.
- Move three wise men around your house as they "travel" to Bethlehem, getting closer to your Nativity set and ending there on Epiphany (Wednesday, January 6th)
- Visit an adoration chapel if possible.
- Go to daily Mass if possible.
- Pray a rosary each day.


## Ideas for in the community:

- Deliver hand-written Christmas Cards to your neighbors.
- Make flannel tie blankets to take to a local shelter. All shelters and Veterans organizations are looking for new warm blankets, hats, gloves, and scarves.
- Go Christmas caroling at a local nursing home. Many nursing homes are one floor. See if you could get permission to sing outside nursing home windows.
- Volunteer at a food pantry/food bank.
- Make cards to take to a local nursing home. You can find out the names of shut-ins and people within nursing homes by calling their offices to personalize messages.
- Buy extra hygiene products at the store to donate. Many people do not have access to cleaning products such as personal care products (deodorant, toothpaste, soap, etc.) and household cleaners (laundry soap, dish soap, etc.)

## Marian-specific ideas:

- Wear blue on the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. (January 1st)
- Take flowers to Mary at church or at Marian statue in home.
- Watch movie on Mary's life, such as *Mary of Nazareth*
- Read Luke 1, or take it one step further and use it to pray Lectio Divina. (See Appendix B for a guide to Lectio Divina)

# Appendix B: Lectio Divina Guide



For deeper reflection or journaling, use this Lectio Divina guide as you read and reflect on each day's readings.

## First, Let's Pray...

- **Take** some time in silence. Allow distractions and concerns to pass by.
- **Rest** in the silence of God's presence. Imagine God looking down upon you praying and sending the Holy Spirit to direct you and draw you close.
- **Pray** out loud for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

## First Reading: (Imagination)

- **Read** the passage slowly once out loud.
- **Questions for reflection:** what sticks out from this passage? A word, a phrase, a verse, an image?
- After reading the passage, **take a few minutes of silent prayer to continue reflecting on the passage.**
- After prayer, take some time to **share** your responses to the reflection questions if you are with a group, or journal if this is self-study.

## Second Reading: (Intellect)

- **Read** the passage again and this time think about the word or image that stuck out to you or anything else the Holy Spirit may present to you and “chew” on the words, turning them over in your minds and hearts.
- **Questions for reflection:** What does the passage say about God? What does it say about you? What is happening in your life that these words have importance? What feelings does it evoke within you?
- After reading the passage, **take a few minutes of silent prayer to continue reflecting on the passage.**
- After prayer, take some time to **share** your responses to the reflection questions if you are with a group, or journal if this is self-study.

## Third Reading: (Will)

- **Read** the passage one more time.
- **Questions for reflection:** How does this relate to my life? What invitation do I experience from the Lord? What resistance do I feel within myself?
- After reading the passage, **take a few minutes of silent prayer to continue reflecting on the passage.**
- After prayer, take some time to **share** your responses to the reflection questions if you are with a group, or journal if this is self-study.

# Appendix C: Family Nativity Script

Assign each cast member to a family member. Read from the script and act out the scenes. You can even use props and dress up as your character.

## Cast:

- Narrator
- Gabriel
- Mary
- Innkeeper 1 2 3 (Shepherd 1,2,3 )
- Joseph
- Caesar Augustus
- Baby Jesus
- Wise Man 1,2,3 (Prophet 1,2,3)

## Narrator:

This is the story of the first Christmas—the night Jesus Christ was born. We celebrate this to remember the hope and joy that this tiny baby brought to the world on that extraordinary night in Bethlehem almost 2000 years ago. For Jesus' birth did bring hope and joy to the world. Hope because at that time there was much wrongdoing and fighting on the earth and the people were looking for a sign from God that he would always be there to look after them—and joy, because, after many years of waiting, God had finally fulfilled his promise to send a man—a savior, or messiah—to Earth to go among the people and teach everybody his peaceful and loving ways. That man would be God's greatest gift to humanity—his son Jesus Christ. within you?

**Narrator:** To prepare the world for this man, God asked different men and women to prophesy, or foretell, that Jesus was coming. These people were called “The prophets.” This is what they said:

**Prophet #1:** Behold, a virgin shall bring forth a son and his name will mean “God is with us.”

**Prophet #2:** Out of Bethlehem...one will go forth to be the King of Israel.

**Prophet #1:** For unto us a child will be born, unto us a son shall be given. And his name shall be called...Wonderful...the Prince of Peace...and there shall be no end to his kingdom And he will be with us forever!

*(In the background, MARY can now be seen in the house sweeping. GABRIEL enters from right; JOSEPH enters right, sits on a chair and sleeps.)*

**Narrator:** Now when God was ready to give Jesus to the world, He chose a good and pure woman named Mary to be his mother. Mary lived in the little village of Nazareth and was engaged to be married to Joseph, a humble carpenter, who lived nearby. One day, when Mary was alone, God sent his messenger, the angel Gabriel, to appear before her (*MARY looks up at Gabriel*)

**Gabriel:** Hail, Mary. Full of grace. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.

**Narrator:** Mary was at first frightened and confused by this greeting of the Angel of God. But then Gabriel told her that God had chosen her to give birth to Jesus.

**Gabriel:** Fear not Mary, for you are special in God's eyes. And behold, he has chosen you to bring forth a son. And you shall call him Jesus. And he will be called the Son of God. And his Kingdom shall have no end.

# Appendix C (cont.): Family Nativity Script

**Narrator:** Mary now understood everything she had been told. And it filled her with great joy and happiness. She replied to Gabriel saying..."

**Mary:** I will do what God tells me. *(MARY looks toward heaven, a smile on her face. Gabrielle turns to stage right and looks down to Joseph.)*

**Narrator:** Not long after he had spoken to Mary, the angel Gabriel appeared to Joseph one night as he slept. In Joseph's dream, the Angel of the Lord told him of God's plan.

**Gabriel:** Joseph, God has chosen you to be the father of his son, Jesus. And Mary will be his mother.

*(JOSEPH rises, clasps his hands, and looks up to the heavens. Then he and MARY walk to center stage and hold each other's hands)*

**Narrator:** When Joseph awoke, he went to Mary with joy in his heart. Both Mary and Joseph had heard that God's son would be coming and they were overjoyed to be chosen by God to be his parents. And so Mary and Joseph went back to living their quiet lives, keeping God's secret only between themselves. Now, at that time, the land they lived in was ruled by the Romans, who were mighty, but wicked rulers of an enormous empire. The chief ruler, a man named Caesar Augustus, was mean and greedy. He wanted to tax everyone in the land to raise money for himself and the Romans. So he issued a decree saying:

**(Narrator/) Caesar Augustus:** Every man shall return to the place of his birth!

**Narrator:** That way, Caesar would know every person who lived in his country, so he could be taxed....And so Joseph and Mary left Nazareth to return to the small village of Bethlehem, about 90 miles away, where Joseph had been born. It was a difficult journey across the hot land, but after six long days and nights, they finally reached

Bethlehem. By then Mary was very tired and about to give birth.

*(INNKEEPER #1 enters MARY and JOSEPH enter from left and stand before the door.)*

**Narrator:** But when they arrived, the city was already very crowded with other people who had come back to be registered, and all of the inns were full. But Joseph sought shelter at several inns anyway, in the hope that someone might spare a room for Mary.

**Joseph:** But when they arrived, the city was already very crowded with other people who had come back to be registered, and all of the inns were full.

**Innkeeper #1:** I'm sorry. I have no room.

**Narrator:** And so it went at every inn.

**Innkeeper #2:** Sorry, my inn is full!

**Narrator:** But one innkeeper looked at Mary, who was great with child, and felt sorry for her. He said:

**Innkeeper #3:** I have no room in my inn. But you may stay in my stable out back.

**Joseph:** Thank you for your kindness, sir.

*(MARY and JOSEPH enter the stable, spread a blanket, and lie down on the floor to sleep.)*

**Narrator:** The stable was for animals – for the donkeys, cows and sheep that people had brought with them. But Mary and Joseph were grateful for any shelter they could get that night in the little town of Bethlehem.



# Appendix C (cont.): Family Nativity Script

## "OH, LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM"

Oh, little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie;  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,  
The silent stars go by.  
Yet in the dark streets shineth  
The everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.

**Narrator:** That night, Mary gave birth. Jesus was born!

*(MARY gives the baby, wrapped in a blanket to JOSEPH, who holds him for all to see (JOSEPH hands the baby back to MARY, who gently lays him down in the manger.)*

**Narrator:** The Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, the Everlasting Prince of Peace – for he is called all these things – was born to a simple carpenter and his wife. And to make the baby Jesus comfortable, Mary wrapped him in swaddling – clean strips of white cloth – and laid him down gently in the soft hay in the manger, the animals’ feeding box.

## "AWAY IN A MANGER"

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;  
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

*(THREE SHEPHERDS enter from left and stand center stage.)*

**Narrator:** That same night there were shepherds watching their flocks of sheep on the steep hills surrounding Bethlehem. The shepherds were poor men who wore rough, simple clothing. For them, nights were usually dark, cold and lonely.

*(Enter GABRIEL from left.)*

**Narrator:** But the night that Jesus was born, the angel Gabriel suddenly appeared above them in the sky.

*(The SHEPHERDS point up at GABRIEL, then back up, frightened, and hold their crooks in front of them for protection.)*

**Narrator:** The shepherds had never seen an angel, and they were frightened. But the Angel of God soon comforted them, saying...

**Gabriel:** Fear not, good shepherds, for I have wonderful news! Today, in the city of Bethlehem, a child was born. This child shall grow up to be our king – not just any king, but the KING of ALL kings – the world’s savior!

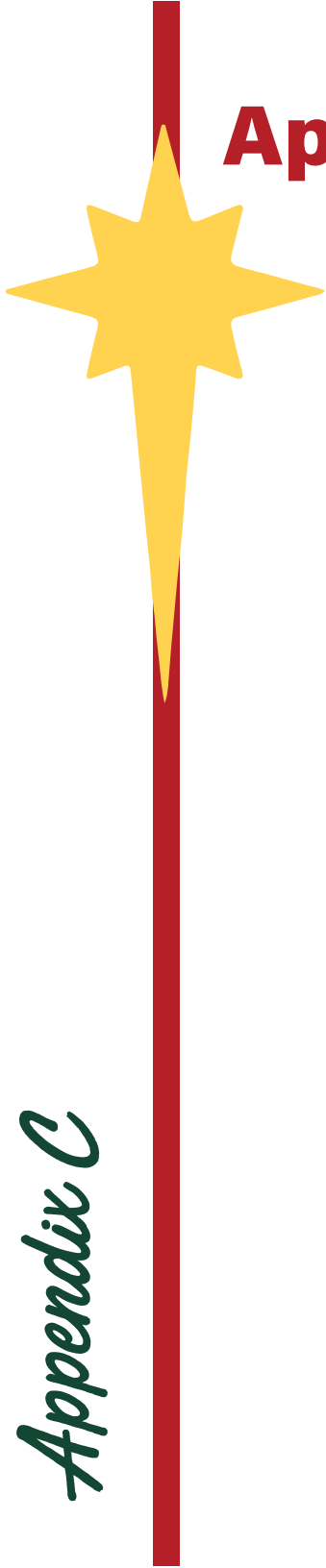
**Shepherd #1:** Please tell us where we can find him!

**Gabriel:** You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

**Narrator:** Then suddenly a whole host – a multitude – of heavenly angels appeared in the sky! *(ALL ANGELS enter.)* And they heralded, or announced, the news of the baby Jesus. “Glory to the newborn king!” they exclaimed. “He shall bring peace and goodwill to all men!”

Glor-----ria.... In excelsis Deo! *(Tune Angels we have heard on High)*

# Appendix C (cont.): Family Nativity Script



**Narrator:** When the angels had departed, the shepherds decided that they should go see the baby Jesus right away.

**Shepherd #2:** Let us go to Bethlehem!

**Shepherd #1:** Yes! Let us see this wondrous child that God has told us about!

**Narrator:** The shepherds were the first to see and worship the baby Jesus. They searched their pockets for some gift they could give him.

**Shepherd #1:** What have I to give this King? I am just a poor shepherd. If only we had riches to honor him by.

**Shepherd #2:** Brothers, we can offer him our faith.

**Narrator:** Faith and trust in Jesus were all that mattered to God. And for the shepherds, just seeing Jesus filled them with hope for all people. “Joy to the world!” they cried, “The Lord our Savior has come!”

## “JOY TO THE WORLD”

Joy to the world, the Lord has come;

Let earth receive her King.

Let every heart prepare Him room,

And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,

And heaven and heaven and nature sing.

**Narrator:** The word about Jesus’ birth began to spread. And little by little the stable filled with men and women and children from near and far.

Meanwhile, in a land far to the east of Bethlehem, three wise men of great knowledge noticed an unusually bright star in the sky.

**Wise Man #1:** That star is amazing! It’s so bright!

**Wise Man #2:** Yes, it’s as if it’s trying to tell us something.

**Wise Man #3:** Maybe it is! Could it be a sign that the Savior has come? The one that the prophets wrote of so long ago?

**Wise Man #1:** Yes! That’s it!

**Wise Man #2:** Let’s follow it!

## “WE THREE KINGS”

We three kings of Orient are

Bearing gifts we traverse afar;

Field and fountain, moor and mountain,

Following yonder star ...

O-o, Star of wonder, Star of night,


Star of royal beauty bright;

Westward leading, still proceeding,

Guide us to Thy perfect light.

*(As they are mentioned by the NARRATOR, the THREE WISE MEN place their gifts in the front of Jesus’ manger, then return to a kneeling position.)*

# Appendix C (cont.): Family Nativity Script



**Narrator:** When they saw the baby Jesus, the Three Wise Men fell on their knees in humble worship. They lay at the feet of baby Jesus the valuable treasures they had brought with which to honor Him.

The FIRST KING gave him gold. The SECOND KING gave Him sweet-smelling frankincense. And the THIRD KING gave Him perfume-like myrrh. For they knew they had at last found their Savior, God's son, who had come to bring peace on earth on that silent and holy night.

## "SILENT NIGHT"

Silent night, holy night,

All is calm, all is bright;

Round yon Virgin Mother and Child;

Holy Infant so tender and mild,

Sleep in heavenly peace;

Sleep in heavenly peace.

**Narrator:** And that is the story of the first Christmas.



*Thank You* for  
**CELEBRATING**  
for the *Joy* of  
**CHRISTMAS**  
with us!



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