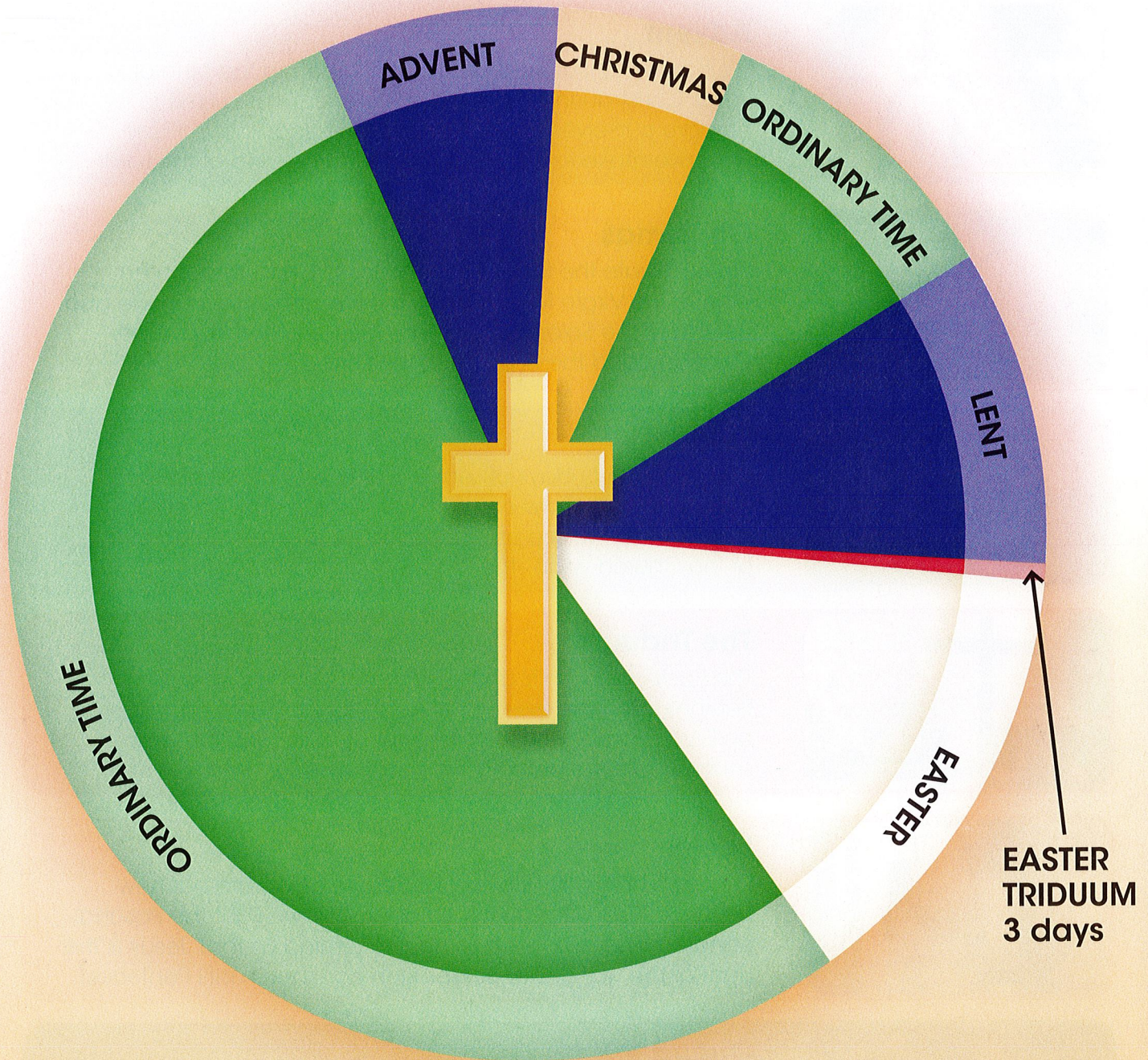


WE CELEBRATE THE CHURCH YEAR

The Year of Grace



The Liturgical Year

While many things you see and hear at Mass are always the same, other things change. The readings change, as do the colors of banners and vestments. All of the changes help us know what part of the Church year we are celebrating. Each year is a year of grace because we celebrate the saving presence of Christ in the world.



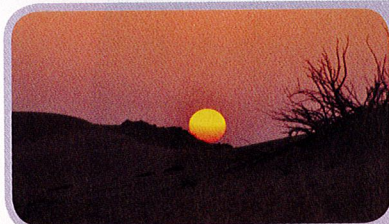
Advent

We begin the liturgical year by anticipating the birth of Jesus Christ during the season of Advent. It is a time to prepare ourselves through prayer and sacrifice. In these ways, we make room in our hearts for the birth of the Lord.



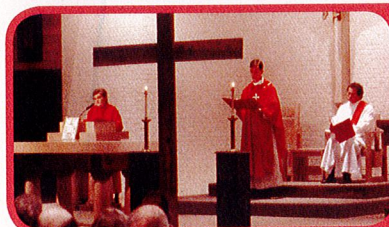
Christmas

We celebrate the Incarnation of Jesus Christ through his birth to the Virgin Mary. During the Christmas season, we also celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, Epiphany, and the Baptism of the Lord.



Lent

During the forty days of Lent, we pray and make personal sacrifices so that we can turn our hearts more completely toward God. We are preparing for the greatest celebration of the Church year—the Resurrection of the Lord.



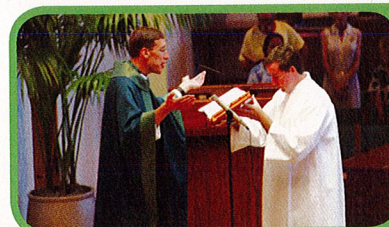
The Triduum

The Easter Triduum is at the center of our year of worship. Beginning on the evening of Holy Thursday and ending on Easter Sunday evening, the Triduum is our three-day solemn celebration of the Paschal Mystery.



Easter

On each of the fifty days of Easter, we celebrate our new life in the Risen Christ. At the Easter Vigil, we light the Paschal candle in the midst of darkness to remind us that Jesus is the Light of the world. Our celebration continues until Pentecost.



Ordinary Time

The rest of the Church year is called Ordinary Time. We celebrate many events in the life and ministry of Jesus. We also celebrate other great feasts and solemnities honoring Jesus, Mary, and the Saints.

All Saints

Faith Focus

How are the Saints a source of hope for the Church?

The Word of the Lord

This is the Gospel for the Solemnity of All Saints. Read it and talk about the reading with your family.

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-12a

The Church is a communion of the holy people of God. When we say that, we express our belief that we are all united, or in communion, with Christ and all the members of the Church, the Body of Christ. We are all a part of the Communion of Saints. The Communion of Saints includes all the faithful members of the Church on Earth and those who have died. It includes both the Saints living with God in Heaven and those faithful in Purgatory who are being prepared to receive the gift of eternal life in Heaven.

The Church officially declares someone a Saint through a process called canonization. There are several steps involved in recognizing an individual as a Saint. Over the course of many years, the person's life and virtue is carefully examined by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome.

The holy person is first named Servant of God, then Venerable, then Blessed, and finally, in some cases, canonized by the Pope as a Saint. Each step requires investigation and evidence.

Although we know the names and life stories of many of the Saints and celebrate special feast days in their honor, there are many Saints in Heaven who are known only to God. The Church teaches that anyone in Heaven is a Saint. On the Solemnity of All Saints, we honor all the Saints in Heaven, those we know and those we do not know.

We celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints on November 1. This special day is a holy day of obligation on which we honor the Saints as a source of hope and renewal for all members of the Church. They inspire us to put God first in our lives and to live as Jesus taught. All Saints Day is a time to thank God for giving us so many examples of how to live our faith. We remember that the Saints pray for us and that we can pray to them, asking them to show us the way to holiness.



Blessed Louis and Zélie Martin, Saint Lawrence, Mary Magdalene

The Little Way

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (Thérèse of the Child Jesus), a Carmelite Sister, is one of the Church's most well-loved Saints. She was only twenty-four years old when she died and is known as "the Little Flower." She wrote, "What matters in life is not great deeds, but great love." Thérèse wanted everyone to know that love is the way to holiness.

On the page below, write down the little ways that you have shown love to others during the past week. Memorize Saint Thérèse's words and reflect on them often.

*"What matters in life
is not great deeds,
but great love."*

**MY FAITH
CHOICE**

This week, I will follow St. Thérèse's little way of doing small deeds with great love. I will



Honor Saint Thérèse by loving God as she did. Pray, "Dear Saint Thérèse, beloved friend of God and friend of mine, help me to love God with all my heart."

Advent

Faith Focus

How does the Jesse Tree help us celebrate Advent?

The Word of the Lord

These are the Gospel readings for the First Sunday of Advent. Choose this year's reading. Read and discuss it with your family.

Year A

Matthew 24:37-44

Year B

Mark 13:33-37

Year C

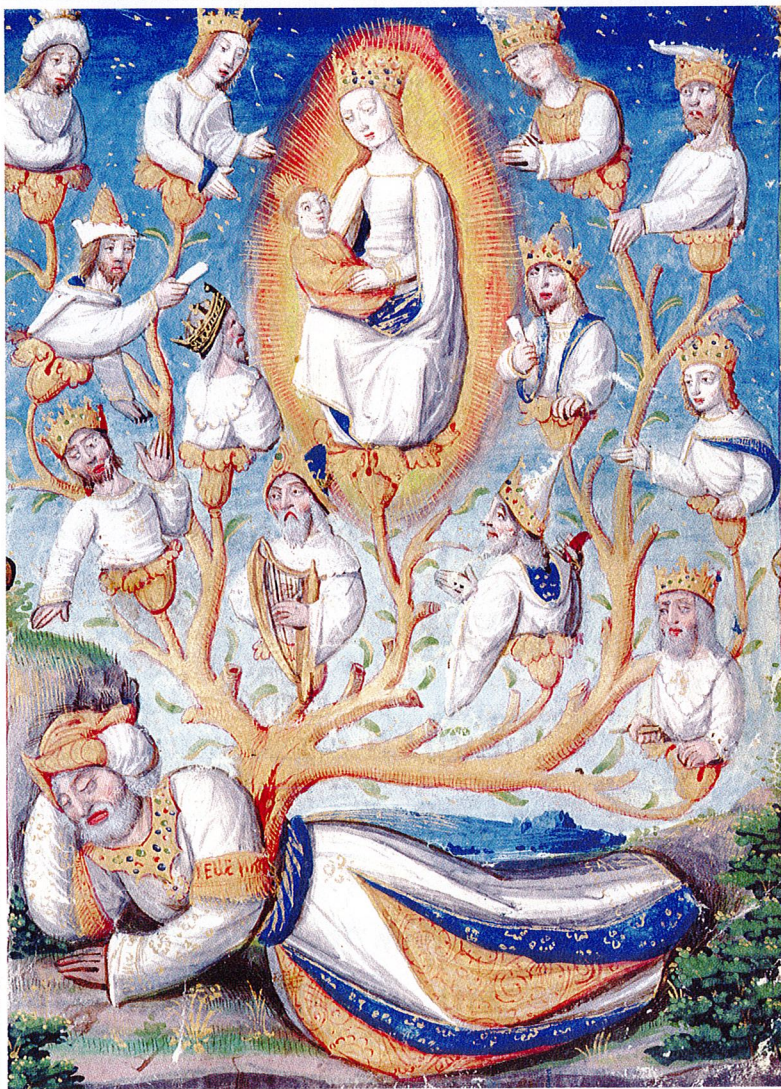
Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

All families have a history and a story to tell. All the people who are part of your family history make up your family tree—your parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and family members who lived generations ago.

Jesus has a family tree too. We Christians use it to help us celebrate Advent. We call it the Jesse Tree. The tree is named for Jesse, a shepherd from Bethlehem. He lived about one thousand years before Jesus. Jesse was the father of David, who grew up to be the greatest king of the people of Israel. David is an ancestor of Jesus.

During Advent, we remember the people—like Jesse and David—who are part of Jesus' family tree. We decorate the Jesse Tree with symbols of these Old and New Testament figures. The Jesse Tree is like our family tree. Each person on the Jesse Tree is part of the long story of God's loving plan of salvation that is fulfilled in Jesus.

Remembering the faith stories of the people on the Jesse Tree helps us remember God's great love for us—and for all people.



The Tree of Jesse,
from "Heures a l'Usage de Rome,"
(16th century)

The Story of Salvation

Make a Jesse Tree for your class. Use a small evergreen tree. Make a symbol for each of these figures. Add others of your own. Put the symbols on your Jesse Tree.



When **Adam** and **Eve** refused to obey, God promised a savior would come some day.

Noah is a man to note; while others laughed, he built a boat.

Abraham and **Sarah** obeyed God's call. Their faith is an example for one and for all.

When **Isaac** was born, Sarah was old. Her laughter rang out, so we are told.

Isaac's son **Jacob** was rich and able; soon twelve healthy sons sat at his table.

Joseph saved his family from starvation. In Egypt they grew into a very strong nation.

Moses, leader and man of God, led Israel through the Red Sea dryshod.

David, the Lord's shepherd and king, could rule, protect, play, and sing.

Isaiah was one who spoke for his Lord. The faithful listened to every word.

John the Baptist's announcement was clear: "Prepare the way! The Lord draws near!"

On **Mary**, God's blessings were abundantly poured. Yes was her response to the angel of the Lord.

Joseph cared for Mary as he promised he would, Joseph the mild, the patient, the good.

Angels came and shepherds adored, **Jesus** is born, our Savior and Lord!



MY FAITH CHOICE

The season of Advent is a time to prepare for the coming of Jesus. To prepare for Jesus' coming, I will



Rejoice! Jesus, the Christ, is coming. Pray, "The LORD, our God, is in our midst."

BASED ON ZEPHANIAH 3:17

Faith Focus

Why was Mary always able to say yes to God?

The Word of the Lord

These are the readings for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Choose one and read it. Talk about the reading with your family.

First Reading

Genesis 3:9–15, 20

Second Reading

Ephesians 1:3–6, 11–12

Gospel

Luke 1:26–38

The Immaculate Conception

On December 8, 1854, Blessed Pope Pius IX declared the Church's belief in the Immaculate Conception an official dogma of the Church. A dogma is a teaching of the faith that is revealed by God and must be believed by all Catholics. The date the teaching was formally announced was also made the day of the liturgical feast of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A solemnity is the highest-ranking celebration in the liturgical year.

In the United States of America, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is a holy day of obligation. This means that Catholics in the United States of America have the same responsibility to take part in the celebration of the Mass on December 8th as they do on Sundays.

God chose Mary to have a unique role in the divine plan of Salvation. He chose Mary to be the mother of the Savior of the world. He chose her to be the Mother of the Son of God, who would become one of us in all things but sin.

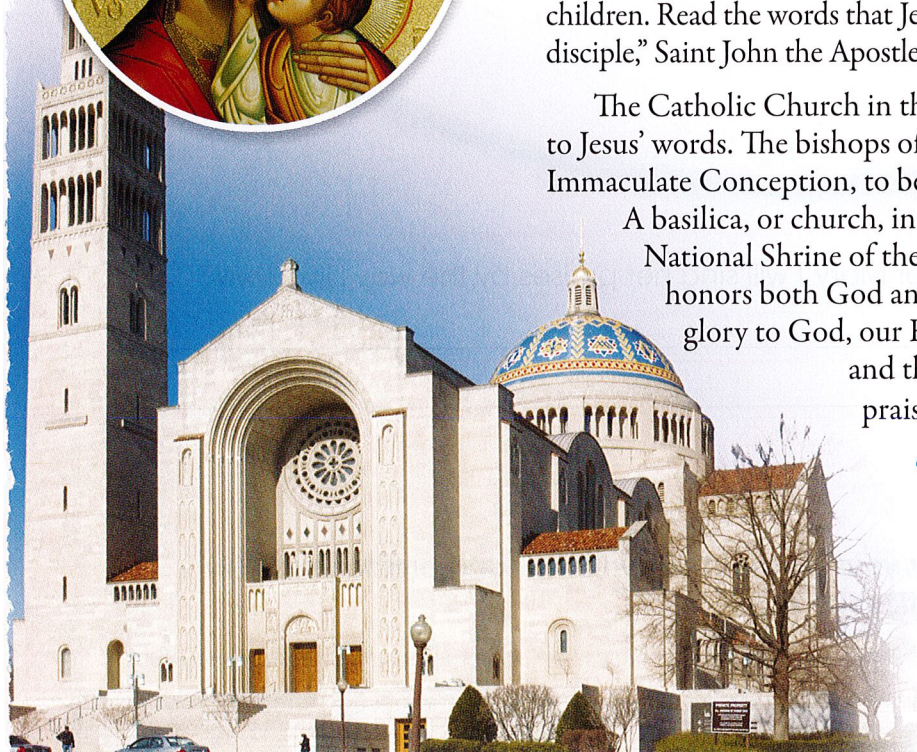
Because of this unique role, Mary received the unique grace of being conceived without Original Sin and the graces to remain free from all sin her whole life on Earth. Mary glorified God by her whole life on Earth from her conception to her Assumption. She continues to glorify God in Heaven with all of the angels and Saints.

Patroness of the United States

From her earliest days, the Church has expressed her faith in Mary to be the Mother of the Church. Jesus asked us to honor Mary as our Mother. He asked Mary to care for us as a mother cares for her own children. Read the words that Jesus spoke to Mary and to the "beloved disciple," Saint John the Apostle, in John 19:26–27.

The Catholic Church in the United States of America responded to Jesus' words. The bishops of the United States chose Mary, as the Immaculate Conception, to be the patron Saint of the United States. A basilica, or church, in Washington, D.C., was named the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. This shrine honors both God and Mary. Our devotion to Mary gives glory to God, our Father. It reminds us to honor him and thank him, as Mary did. With Mary we praise God,

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." LUKE 1:46–47



The Miraculous Medal

In 1830, Sister Catherine Labouré, a nun in Paris, had a vision of Mary as the Immaculate Conception. Mary gave Sister Catherine a mission—to have a special medal made for Catholics to wear. Our Blessed Mother described the medal she wanted. The front was to have an image of Mary on it, along with this prayer: “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.” Mary promised special graces to all those who wore the medal. With the approval of the bishop, the medals were made, and a new devotion to Mary was established. So many people who wore the medal received blessings, good health, peace, and other graces that people began to call it the Miraculous Medal. It is still worn today. It honors the Immaculate Conception and her special place in God’s plan of salvation.

Name three special blessings, or graces, you would like to receive from our Blessed Mother. Write them on the lines below.



MY FAITH CHOICE

This week, I will honor Mary. I will sing her praises by the way I live. I will



Honor Mary, your Mother. Pray with her and praise God, "My soul magnifies the Lord!"

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Faith Focus

Why do so many people visit the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe?

The Word of the Lord

These are the three readings for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Choose one of the readings and find it in a Bible. Read and discuss the reading with your family.

First Reading

Isaiah 7:10-14

Second Reading

Galatians 2:4-7

Gospel

Luke 1:39-48

On a cold morning in December, 1531, a peasant named Juan Diego was walking to Mass near the town of Tepeyac, Mexico. Suddenly, he heard music and saw a cloud surrounded by light. In the cloud was a beautiful lady dressed as an Aztec Indian princess. She spoke to Juan in his native language.

The Virgin Mary of Guadalupe asked Juan Diego to tell the Bishop of Mexico that she wished a shrine to be built on that very spot to make her love for all people known. Because Juan did not speak Spanish, and the bishop did not understand the Aztec language, Nahuatl, the bishop asked for a sign that the message was from the Virgin Mary.

Three days later, the Blessed Mother again appeared to Juan. She told Juan to gather roses and take them to the bishop. Because it was winter and roses were not growing, this certainly would be a sign the bishop would believe.

When Juan came to the bishop, he opened his cloak and the flowers fell out. To the astonishment of all, they saw an image of Mary dressed as a Aztec princess. The bishop built the shrine. Today that shrine is known as the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

On the feast day of December 12, it is a custom in Mexico for young girls to dress up as Indian girls and young boys to dress up as Juan Diego. Many people carry roses.

Many of our Popes have honored Our Lady of Guadalupe. Pope John Paul II visited her shrine four times. Pope Benedict XVI called the Marian shrine the heart of Mexico and of all America. He entrusted all of the world's families to Our Lady of Guadalupe.



Blessed Are They

Our Lady of Guadalupe's message is that Jesus brings Salvation to all people, especially the weakest and most vulnerable members of our world. This is the message of the Beatitudes.

Read Matthew 5:3-10 in your Bible. Choose one of the Beatitudes and draw a picture of how you might live this Beatitude in your daily life.



**MY FAITH
CHOICE**

This week, I will honor Our Lady of Guadalupe by working for peace and justice for all people. I will



**Pray with Mary, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my savior."**

LUKE 1:46-47

Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Faith Focus

What do we learn from the Gospel story of the angel's announcement to the shepherds of the birth of Jesus?

The Word of the Lord

These are the Gospel readings for Mass on the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas Day). Choose one reading. Read and discuss it with your family.

Gospel

John 1:1–18 or
John 1:1–5, 9–14

Sometimes the people in our lives surprise us. They do something we do not expect. When that happens, we learn a new thing about them. What happened on the night Jesus was born tells us something new about him.

Luke's account of the Gospel includes the announcement of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. They were the first to receive the Good News of Jesus' birth. As the shepherds watched their sheep, an angel appeared to them and said:

"[T]oday in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord." LUKE 2:11

The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem. There they found Jesus and Mary and Joseph as the angel said they would.

Throughout the history of Israel, the writers of Sacred Scripture used the image of shepherds to speak about God. For the Israelites, God was a shepherd who watched over them, his sheep. They often prayed:

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack. PSALM 23:1

However, at the time of Jesus' birth, many people thought that shepherds were of little worth. Their hard, dangerous work kept them in the fields day and night. This meant that they were unable to observe religious practices. Because of this, religious leaders thought shepherds were unfaithful, unimportant people.

But it was to shepherds, Luke tells us, that God announced the birth of the Savior. Jesus is the Messiah and Lord of all.



The Lord Is Our Shepherd

For each letter of the word shepherd, write a word or phrase that tells us about who Jesus is. Then imagine that you are a newspaper reporter who has been asked to find out more about some amazing events that took place in a stable outside Bethehem. Use your words and phrases to write a story telling what you discovered about Jesus.

A large white rectangular area with a faint, repeating background pattern of the words "The Lord is my shepherd" and "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack." This area is intended for students to write their words and phrases for each letter of "shepherd" and to write their newspaper story.

MY FAITH CHOICE

This season of Christmas is a time of joy. I will rejoice in the birth of Jesus. I will



Honor the birth of Jesus. Pray, "For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord" (Luke 2:11).

Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Faith Focus

How does the Church honor Mary during the Christmas season?

The Word of the Lord

These are the readings for the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. Read and discuss them with your family.

First Reading

Numbers 6:22-27

Second Reading

Galatians 4:4-7

Gospel

Luke 2:16-21

Each year on Mother's Day, we honor our mothers. We thank them for taking us to the soccer game. We thank them for cooking our meals and for keeping us clothed. We thank them for their love each day of the year. What are some other special times when you honor your mother?

The Church honors Mary, the Mother of God, many times during the year. During the Christmas season, we think about Mary in a special way.

While the celebration of the birth of Jesus is at the heart of our Christmas season, we also celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family between Christmas and January 1. At our celebration of Mass on that day, we pray that through Mary's prayers and the prayers of her husband, Joseph, our families may live in peace and love.

The Church also sets aside the first day of the new year, January 1, as the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. On this holy day and holiday, we gather to celebrate Mass. We ask God to bless our new year. We ask that Mary's prayer and her motherly love bring us joy forever.

By remembering Mary as the Mother of God and our Mother too, we begin the year with blessings. Mary reminds us of what the whole Church desires to do. We all want to say yes to God as she did. We all want to do God's will all our lives, just as Mary did.



Mary, Pray for Us

A litany is a prayer of petition in which a series of petitions are followed by the same response. The litany to the Blessed Virgin Mary on this page is based on one that was composed in the Middle Ages.

Pray this litany with your class to honor Mary, the Mother of God.

Group 1: Lord, have mercy on us.

Group 2: Christ, have mercy on us.

Group 1: Lord, have mercy on us.

Group 2: Holy Mary,

Holy Mother of God,

Holy Virgin of virgins,

Group 1: Mother most pure,

Mother of our Savior,

Mother of the Church,

Group 2: Seat of Wisdom,

Mystical Rose,

Morning Star,

Group 1: Refuge of sinners,

Comforter of the afflicted,

Help of Christians,

Group 2: Queen of Angels,

Queen of all Saints,

Queen of Peace,

Group 1: Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,

Group 2: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

All: pray for us.

pray for us.

pray for us.

All: pray for us.

pray for us.

pray for us.

All: pray for us.

pray for us.

pray for us.

All: pray for us.

pray for us.

pray for us.

All: pray for us.

pray for us.

pray for us.

Based on the Litany of Loreto

**MY FAITH
CHOICE**

This week, I will honor Mary. I will follow her example of saying yes to the Lord's call. I will



Honor Mary, our Mother. Pray, "May it be done to me according to your word, Lord" (Based on Luke 1:38).

Epiphany of the Lord

Faith Focus

Whom did Jesus come to save?

The Word of the Lord

This is the Gospel reading for the Solemnity of the Epiphany. Find it in the Bible and read and discuss it with your family.

Years A, B, and C

Matthew 2:1-12

The word *epiphany* means to make visible, manifest, or make known. The Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord during the season of Christmas. On Epiphany, we remember and celebrate that Jesus was revealed to be the Savior of the world. The Magi were wise men who came from the East searching for the newborn king of the Jews. They had seen a star rising in the sky and recognized it to be a sign that a great ruler had been born.

We do not know how far the Magi had to travel or where they actually lived. We do not know what obstacles they had to overcome. But what we know from Scripture is that the wise men believed that the light of the star that went before them was leading them to a very special newly born ruler.

When the star stopped over the place where Jesus was, the Gospel tells us that the Magi

“were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother.”

MATTHEW 2:11

The tradition of the Church names the wise men Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. Tradition also identifies them to be kings from different lands and of different races. Though they were kings, when they found the Holy Family,

“they prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” MATTHEW 2:11

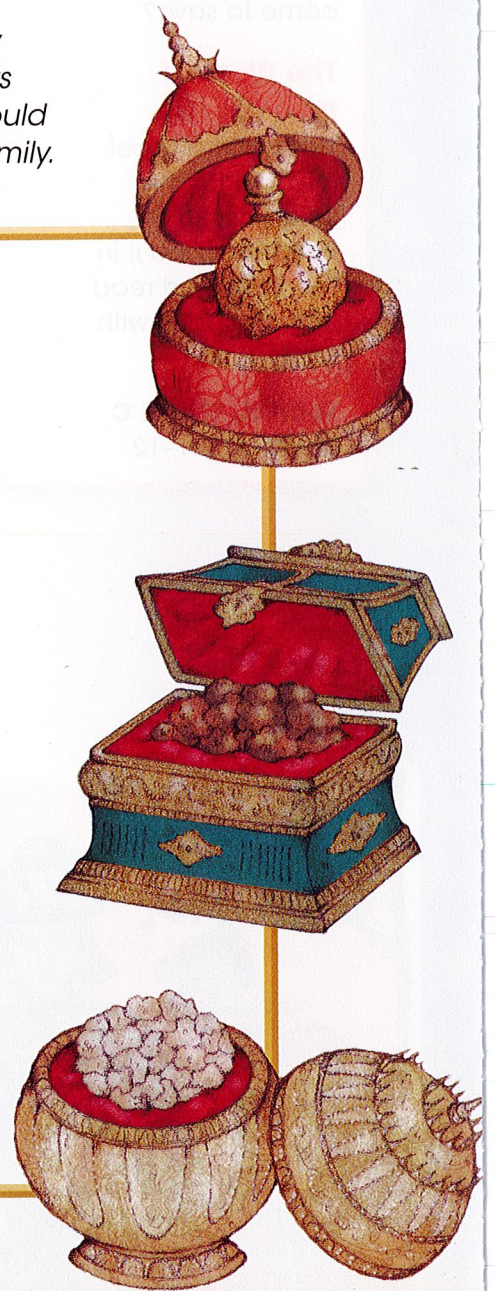
The Epiphany story reveals that Jesus is the Savior of the whole world, of all people, in all lands, and of all times. The Magi remind us of the joy of our meeting Jesus both in events of our daily life and especially in the Eucharist and the other Sacraments. The Magi teach us the importance of spending time in adoration of Jesus. They help us remember and trust that we are guided by the light of our faith in Jesus. We will always have that light to find our way to God here on Earth, and it will lead us to Heaven when our earthly journey is ended.



Kings and Gifts

In the word search below, find the names of the three kings and the three gifts they offered to Jesus. The words may be found in any direction. Some words may be written backwards. Gifts don't always have to be wrapped in packages. What gifts do you think Jesus would want you to bring to him today? Discuss your thoughts with your family.

F	Z	D	F	N	E	O	F	B	H	P	I
G	I	V	R	R	G	M	G	R	C	Z	D
S	R	U	A	R	O	H	R	O	G	W	L
F	O	S	N	A	O	Y	I	S	A	C	M
R	H	C	K	L	M	I	V	I	A	T	Y
A	K	E	I	T	A	A	H	Y	W	N	H
P	C	W	N	Q	V	T	X	C	L	Y	I
S	W	X	C	W	A	T	M	M	L	D	P
A	U	J	E	H	H	P	P	Z	A	E	W
G	M	P	N	U	J	Z	E	Y	J	S	M
A	R	A	S	A	H	T	L	A	B	N	N
A	E	F	E	G	O	L	D	C	J	F	E



MY FAITH CHOICE

This week, I will adore Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. I will



Worship Jesus, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Pray, "Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—I adore you with my whole heart."