

Restore the Roots

Cultivating Your Domestic Church

A Liturgical Living Initiative of St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral, La Crosse, WI

Christmas

Christmas

In today's world, feasting has become arbitrary. Our capacity to throw a party is ubiquitous and dispensable. Gone is the time in which special occasions required days or weeks of an entire family— an entire community— preparing meals and processions, slaughtering the fattened calf and sewing their "Sunday best." Instead, the calf and the clothes can be acquired any day of the year at your local Walmart. Convenient, yes, but also tempting us to construct our feasting calendar according to our fancy. Why wait for December 25 when we can get together on the 15th? Why take the time to prepare a long, slow dinner when the pre-packaged ham tastes just as good?

In a culture of industry and efficiency, not only does feasting become arbitrary, but it also becomes short-lived. We feast on the wrong occasions, and we do not feast enough! The party ends, the tree comes down, and we return to work. In contrast to this, we hear the force of the Church's command, which she gives on the Sunday of the Third Week of Advent: *Gaudete! Rejoice! The Savior of the world is coming. Prepare with eagerness!*

If we rejoice at the sign and preparation of the coming of the Lord, how much more should we rejoice when he has actually come! Saint Leo the Great is unambiguous when he proclaims:

Today our Savior is born; let us rejoice. Sadness should have no place on the birthday of life. The fear of death has been swallowed up; life brings us joy with the promise of eternal happiness.

No one is shut out from this joy; all share the same reason for rejoicing. Our Lord, victor over sin and death, finding no man free from sin, came to free us all. Let the saint rejoice as he sees the palm of victory at hand. Let the sinner be glad as he receives the offer of forgiveness. Let the pagan take

courage as he is summoned to life.

In the fullness of time, chosen in the unfathomable depths of God's wisdom, the Son of God took for himself our common humanity in order to reconcile it with its creator. He came to overthrow the devil, the origin of death, in that very nature by which he had overthrown mankind.

And so at the birth of our Lord the angels sing in joy: Glory to God in the highest. And they proclaim peace to his people on earth as they see the heavenly Jerusalem being built from all the nations of the world. When the angels on high are so exultant at this marvelous work of God's goodness, what joy should it not bring to the lowly hearts of men?

Did you know that Christmas does not end on December 26? The joy of Christ's birth cannot be contained in a single day, so the Church in Her wisdom declares an entire season of Christmas. This season used to last 40 days, until the Feast of the Presentation on February 2. Now it extends through the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which next year we will celebrate on January 12. Shorter perhaps, but the message remains: Christmas continues! It is okay to bake cookies in the weeks leading up to December 25, but the cookie-eating merely begins then. Do not stop eating cookies because the day has come and gone. Keep celebrating in ways grand and small, with special desserts, special activities, and special prayers, because Jesus has come to us, and he has stayed.





Ideas to Celebrate the Christmas Season!



ATTEND MASS

Start by attending Mass on Christmas Eve, at Midnight or on Christmas day. Christmas literally comes from the words "Christ's Mass"! Try to attend daily Mass throughout the Christmas season, especially during the octave.



TAKE A "VACATION"

If you aren't planning to go away on vacation, vacation at home! Take time off from doing your regular activities, chores and duties and replace it with fun activities; game nights, light displays, baking, get-togethers, movies, crafts, etc. It's a fantastic way to observe the octave. Treat **each** of the 8 days like a Sunday. Even if you have to work, do your best to set aside the nights and make them special.



If you started a new prayer habit during Advent, don't stop just because Advent is over. Keep going! You may have to pick something different if it was Advent specific but work to keep that habit in place. Seasons like Advent call us into deeper union with God, and we should aim to continue even though we may not be able to set aside the same amount of time for prayer. Make a plan to pray throughout Christmas and into the New Year!

GIVE TO OTHERS



God the Father sent his only Begotten Son to the world to save us. While reflecting on what He gave us, what can you give to others? Give presents to family and friends. But also think of your neighbors, the poor, marginalized, or lonely people. Can you give time, money or do something for them?



EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY!



Celebrate with desserts, special meals, or nice drinks. Bake more cookies and enjoy those nice things that you set aside for special occasions. **THIS** is the special occasion, Jesus in born!

PRAY BEFORE THE MANGER

Take time throughout the season to stop at your own Nativity set and/or the one in church to pray before the image of Jesus. Meditate on His birth, what it means to you, and how you can share this Good News with others.

"MERRY CHRISTMAS!"

Although the rest of the world stops celebrating Christmas on December 26, the celebration continues all the way through January 12. Wish all a Merry Christmas! Jesus' birth is truly something to celebrate and we should remind others that it's still Christmas!

WHITE CANDLES



A tradition is to add a white candle to the center of the Advent wreath (and even switch the colors out for white too.) You can also remove the wreath all together and just have one large white candle. Light it daily for the entire season to remind you of the one true Light who came down to earth for us!

CHRISTMAS MOVIES AND SONGS

Now is the time to watch all the Christmas movies and listen to all the songs that you put off during Advent! This year, watch a movie about the Nativity if you don't typically. Two options are "The Nativity Story" and "Nativity".



DO THE EPIPHANY BLESSING

On the Solemnity of the Epiphany, it is tradition to bless your home and write "20+C+M+B+25" over your front door. Look for more information on a subsequent handout published on Epiphany weekend.

KEEP DECORATIONS UP UNTIL JANUARY 12

Keep your tree up, decorations hung, festive tables set and lights on throughout the entire Christmas season. The Nativity set gets extra special treatment. Keep it set up until February 2, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord!



Editors: Msgr. Richard Gilles and Natalie Elskamp
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JANUARY

3 Most Holy Name of Jesus



This feast day honors the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Instituted by the Franciscan order in the 16th century, the feast emphasizes the power and significance of Jesus' name as a source of salvation, healing, and strength. The name "Jesus" itself means "God saves" in Hebrew, reflecting His divine mission to redeem humanity. Today encourages us to reflect on the importance of invoking the name of Jesus in prayer, especially as a reminder of His love and presence. It also underscores the reverence due to Jesus' name, often seen as a sign of His protection and grace. It is a day of gratitude for the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ and a call to live by His example of humility and love. For ways to celebrate today, check out page 2.

21 St. Agnes



St. Agnes was a virgin and martyr whose name means "lamb." Several men tried to win her over to be their wife, but she was determined that Christ would be her only suitor. Those men turned Agnes in for being a Christian. She was just an adolescent when she was threatened with a torturous death. She took all the threats with heroic calmness and showed no fear for pain. In response, the judge had her stripped naked and put out in the street. Some say her hair miraculously grew to cover her bare body. In the end, it was ordered that she be beheaded. St. Ambrose said, "She went to the place of execution more cheerfully than others go to their wedding." She was going home to the One whom she loved most. St. Agnes is the patroness of girls, chastity, purity, Girl Scouts, rape victims, engaged couples, and gardeners. To celebrate her feast day, decorate with red and white flowers, ribbon or table set. White represents her purity and red represents her being a martyr. If you are feeling up to a challenge, bake a cake or cookies shaped like a lamb!

28 St. Thomas Aquinas



St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) was a Dominican friar, theologian, and philosopher, widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in Christian intellectual history. Born in Italy, Aquinas entered the Dominican Order and pursued studies at the University of Naples, later continuing his education in Paris and Cologne. His most famous work, the *Summa Theologica*, presents a systematic theology that integrates Christian doctrine with the philosophical ideas of Aristotle, making it a cornerstone of Catholic thought. Aquinas emphasized the harmony between faith and reason, asserting that both lead to truth. He also wrote extensively on ethics, the nature of God, and the sacraments, deeply influencing Catholic doctrine. Declared a Doctor of the Church in 1567, Aquinas' theological insights continue to shape Christian teaching and philosophy. He is the patron saint of students and scholars. A symbol often associated with Thomas is the star, to represent the Divine Guidance he had while writing. A simple treat for the day would be star cookies! Or consider finding a copy of G.K. Chesterton's book, *St. Thomas Aquinas, The Dumb Ox*.

Monthly Devotion: THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

JAN. 3

THE HOLY NAME OF Jesus



Honoring the name of Jesus can be a deeply meaningful and reflective experience. Here are several ways to observe the feast day and incorporate the name of Jesus into your daily life:



Attend Mass: The readings and prayers Mass on January 3rd, focus on the significance of Jesus' name. This liturgy especially reminds us of His divine mission and encourages deep reverence for His name.



Invoke the Name of Jesus in Prayer: Throughout the day, incorporate the name of Jesus into your prayers. This can include traditional prayers, such as the "Jesus Prayer" ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"), "Jesus, I trust in you!" or simply invoking His name in personal, spontaneous prayer.



Reflect on Scripture: Read and meditate on passages from the Bible that speak to the power of Jesus' name, such as Philippians 2:9-11, John 14:13-14 or Acts 4:12



Devotional Practices: Incorporate specific devotions to the Holy Name, such as the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus or a prayer of consecration, offering oneself to Jesus under the power of His name.



Sing Hymns to the Holy Name: Sing or listen to hymns that honor the Holy Name of Jesus. Hymns like "Jesus, Name Above All Names" or "At the Name of Jesus" can help focus the mind and heart on the Sacred Name.



Silence and Contemplation: Take time for quiet reflection or adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, contemplating the power of Jesus' name and its significance in your life. This silence allows for a deeper connection to the sacredness of the day.

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Interested in bringing Restore the Roots to your parish? Email us! RestoretheRootsLax@gmail.com

A NEW TRADITION!

If you've never celebrated your Saint name day, start this year! Here's how to find your saint: (If you have kids, remember to do this for them too!)



Identify Your Saint

If you were named after a saint, you'll need to identify which saint that is. Some are easy because there is only one saint with that name. Others share a name with multiple saints (for example, "John" can refer to 'the Baptist', 'the Evangelist', etc.) Or you might need to look at variations like "Theresa" and "Teresa" or "Mariah" and "Mary" If you were named after a biblical figure, such as John or Mary, their feast days will be tied to the liturgical calendar.

If you were named after Mary, you could choose any one of the many titles of Mary.

If you don't have a specific saint tied to your first name, try your middle name. Or try different variations of your name. If you still can't find one, use your confirmation saint.



Find the Feast Day on the Liturgical Calendar

Once you've identified the saint, find out the date of their feast day, which is often tied to their death anniversary or a significant event in their life. Find the feast day by searching online for the name of your saint and "Roman Catholic Feast Day"



Put it in your calendar!

If you don't write it down, you'll forget. You might even want to put a reminder in one week before if you plan to celebrate in a special way.



Celebrate Your Name Day!

Once you've identified your name day, you can celebrate it in a variety of ways, such as attending Mass, praying to your patron saint, learn more about your saint, hosting a small gathering, performing acts of charity in their honor or having a special meal or dessert tied to their feast.

(Check Catholic Cuisine for ideas!)