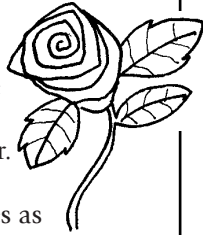




## Thoughtful Moments

### Our Lady of Guadalupe

In 1531, Jesus' mother appeared to St. Juan Diego in Mexico with instructions to tell the bishop to build a cathedral in her honor. She had him fill his tilma (cape) with roses as a gift. When Juan spilled the roses from his tilma before the bishop, a beautiful portrait of Our Lady remained. On December 12th, place roses in your home to honor the Mother of all people.

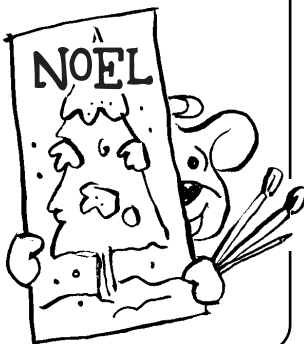


### "I love you"

For every negative comment you make to your child, try to add a positive one. While discipline and correction are important, so is love. If children doubt your love for them, the discipline won't work.

### Your authority

No one has the right to instruct or advise your child unless you agree. If teachers or doctors counsel your child without your permission, they won't be held accountable if your child gets hurt or in trouble. God gave that job to you.



## Help Christmas sparkle with love

Through the eyes of a child, Christmas is truly a magical time. The twinkle of the lights, the glitter of the tree, the tunes of favorite carols. In fact, what we remember most about Christmases past has nothing to do with gifts. It's all about the sparkle of love.

"One of my favorite Christmas traditions was cutting down the tree," remembers Jacob. "We got dressed up in our boots, made a thermos of hot chocolate and went marching through the woods together looking for the perfect tree."

For Susan, it was all about the music. "Every year my parents hosted a neighborhood caroling party. All the

families together made it seem like one big family. I still do the same thing with my own family. Christmas doesn't start for us until we sing together."

"We were always the last family on the block to take our tree down," remembers Sarah. "Whenever anyone would ask why, Mom would tell them the Magi still needed to make it to the manger."

"I loved our annual nativity pilgrimage," said David. "Dad took

us to other churches to see their manger scenes."

Luz said she has kept her mother's tradition of leaving something out all year. "It helps us to remember our wonderful Christmas and look forward to Christ's coming all over again."



## Why Do Catholics Do That ?

## Why do we sing carols at Christmas?

The word "carol" means song of joy. St. Francis of Assisi first introduced the joyous spirit of caroling to Europe in the 13th century. He created nativity plays in which actors sang the story of Christ's birth in the language of the audience.



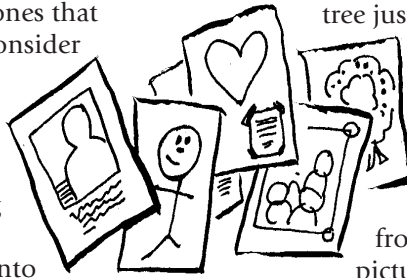
St. Francis encouraged the listeners to join in.

In time, the carols traveled from Italy to the rest of Europe and then to the United States. Today's custom has carolers go from house to house singing Christmas songs of joy.

## Giving gifts of love

Most of us would say that the best Christmas gifts we have received through the years are the ones that didn't come from a store. This season, consider these ideas for heartfelt Christmas gifts:

**Book of blessings.** Pick a recipient and together list all the ways that you feel blessed by having that person in your lives. Then each create a page using drawings, poems, stories, or photos that illustrate your ideas. Bind all the pages into a book to be presented as a Christmas gift.



**Family tree** – Choose a family member and create a tree just for him or her. Put pictures of family members on the leaves and use family memories or anecdotes for the branches.

**Memory book** – For friends or family who may not live close, make a book of memories from the year to help them still feel a part of your family. Include pictures from vacations, samples of hobbies, school pictures, and other illustrations of how your children have grown through the year.

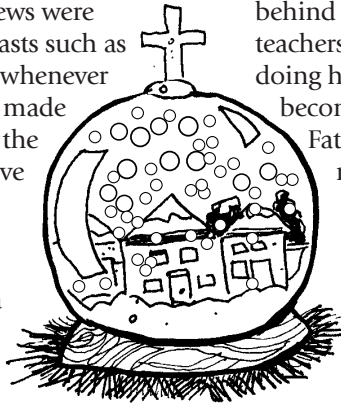
### Scripture LESSON

#### Luke 2:41-52, Jesus in the world

In Jesus' day, adult Jews were expected to observe feasts such as Passover in Jerusalem whenever possible. Jesus' family made the trip every year but the one when he was twelve was his first trip as an adult Jew.

In those days, a Hebrew boy became a man around the age of twelve and was recognized in a ceremony known as a Bar Mitzvah. Then he began formal education in the Torah and Hebrew Scriptures.

This was an important time in Jesus' life. Scripture reports that Jesus stayed



behind to talk with the scholars and teachers, and told his parents he was doing his Father's work. He had become aware of his place in his Father's kingdom, yet he remained mindful of his responsibilities to his parents and obediently left with them.

*What can a parent do?* Christians live in neighborhoods, schools, and communities. We are subject to legitimate earthly authority and can't retire from the world to live holy lives. As parents, we have to find ways to teach children to be holy while living in the world.

### Parent TALK

#### Is Santa real?

The other day my son, Jacob, asked me the question most parents dread. "Is there really a Santa Claus?" Without hesitation, I told him, "yes!"



I grew up in a large family and my parents often lacked money for gifts at Christmas. Yet, thanks to "Santa Claus," we never went a Christmas without a stocking to open or a gift under the tree.

To be truthful, I admitted that I have never seen Santa Claus and I don't know if a chubby man in a red suit is the one who delivered our presents.

Instead, I do know that Santa exists in the generosity and kindness of others. Santa provides an opportunity for people to humbly reach out to others in his name. So whether we call this spirit, "Santa" or "St. Nicholas," at the core, it is a love for Christ and the joy of celebrating his birth that brings out the best in people.

### Feasts & Celebrations

**Dec. 6 – St. Nicholas (350).** St. Nicholas had a generous heart and gave away most of his fortune. He is credited with saving three girls from being sold into slavery to pay their father's debt. His frequent anonymous acts of generosity helped him become the patron saint of children.

**Dec. 14 – St. John of the Cross (1591).** As a Carmelite, St. John led a reform in the Order to encourage more prayer and simplicity. Because of a misunderstanding, he was jailed for nine months, but some of his beautiful spiritual writing came from

this experience. His mystical-poetical reflections showed his love of prayer.

**Dec. 27 – St. John (1st century).** An apostle and friend of Jesus, St. John was known for his fiery temper. He once asked Jesus if he could call down fire from heaven on an inhospitable town. Later in his life, he and St. Peter asked the Holy Spirit to come down on the Samaritans. Friendship with Jesus really changes a person.



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