

## Thoughtful Moments

### A new year begins

Each year the Church begins a new liturgical year on the Sunday closest to the feast of the apostle Andrew (November 30). This year the first Sunday of Advent is November 29. We begin Year B in the liturgical cycle.

### Welcome saints into your family

Saints are holy people who lived a life of extraordinary virtue and now celebrate with God in Heaven forever. All Saints Day (November 1) reminds us that we are still connected to them through the Communion of Saints. Introduce children to new saints regularly.



### Judge not

Help children to remember that criticizing others is a serious business. *"Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven"* (Luke 6:37). Better to worry about our own behavior and let others do the same.



## Heaven is worth the wait

No one likes to wait, and children are particularly poorly suited to delayed rewards. Yet, Advent is all about waiting for something amazing. So how can we help youngsters see that Heaven will be worth the wait?

**There are no worries in Heaven.** *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain"* (Revelation 21:4). When we get there, we leave behind concerns, pain, worries.

**Everything good comes from Heaven.** *"Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above"* (James 1:17). If all good things come from Heaven, imagine how great it will be

when we get there.

**The company is great there.** When we get to Heaven, we will have joyful reunions with beloved grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends who have died before us.

Best of all, we get to mingle with the saints, angels, and with Jesus, himself.

**The one who loves us best is there.** As much as earthly parents love their children, it's nothing compared to the love God has for

each of us. He is the perfect parent – our true Father – and he is waiting for us in Heaven.

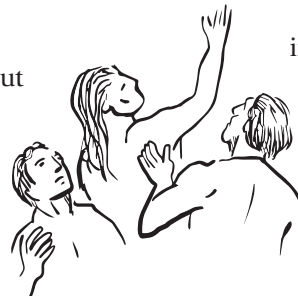
**Heaven is our true home.** *"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 3:20).



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

### Why do we pray for the souls in Purgatory?

All who die in God's friendship go to Heaven. But if we haven't properly atoned for our sins, we are purified in Purgatory first. The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls Purgatory, "a final cleansing of human



imperfection before one is able to enter the joy of heaven."

Praying for the souls in Purgatory helps them pass through faster than they would otherwise. *"Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin"* (2 Maccabees 12:46).

## Make Christmas all about love

What parent doesn't cherish the sparkle of excitement in a child's eye at Christmas? As Catholic parents, though, we want our children to have the joy of the holiday, not just the anticipation of receiving gifts. Try these ideas to experience Christmas as a holiday of love.

**Help children give, not just receive.** Children love to give gifts. Write up a list of grandparents, teachers, and siblings and help children make and send handmade gifts like Christmas cookies or ornaments.



**Focus on Jesus.** Start the season by reading a few verses of the story of Jesus' birth each day. Sing your favorite religious Christmas carols. Make birthday cards for the Baby.

**Come alive.** In the tradition of St. Francis of Assisi, act out your own Nativity. Each take a part to play. Imagine what it would have been like to have been there for the real event.

**Thank you note.** All good gifts come from God. Write Jesus a "thank you" note for the blessings you received in the last year.

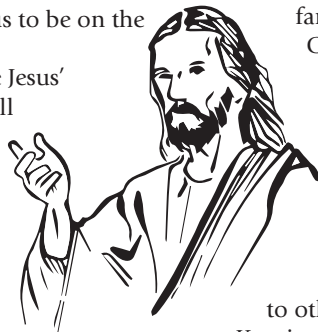
### Scripture LESSON

### Mark 13:33-37, Keep watch!

In this reading, Jesus urges us to always be ready because "You do not know when the time will come." He wants us to be on the watch for Him.

Next month we celebrate Jesus' arrival at Christmas. He will come twice more for certain: at our death and at the end of time. Advent is the time to ask, "What do I need to do to be ready to greet the Lord?"

**What can a parent do?** Start by doing your best to remain in a state of grace and help children to do the same. Teach youngsters to perform a daily examination of



conscience, and pick one sinful practice to eliminate. Make it a family practice to go to Confession regularly – once a month, if possible.

Then attend or watch Mass weekly and try to spend more time in prayer. Finally, see if there are ways your family can offer yourselves in service

to others.

Keeping watch means fixing our eyes on God at all times. Then, when Christmas comes, we can greet the Lord with joy.

### Parent TALK

One afternoon, my daughter, Kara, went to a friend's home and came back in a thoughtful mood. It seemed that at three o'clock, everyone in the house stopped what



they were doing and came together. They spent time in prayer: fifteen minutes for the Divine Mercy chaplet (at the hour of mercy) and thirty minutes for a family Rosary. Everyone took turns praying a decade and sharing a meditation on the Mystery, which Kara liked, because then she didn't have to "pray all those beads" by herself.

When Kara came home, she told me about the family holy hour and asked if we could do it, too. I told her it might be hard to make a whole holy hour every day, but it gave me the idea to put a "Rosary reminder" in my phone, for three o'clock. Thanks to Kara's friends, daily prayer has become a family habit.

### Feasts & Celebrations

**Nov. 1 – All Saints Day.** In the early Church, saints and martyrs were each assigned a feast day. However, the extreme persecution of the Christians meant there weren't enough days in the calendar for individual commemorations. Eventually Pope Gregory IV designated Nov. 1 as All Saints Day.

**Nov. 2 – All Souls Day.** On this day we pray for the dead, especially our loved ones and souls in Purgatory to help them get to Heaven faster.

**Nov. 12 – St. Josaphat (1623).**

Born in the Ukraine to Orthodox parents, St. Josaphat converted to Catholicism, became a Basilian monk, then a priest, and was named Bishop of Vitebsk (now in Russia). He worked for unity in the Church and was martyred for his efforts.

**Nov. 13 – St. Frances Xavier Cabrini (1917).** Mother Cabrini started the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Italy and founded 67 institutions to care for the sick and forgotten in Europe and the Americas. She was the first U.S. citizen to be canonized.



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