



Seeds of Faith

Supporting families growing in faith

December 2015

Family Life



Think back to before you ever had children—if you can remember what life was like then! Can you remember wanting to have a baby, imagining what it would be like to hold your child in your arms? Did you look forward to having an infant, a toddler, a small child at the heart of your home? Could you ever have imagined how this baby would change you, challenge you, bring you joy?

Siobhán who is a mum of three says, “When I had my eldest daughter, I was 10 days overdue and felt like I had

the longest pregnancy in history. Yet the moment I saw her I simply could not believe my eyes. I remember her daddy holding her and looking down at her as if he couldn't believe his either. Nothing has given me greater certainty of God as Creator.”

When our newborn infant is placed in our arms all our hopes and dreams take shape—here in this little form. We might have read all the right books or watched all the right TV programmes but nothing really prepares us for the reality of meeting our own child. In the same way when Jesus is born all that has been said and written about who God is - all the words and ideas - take shape, take flesh in this little baby. Everything that God wants to communicate to us is expressed perfectly in the person of Jesus. In Jesus the Word of God is made flesh.

In the gospel, when John talks about Jesus becoming human he uses that phrase “the word became flesh” but this can also be translated as “he pitched his tent among us”. That is a beautiful image – God's tent is pitched among us because God wants to be with us, to travel life's road with us. Family life is very much about us pitching our tent together, creating a place of safety and shelter where we can be at home. That home may be a stable or a refugee camp, a house or an apartment but being at home is very important. In every family which creates a place that is home we see a glimpse of God.

Praying as a family

Did you every sit and just gaze at your baby? Think about the way that Mary must have sat looking at the baby Jesus. What did she see? She knew he was special, that he was “God with us” but how did she understand that? The gospel tells us that Mary “pondered all things in her heart”. To me that means she sat and thought and wondered. I imagine that must have been something that went on right through Mary's life—looking at Jesus and wondering what it all meant. Pondering just like that can be a good way for us to pray with scripture too.



- Take a short piece of scripture
- Ask the Holy Spirit to open your mind and heart to God's word
- Read the scripture piece through slowly
- Pause to give yourself a chance to think about what you have just read
- Then read it through again slowly and stop wherever a word or an image catches your attention
- Let yourself stay with this word or image
- Ponder why this word or image catches your attention, what is it saying to you, is it comforting, challenging?
- Close your time of prayer thanking God for the gift of His Word

If you would like to find some more resources to help you with faith and family life have a look at kellitrujillo.wordpress.com and at godfaithandfamilylife.wordpress.com

DECEMBER GOSPELS

When we know that someone special is coming to stay for a while, or just to visit, we try to be as ready as we can be. Who do you remember coming to your home? Or to school? Maybe you remember seeing on the TV about famous people coming to visit our country? What do you remember about the preparations? The excitement? The extra work? Recalling our own experiences of welcoming different kinds of visitors can help us to get into the scene in these gospels which take us through Advent and into the Christmas season.



29/11	Luke 21:25-28,34-36	The Son of Man will come in glory
06/12	Luke 3:1-6	The Word of God comes to John
13/12	Luke 3:10-18	John prepares the way for Jesus
20/12	Luke 1:39-45	The visitation to Elizabeth
25/12	Luke 2:1-14	The birth of Jesus (Midnight)
25/12	Luke 2:15-20	The shepherds at the manger (Morning)
27/12	Luke 2: 41-52	Jesus lost and found
03/01/16	Matt 2:1-12	The visit of the Magi

FAMILY SPIRITUALITY

Also available from Redemptorist Publications is

Family Spirituality: God among the pots and pans

written by Bairbre Cahill
See www.rpbooks.co.uk for details



GOD AMONG THE POTS AND PANS



Sacred Space

For your sacred space this month you could use the starry sky explained below as a great backdrop. You might also like to have an Advent wreath which you could buy or make. Until you put up your crib and Christmas decorations it might also be nice to put the shepherds, sheep and any other animals you have for your crib into your sacred space. This reminds us that life was pretty normal for the shepherds—until they saw all those angels telling them the wonderful news about Jesus' birth! Can we even begin to imagine how amazed and excited they were? Lets try this Advent and Christmas to catch some of that joy and delight!

Stepping Stones on the Journey of Faith

We spoke last month about how mass begins: we gather as a community. This month we are looking at the next part - the Liturgy of the Word. Any of us who have told stories to children know that they love stories of when their parents and grandparents were young. Indeed many of us have been asked the less than complimentary question "What was it like long ago when you were small?" From these family stories children develop a sense of who they are, where they come from, what matters in life. So too the readings at mass offer us that sense of where we come from as a family of faith, what has shaped us as a Christian people, who we are and what values matter to us.



• The readings from the Old and New Testament—that is before Jesus' birth and from the time of his birth—tell us the story of God's love for his people.

- The story is told in many different styles: as poetry, as history, in legends, in letters, in advice about how to live and behave.
- We believe that the Holy Spirit guided the people of faith who put all this into words.
- We believe that when we listen to God's word, reflect about it and pray with it, we can come to know God better and to realize more clearly what it means for us to be friends of Jesus.
- The gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John really put us in touch with the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- The other parts of the New Testament—like the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Paul and the others – can give us a glimpse of what life was like for the early church.
- The bible is our story. Let us begin to expect that God will have something to say to us as we learn to listen more deeply to the readings at mass.

Holy Spirit

As we journey through Advent towards Christmas
Open our hearts to welcome Jesus
Help us to make our home

A place of prayer
of welcome
of gentleness
of peace



A place where you would feel at home.
Amen

Something to do during Advent in the lead up to Christmas - get some black sugar paper and chalk. You



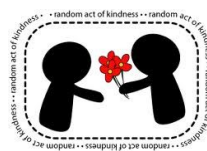
You



could buy those in any good stationery shop. Draw a basic structure



to represent the stable.



Every day, each person resolves to do one act of kindness .

In the evening everyone looks back over their day to see have they managed to do their act of kindness and if they have, they draw a star with chalk above the stable. By Christmas, the night sky could well be lit up!



Advent is an important time of preparation for Christmas. As well as being the time when we are buying gifts and sending cards it is a time to think about what Christmas really means and what difference that makes to our lives. And Christmas is more than just one day. The season of Christmas lasts right up to the Epiphany on 6th January.

A prayer before Christmas dinner

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow... God of all gifts, we thank you for the many ways you have blessed us this day. We are grateful for each person 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.

We remember your humble birth into our lives and pray for those who do not have 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 for your Holy Spirit who brings our hearts to life this Christmas Day and forever. Amen.

