

Keeping the Christmas Season by Jennifer Gregory Miller

The days building up to the Solemnity of Christmas have been full of expectation and anticipation – and probably full of busy activity. We have counted down the days until Christmas every day in Advent. But Christmas isn't just one day – the climax is spread out for several weeks. This year, 2010, the Christmas season is a bit short, lasting only 16 days, with the last day of the season being the Baptism of Our Lord on January 9, 2011.

Our family enjoys having a prayer companion and picture study to mark the days of the liturgical seasons. To avoid that letdown, this is a little prayer companion to mark the days of the Christmas season.

In addition to the prayers and thoughts, we're going to try to sing a different Christmas carol for each day of the Christmas season. Not all days have the lyrics to the carol, due to lack of space.

These pages will be kept in a [horizontal easel binder](#), with extra pages of the prayers printed out for everyone's use.

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Adoration of the Child, Gerrit van Honthorst, 1620

December 24: Christmas Eve



After attending the vigil Mass, we have a ceremony to place Baby Jesus in the Manger. This is our prayer ceremony; depending on attention span, it will be shortened. We gather in another part of the house, holding the Christ Child, and lighted candles, and process to the manger, singing Silent Night:

Silent Night! Holy Night!
All is calm, all is bright,
'Round yon Virgin Mother and Child.
Holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent Night! Holy Night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia.
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!

Silent Night! Holy Night!
Son of God, love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth!

Then a shortened version of the Proclamation of the Birth of Christ is read:

From the Roman Martyrology:

In the twenty-fourth day of the month of December;
In the forty-second year of the Empire of Octavian Augustus;
In the Sixth Age of the world while all the earth was at peace,

JESUS CHRIST,

Eternal God, and Son of the Eternal Father, willing to consecrate the world by His gracious coming; having been conceived of the Holy Ghost, and the nine months since His conception having now passed (all kneel), was born in Bethlehem of Judah of the Virgin Mary, made man. (Very solemnly):

THE BIRTHDAY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

All: Thanks be to God.

The Christ Child is laid in the manger.

Christmas Eve Prayers (continued)

Father: Our help is in the Name of the Lord

All: who made heaven and earth.

All: The eternal Word, born of the Father before time began, today emptied himself for our sake and became man.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and Holy is His Name.

He has mercy on those who fear Him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of His arm,
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of His servant Israel
for He has remembered His promise of mercy,
the promise He made to our Fathers,
to Abraham and His children for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

All: The eternal Word, born of the Father before time began, today emptied himself for our sake and became man.

From the holy Gospel according to St. Luke (2:15-20):

And it came to pass, when the angels had departed from them into heaven, that the shepherds were saying to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste, and they

found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in the manger. And when they had seen, they understood what had been told them concerning this Child. And all who heard marveled at the things told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept in mind all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken to them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Father: The Word was made flesh, alleluia.

All: And dwelt among us, alleluia.

Father: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come to You.

Father: Let us pray. O God, who made this most holy night to shine forth with the brightness of the true Light, grant we beseech Thee, that we who have known the mystery of His light on earth, may attain the enjoyment of His happiness in heaven. Who lives and reigns with Thee forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Crib Blessing (optional):

Father: Bless, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, this crib (*he sprinkles it with holy water*) which we have prepared in honor of the new birth in the flesh of Thine only begotten Son, that all who devoutly contemplate in this image the mystery of His Incarnation, may be filled with the light of His glory. Who lives and reigns with Thee forever and ever.

All: Amen.

All Sing:

O come all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
To Jesus, to Jesus in Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him,
Born the King of Angels,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ our Lord.

Meal Prayers for the Christmas Season

Before Breakfast

- Leader:** The Word was made flesh, alleluia, alleluia!
- All:** And dwelt among us, alleluia, alleluia!
- Leader:** Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad,
- All:** Before the face of the Lord, for He comes.
- Leader:** Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty. Through Christ our Lord.
- All:** Amen.

After Breakfast

- Leader:** Glory to God in the highest!
- All:** And on earth peace to men of good will, alleluia!
- Leader:** The Lord has reigned,
- All:** And He is clothed with beauty.
- Leader:** O Almighty God, the Savior of the world, who hast nourished us with heavenly food, we give Thee thanks for the gift of this bodily refreshment which we have received from Thy bountiful mercy. Through Christ our Lord.
- All:** Amen.

Before Dinner

- Leader:** All the ends of the earth have seen, alleluia!
- All:** The Salvation of our God, alleluia!
- Leader:** Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
- All:** The Lord is God and He has shone upon us.
- Leader:** Unto us a child is born, Alleluia
- All:** A Son is given to us, Alleluia.
- Leader:** Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty. Through Christ our Lord.
- All:** Amen.

After Dinner

- Leader:** The goodness of God our Savior has appeared.
- All:** Not by the works of Justice which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us.
- Leader:** A sanctified day has shone upon us, alleluia!
- All:** Come, you nations, and adore the Lord!
- Leader:** Let us pray. Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the new birth in the flesh of Thine only-begotten Son may set us free, whom the old bondage holds under the yoke of sin. Through Christ our Lord.
- All:** Amen.
- Leader:** We give Thee thanks, Almighty God, for these and all Thy gifts, which we have received from Thy bounty. Who livest and reignest world without end.
- All:** Amen.

Christmas Night Prayers at the Crib

Father: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Father: Our help is in the Name of the Lord.

All: Who made heaven and earth.

Father: Let us think over whether our actions during the day have done honor to the Christ-Child (pause).

Let us ask forgiveness for what we have not done as we should.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come: Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

All: Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

All: This day Christ is born; this day the Savior has appeared; this day angels are singing on earth, archangels are rejoicing. This day the just are glad and say, Glory to God in high heaven, alleluia.

All Pray: (Psalm 134)

Come, bless the Lord, * all you servants of the Lord.

Who stand in the house of the Lord * during the hours of the night.

Lift up your hands toward the sanctuary * and bless the Lord.

May the Lord bless you from Sion, * the maker of heaven and earth.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son * and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, * world without end.

Amen.

All: (Repeat antiphon preceding psalm.)

Mother or Eldest Child: (Lesson from Jeremiah): You are in our midst, Lord, and Your holy Name has been invoked upon us. Do not forsake us, O Lord our God. The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Father: Into Your hands, O Lord, * I commend my spirit.

All: Into Your hands, O Lord, * I commend my spirit.

Father: For You have redeemed us, O Lord, God of truth.

All: I commend my spirit.

Father: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All: Into Your hands, O Lord, * I commend my spirit.

Father: Keep us, O Lord, as the apple of Your eye.

All: Shelter us under the shadow of Your wings.

Canticle of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32)

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace;
Your word has been fulfilled:

my own eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared in the sight of every people:

a light to reveal you to the nations
and the glory of your people Israel.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, * world without end. Amen.

Father: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come to You.

Father: Let us pray. Visit this dwelling, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy. Let Thy holy Angels dwell herein, who may keep us in peace, and let Thy blessing be always upon us. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Father: Let us remember the saints who come with us today to show their love for the Christ-Child.

(The Collect or some other appropriate part of the Mass of the day is read.)

Let us now sing a carol to the Christ-Child so that He may rest peacefully with us this night.

Night prayers end with a favorite carol.





Adoration of the Shepherds, Agnolo Bronzino, 1539-40

December 25: Solemnity of the Birth of Jesus Christ

The Word was made flesh, alleluia, alleluia!

And dwelt among us, alleluia, alleluia!

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth!

How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is giv'n;
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His Heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Christ enters in.

Where children pure and happy pray to the blessèd Child,
Where misery cries out to Thee, Son of the mother mild;
Where charity stands watching and faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks, and Christmas comes once more.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!



The Holy Family, Juan Simón Gutiérrez

December 26: Feast of the Holy Family

The first Sunday in the octave of Christmas is the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Normally this would be the feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr, also known as Boxing Day. Today we meditate on the Holy Family and pray for help to imitate their virtues in our home. See the readings of today, especially the second reading from Paul to the Colossians 3:12-21.

Prayer to the Holy Family

Lord Jesus Christ, who, being made subject to Mary and Joseph, didst consecrate domestic life by Thine ineffable virtues; grant that we, with the assistance of both, may be taught by the example of Thy Holy Family and may attain to its everlasting fellowship. Who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Besides this carol, another appropriate hymn would be *Where Charity and Love Prevail* or *Ubi Caritas*.

Once In Royal David's City

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| 1. Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her Baby
In a manger for His bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little Child. | 3. And through all His wondrous
childhood
He would honor and obey,
Love and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms He lay:
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as He. |
| 2. He came down to earth from
heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Savior holy. | 4. Jesus is our childhood's
pattern;
Day by day, like us He grew;
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feeleth for our sadness,
And He shareth in our gladness |



Stoning of St. Stephen, 1447-1449, Fra Angelico

Honoring St. Stephen, Martyr:

- Father:** Christ, the New-born, today crowned blessed Stephen.
All: Come, let us adore Him.
Mother: Stephen, full of grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people.
All: Thanks be to God.
Father: You crowned him with glory and honor, O Lord.
All: You have given him rule over the works of Your hands.
Father: Let us pray. Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that we may imitate him whose memory we celebrate, so as to learn to love even our enemies; because we now solemnize his martyrdom who knew how to pray even for his persecutors to our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, who lives and reigns forever. Alleluia.
All: Alleluia.

Good King Wenceslas

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| <p>1. Good King Wenceslas looked out
 On the feast of Stephen
 When the snow lay round about
 Deep and crisp and even
 Brightly shone the moon that night
 Though the frost was cruel
 When a poor man came in sight
 Gath'ring winter fuel</p> | <p>4. "Sire, the night is darker now
 And the wind blows stronger
 Fails my heart, I know not how,
 I can go no longer."
 "Mark my footsteps, my good page
 Tread thou in them boldly
 Thou shalt find the winter's rage
 Freeze thy blood less coldly."</p> |
| <p>2. "Hither, page, and stand by me
 If thou know'st it, telling
 Yonder peasant, who is he?
 Where and what his dwelling?"
 "Sire, he lives a good league hence
 Underneath the mountain
 Right against the forest fence
 By Saint Agnes' fountain."</p> | <p>5. In his master's steps he trod
 Where the snow lay dinted
 Heat was in the very sod
 Which the Saint had printed
 Therefore, Christian men, be sure
 Wealth or rank possessing
 Ye who now will bless the poor
 Shall yourselves find blessing.</p> |
| <p>3. "Bring me flesh and bring me wine
 Bring me pine logs hither
 Thou and I will see him dine
 When we bear him thither."
 Page and monarch forth they went
 Forth they went together
 Through the rude wind's wild lament
 And the bitter weather.</p> | |



Apostle St. John the Evangelist, 1610-1614, El Greco

December 27: Feast of St. John, Evangelist and Apostle

St. John was the youngest apostle of Jesus, the brother of St. James the Greater. He wrote the fourth Gospel, and mentions himself as the “disciple whom Jesus loved” or the “beloved disciple.” St. John is the only apostle who was not martyred, but he did suffer beating, poisoning, and boiling in oil, of which he all miraculously survived. For his feast the priest wears white; all other feasts of apostles the priest wears red.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* mentions that “early Christian art usually represents St. John with an eagle, symbolizing the heights to which he rises in the first chapter of his Gospel. The chalice as symbolic of St. John...is sometimes interpreted with reference to the Last Supper, again as connected with the legend according to which St. John was handed a cup of poisoned wine, from which, at his blessing, the poison rose in the shape of a serpent.”

St. John, who spent most of his life teaching the main precept of Jesus "Little children, love one another" (from Jerome, *Comm. in ep. ad. Gal.*, vi, 10). On this day we drink to the love of St. John. The *Roman Ritual* includes a blessing of wine. At the family meal, serve wine for the adults, another drink for the children. The father leads the blessing for the wine:

Let us pray. Lord God, bless + and consecrate + this vessel of wine (or any other beverage) by the power of your right hand; and grant that, through the merits of St. John, apostle and evangelist, all your faithful who drink of it may find it a help and a protection. As the blessed John drank the poisoned potion without any ill effects, so may all who today drink the blessed wine in his honor be delivered from poisoning and similar harmful things. And as they offer themselves body and soul to you, may they obtain pardon of all their sins; through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Afterwards, the father pours a glass of wine, passes it to the mother and says “Drink to the love of St. John” and the mother answers “I thank you for the love of St. John” or “Where love is, there is God.” Cups are then handed around the table the greeting is repeated by different members and guests.

Sing *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* today.



The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin: The Flight into Egypt,
c. 1496, Albrecht Dürer

(Note: The depictions of the massacre of the Holy Innocents are too graphic and disturbing even for me, so I'm picturing the Flight.)

Christmas Prayer Companion, by Jennifer Gregory Miller <http://familyfeastandferia.wordpress.com>

December 28: Feast of the Holy Innocents

The Holy Innocents are the boy babies that Herod had killed when he was trying to find Baby Jesus. From Matthew's Gospel comes the story (Mt 2:16-18). And an angel appeared in a dream to St. Joseph and told him to take Mary and the child Jesus into Egypt to escape Herod. These young boys are the first to die for Christ; Jesus' life was spared because they gave theirs. Today there is a blessing for children, and the parents can remember to bless their children every night with a sign of the Cross on their forehead.

Blessing of Children

Father: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come unto You.

Father: Let us pray. O Lord Jesus Christ, once You embraced and placed Your hands upon the little children who came to You, and said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, and their angels always see the face of my Father!" Look now with fatherly eyes on the innocence of these children and their parents' devotion, and bless them this day through our ministry. *(The father signs the forehead of each child with the sign of the cross.)* In Your grace and goodness let them advance continually, longing for You, loving You, fearing You, keeping Your commandments. Then they will surely come to their destined home, through You, Savior of the world. Who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All: Amen

Father: May God bless you. And may He keep your hearts and mind—the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

The father then sprinkles the children with holy water.

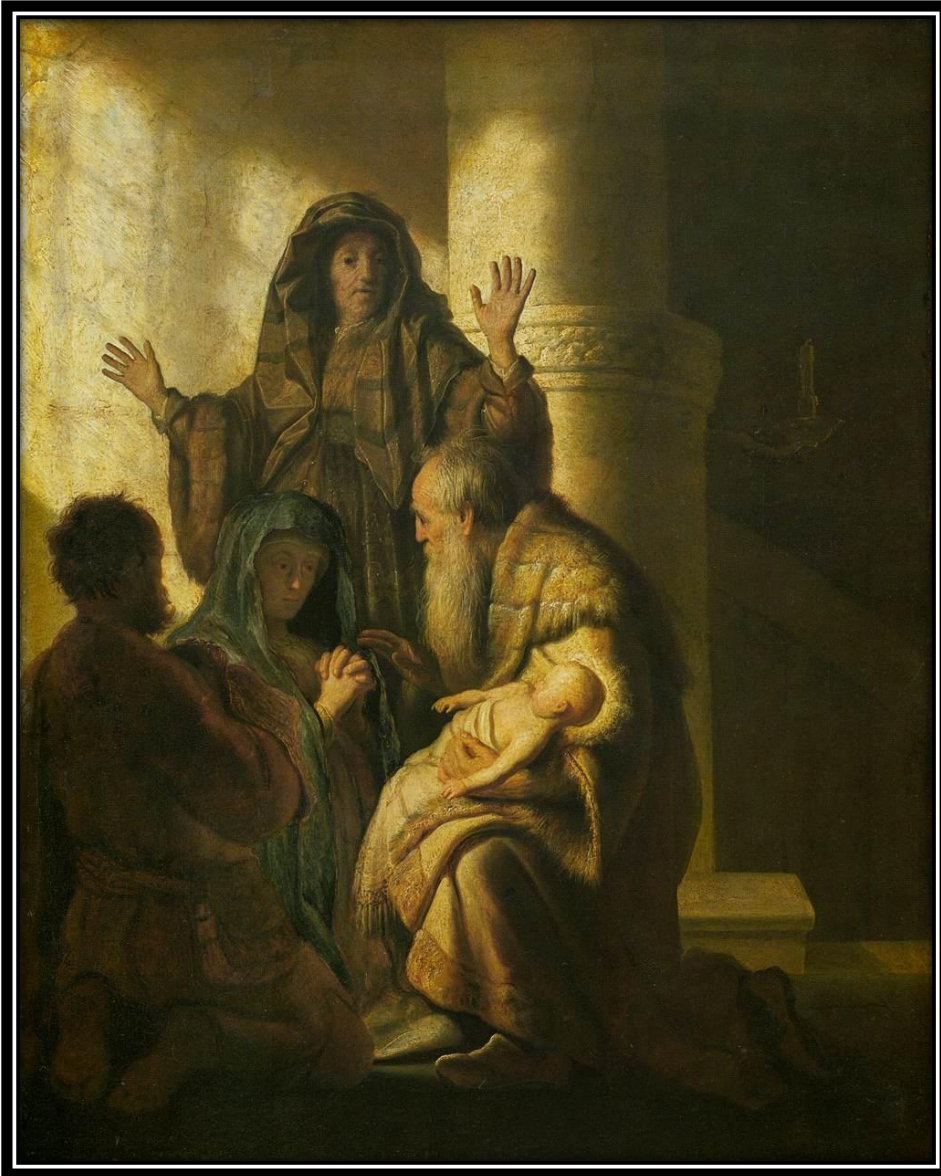
Coventry Carol (Lullay, Thou Little Tiny Child)

Lully, lullay, Thou little tiny Child,
By, by, lully, lullay.

1. O sisters too, how may we do,
For to preserve this day
This poor Youngling for Whom we sing
By, by, lully, lullay?

2. Herod the king, in his raging,
Charged he hath this day
His men of might, in his own sight,
All young children to slay.

3. Then woe is me, poor Child, for Thee,
And ever mourn and say;
For Thy parting nor say nor sing,
By, by, lully, lullay.
Lully, lullay, Thou little tiny Child,
By, by, lully, lullay.



*Simeon and Anna Recognize the Lord in Jesus, c. 1627,
Harmenszoon van Rijn Rembrandt
Oil on wood*

December 29: 5th Day in the Octave of Christmas Optional Memorial of St. Thomas Becket, bishop & martyr

The Church celebrates the first eight days, or octave of Christmas, as every day a little Christmas. There is another octave at Easter. The difference between the two octaves is the Christmas octave includes a few other feast days within the octave, but Easter has none. The Christmas octave includes the feasts of St. Stephen, St. John Evangelist, Holy Innocents, and the Holy Family. The first three feasts are of martyrs, symbolizing the three kinds of martyrdom: freely chosen and killed, freely chosen but did not die, and not chosen but martyred. New Year's Day, which is the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, is the final day of the Christmas octave.

Today is the optional Memorial of St. Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 1170, murdered by knights of King Henry II in the cathedral. His symbol is a sword in bishop's hat, the mitre.

The Gospel today is the Presentation in the Temple, Luke 2:22-35.

Good Christian Men Rejoice

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| 1. Good Christian men rejoice
With heart and soul and voice!
Give ye heed to what we say
News! News!
Jesus Christ is born today!
Ox and ass before Him bow
And He is in the manger now
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today! | 2. Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice
Now ye hear of endless bliss
Joy! Joy!
Jesus Christ was born for this
He hath ope'd the heav'nly door
And man is blessed evermore
Christ was born for this
Christ was born for this. |
| 3. Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice
Now ye need not fear the grave:
Peace! Peace!
Jesus Christ was born to save
Calls you one and calls you all
To gain His everlasting hall
Christ was born to save
Christ was born to save. | |



Adoration of the Shepherds, 1539-40, Agnolo Bronzino

December 30: 6th Day in the Octave of Christmas

We continue with the Octave (eight days) of Christmas. Today and tomorrow are the only days without a saint in the General Roman Calendar.

Today the Gospel concludes the Presentation in the Temple story, including Anna, the prophetess. (Luke 2:26-30):

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Angels We Have Heard on High

1. Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain: *Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song?
Refrain

3. Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ Whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Refrain

4. See Him in a manger laid,
Whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
While our hearts in love we raise.
Refrain



*The Nativity, 1508-1519, Juan de Flandes
Oil on Panel*

December 31: 7th Day in the Octave of Christmas

Optional Memorial of Pope St. Sylvester I

This is the last day of the year 2010, New Year's Eve. It is a good thing in the midst of celebrating New Year's activities to also pray for the family, our nation, and our Pope for the upcoming year.

Prayer to Mary for My Family (by Rev. George Dennerle)

I am just a little child, dear Mother Mary. That's why I know that you love me, and will listen to me now. You were the Mother of your happy Family. May I ask you, please to help my dear mother? Keep her well and strong, so that she can take care of her family as you did. You loved Saint Joseph, for he was the head of your Family. Please help my good father. He must be well and strong, too. He must have work to do. Jesus was the Child of your Family. Please help all the children in our family to be like your Jesus. Amen

Prayer for Our Nation (by Rev. George Dennerle)

Dear Mother Mary! You are the greatest of all the saints in heaven. We ask you to watch over our country. We ask you to guard our flag. Please help our leaders: make them good, make them brave, make them love you and your dear Son, Jesus. Be a mother to all the people. Help us now, and bring us to heaven when we die. Amen.

Prayer for Our Holy Father

Dear Jesus, please watch over and bless our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. Give him good health and energy to fulfill his office. Help him to love You more every day. May he be open to the direction of the Holy Spirit so that he can guide the whole Church on earth. Amen.

The Friendly Beasts

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| <p>1. Jesus, our Brother, strong and good,
Was humbly born in a stable rude,
And the friendly beasts around Him
stood,
Jesus, our Brother, strong and good.</p> <p>2. "I," said the donkey, shaggy and
brown,
"I carried His mother uphill and down,
I carried His mother to Bethlehem town;
I," said the donkey, shaggy and brown.</p> <p>3. "I," said the cow, all white and red,
"I gave Him my manger for His bed,
I gave Him hay to pillow His head;
I," said the cow, all white and red.</p> | <p>4. "I," said the sheep with curly horn,
"I gave Him my wool for His blanket
warm,
He wore my coat on Christmas morn;
I," said the sheep with curly horn.</p> <p>5. "I," said the dove, from the rafters high,
"I cooed Him to sleep that He should not
cry,
We cooed Him to sleep, my mate and I;
I," said the dove, from the rafters high.</p> <p>6. Thus all the beasts, by some good spell,
In the stable dark were glad to tell
Of the gifts they gave Emmanuel,
The gifts they gave Emmanuel.</p> |
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*Virgin and Child, 1320-22, Lippo Memmi
Tempura on Wood*

January 1: Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Today concludes the Christmas Octave, and marks the beginning of the year 2011. We honor Mary as the Mother of God, the highest privilege for a human being. *Theotokos* is the Greek word for this title of “Mother of God” and this is one of Mary’s oldest titles.

Traditionally many people visited family and friends on this day. In particular it has been a day for remembering our baptism and our godparents and godchildren. We both pray for our godparents (perhaps visiting, providing gifts) and our godchildren. Perhaps all the family baptismal candles could be arranged around a central Christ Candle as the table display, and everyone could renew their baptismal promises.

Renewal of Baptismal Promises:

Leader: When you were baptized, your godparents made promises to God for you. Now you are old enough to make themselves. Tell me: do you promise to have nothing to do with the devil?

All: We do promise.

Leader: Nor with his works of sin?

All: We do promise.

Leader: Do you promise to keep away from everything the devil uses to lead people into sin?

All: With God’s help, we do promise.

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, who was born and died for us?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe all the Catholic Church believes and teaches?

All: We do believe. For Jesus Christ, began the Catholic Church. He promised to be with His Church always. He promised that His church would teach only what is true.

Leader: Will you always believe in the Holy Catholic Church?

All: Yes, with God’s help, we will live and die as Catholics.

January 1, continued:

Hymns to Sing:

What Child is This?

1. What Child is this who, laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom Angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and Angels sing;
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

2. Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

3. So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
Come peasant, king to own Him;
The King of kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise a song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Sing of Mary

1. Sing of Mary, pure and lowly, Virgin mother undefiled, Sing of God's own Son most holy, Who became her little child. Fairest child of fairest mother, God the Lord who came to earth, Word made flesh, our very brother, Takes our nature by his birth.	2. Sing of Jesus, son of Mary, In the home at Nazareth. Toil and labour cannot weary Love enduring unto death. Constant was the love he gave her, Though he went forth from her side, Forth to preach, and heal, and suffer, Till on Calvary he died.
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3. Glory be to God the Father;
Glory be to God the Son;
Glory be to God the Spirit;
Glory to the Three in One.
From the heart of blessed Mary,
From all saints the song ascends,
And the Church the strain reechoes
Unto earth's remotest ends.



Adoration of the Magi, 1423-24, Fra Angelico

January 2: Epiphany of the Lord

Traditionally, the “Twelve Days of Christmas” would be from Christmas to Epiphany, which was on January 6. The Church in the United States now celebrates Epiphany on the second Sunday after Christmas, so the twelve days are considerably shortened. On this day the Roman Ritual includes several special blessings: Blessing of Water, blessing of chalk, blessing of Gold and Frankincense, and Blessing of homes. The House Blessing is included here. The children all play part of kings, wearing crown, bearing “gifts” to be part of the procession in the house. The manger is decorated, with Baby Jesus wearing a crown and regal robe.

The Gospel today is Matthew 2:1-12: This is an excerpt:

When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

We Three Kings of Orient Are

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar.
Field and fountain, moor and
mountain, following yonder star.</p> | <p>3. Frankincense to offer have I.
Incense owns a Deity nigh.
Prayer and praising, all men raising,
worship Him, God on high. <i>Refrain</i></p> |
|--|---|

Refrain:
O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect Light.

4. Myrrh is mine: its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom.
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.
Refrain

2. Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,
Gold I bring to crown Him again,
King forever, ceasing never, over us all
to reign. *Refrain*

5. Glorious now behold Him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice.
Alleluia, alleluia! sounds through the
earth and skies. *Refrain*

Epiphany House Blessing Ceremony

The manger is decorated regally, containing the enthroned Christ Child. All gather around the manger while the visiting priest leads the prayers. If there is no priest present, the father of the family leads:

P: God's peace be in this home,

All: And in all who live here.

P: **The star burned like a flame, pointing the way to God, the King of kings; the wise men saw the sign and brought their gifts in homage to their great King.**

All: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; for He has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations shall call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name.

He has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation. He has shown the strength of His arm, He has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of His servant Israel for He has remembered His promise of mercy, the promise He made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

As it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.

All: **The star burned like a flame, pointing the way to God, the King of kings; the wise men saw the sign and brought their gifts in homage to their great King.**

P: Many shall come from Sheba.

All: Bearing gold and incense.

P: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come unto Thee.

P: Let us pray. O God, who by the guidance of a star did this day reveal your Only Begotten Son to the Gentiles, grant that we who know You by faith may be brought to the contemplation of the heavenly majesty, through the same Christ, Our Lord.

All: Amen.

All: Be enlightened and shine forth, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come, and upon thee is risen the glory of the Lord, Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary.

P: Nations shall walk in your light, and kings in the brilliance of your rising.

All: And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

House Blessing

P: Let us pray. O Lord, Almighty God, bless this house + that it may become a shelter of health, chastity, self-conquest, humility, goodness, mildness, obedience to the commandments, and thanksgiving to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Upon this house and those who dwell herein may Your blessing remain forever, through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Blessing of Chalk

P: Bless, + O Lord God, this creature, chalk, and let it be a help to mankind. Grant that those who will use it with faith in your most holy name, and with it inscribe on the doors of their homes the names of your saints, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, may through their merits and intercession enjoy health in body and protection of soul; through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

*The father of the family and the three "kings" take blessed chalk (one piece each) and proceed to the front door, accompanied by the priest. While all look on, the father reads the corresponding words as the kings inscribe their initials onto the lintel. (The initials CMB also stand for **Christus mansionem benedicat: Christ bless this house.**)*

Final inscription on lintel should read: 2 0 + C + M + B + 1 1

"The three wise men,

Caspar, *[Caspar inscribes 'C' on lintel]* **C**

Melchior, *[Melchior inscribes 'M']* **M**

and Balthasar *[Balthasar inscribes 'B']* **B**

followed the star of God's Son who became man

two thousand *[Dad inscribes the '2 0' on left]* **2 0**

eleven years ago. *[Dad inscribes '1 1' on right]* **1 1**

"May Christ bless our dwelling, *[Dad places + after '20']* **+**

and remain with us throughout the new year, *[+ after 'C']* **+**

and grant that our comings and goings *[+ after 'M']* **+**

will be in search of truth *[+ after 'B']* **+**

Priest or Father: Almighty God, incline your ear. May you bless us and all who are gathered here. Send your holy angel who will defend us and fill with grace all who live here. Amen

*The father and the "Three Kings" now accompany the priest as he blesses the house with holy water. Everyone sings: **We Three Kings of Orient Are.***

Proclamation of the Date of Easter 2011

The Proclamation of the Date of Easter on Epiphany dates from a time when calendars were not readily available. It was necessary to make known the date of Easter in advance, since many celebrations of the liturgical year depend on its date. The number of Sundays that follow Epiphany, the date of Ash Wednesday, and the number of Sundays that follow Pentecost are all computed in relation to Easter.

Although calendars now give the date of Easter and the other feasts in the liturgical year for many years in advance, the Epiphany proclamation still has value. It is a reminder of the centrality of the resurrection of the Lord in the liturgical year and the importance of the great mysteries of faith which are celebrated each year. (From *Sacramentary Supplement*, pp. 47-50.)

On the solemnity of the Epiphany, the proclamation takes place after the Gospel, the homily or after the Prayer after Communion. The proclamation should be sung from the ambo by a deacon, cantor or a reader. In their absence, the celebrant or concelebrant or another priest may sing or proclaim it according to the following text:

Dear brothers and sisters, the glory of the Lord has shone upon us, and shall ever be manifest among us, until the day of his return.
Through the rhythms of times and seasons
let us celebrate the mysteries of salvation.

Let us recall the year's culmination, the **Easter Triduum** of the Lord: his last supper, his crucifixion, his burial, and his rising celebrated between the evening of the **21st of April** and the evening of the **24th of April**.

Each Easter – as on each Sunday –
the Holy Church makes present the great and saving deed
by which Christ has for ever conquered sin and death.

From Easter are reckoned all the days we keep holy.

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, will occur on the **9th of March**.

The **Ascension of the Lord** will be commemorated on the **2nd [or 5th] of June**.
Pentecost, the joyful conclusion of the season of Easter, will be celebrated on the **12th of June**.

And this year the **First Sunday of Advent** will be on the **27th of November**.

Likewise the pilgrim Church proclaims the Passover of Christ
in the feasts of the holy Mother of God, in the feasts of the Apostles and
Saints,
and in the commemoration of the faithful departed.

To Jesus Christ, who was, who is, and who is to come, Lord of time and history,
be endless praise, for ever and ever.
Amen.

January 3: Monday After Epiphany Optional Memorial Most Holy Name of Jesus

The Gospel today show Jesus beginning his public work:

Matthew 4:12-17: Jesus withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth He went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The Optional Memorial today is the Most Holy Name of Jesus, which was restored to the calendar a few years ago. Today we honor Jesus Christ's name, also pictured as IHS. It is pious act to bow one's head at the name of Jesus.

This is based from St. Paul's quote:

Philippians 2:9-11: Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

O Come All Ye Faithful

1. O Come All Ye Faithful
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him,
Born the King of Angels.

2. O Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all that hear in heaven God's holy
word.
Give to our Father glory in the Highest;
Refrain

Refrain: O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

3. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
O Jesus! for evermore be Thy name adored.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
Refrain



*Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, 1440-42, Fra Angelico
Fresco*



January 4: Tuesday after Epiphany Memorial of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is the first canonized saint born in the United States. St. Elizabeth born in 1774, witnessed the birth of the United States. She married William Seton, had five children. Her husband died of tuberculosis, and she converted to Catholicism after his death, and began a religious order, the Daughters of Charity, in Emmitsburg, Maryland. She died in 1821. She helped establish Catholic schools in the US. She is a very special saint, with so much in common with families and home education, that we should learn more about this saint and pray to her for assistance through our school year.

St. Elizabeth followed today's reading from St. John, and we should keep these words in our hearts and keep them in mind.

1 Jn 4:7-10: Beloved, let us love one another,
because love is of God;
everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.
Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.
In this way the love of God was revealed to us:
God sent his only-begotten Son into the world
so that we might have life through him.

Huron Carol ("Twas in the Moon of Wintertime)

<p>1. 'Twas in the moon of wintertime, When all the birds had fled, That mighty Gitchi Manitou Sent angel choirs instead; Before their light the stars grew dim, And wondering hunters heard the hymn:</p>	<p>The earliest moon of wintertime Is not so round and fair As was the ring of glory on The helpless Infant there. The chiefs from far before Him knelt With gifts of fox and beaver pelt. <i>Refrain</i></p>
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Refrain: Jesus your King is born,
Jesus is born,
In excelsis gloria.

<p>2. Within a lodge of broken bark The tender babe was found, A ragged robe of rabbit skin Enwrapped His beauty round; But as the hunter braves drew nigh, The angel song rang loud and high: <i>Refrain</i></p>	<p>3. O children of the forest free, O seed of Manitou, The holy Child of earth and Heav'n Is born today for you. Come kneel before the radiant Boy, Who brings you beauty, peace and joy. <i>Refrain</i></p>
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January 5: Wednesday After Epiphany Memorial of St. John Neumann, Bishop

St. John Nepomucene Neumann was born in Bohemia and came to the United States to be a missionary. He was ordained in New York in 1836 and consecrated bishop in Philadelphia in 1852, but died of exhaustion in 1860.

The first reading continues the beautiful teaching from St. John. On December 27 we celebrated his feast, remembering how his main teaching was “Little children, love one another.”

1 John 4:11-18: Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us.

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.

I Saw Three Ships

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas Day in the morning. | 4. Pray, wither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Pray, wither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas Day in the morning? |
| 2. And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
And what was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day in the morning? | 5. O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day in the morning. |
| 3. The Virgin Mary and Christ were there,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
The Virgin Mary and Christ were there,
On Christmas Day in the morning. | 6. And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the bells on earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day in the morning. |



*The Adoration of the Magi, c. 1420, Unknown German Master
Tempera on pine*

January 6: Thursday After Epiphany Traditional Feast of the Epiphany

Today ends the traditional “Twelve Days of Christmas”. Many traditions are attached to the evening before and this day, including the beginning of Mardi Gras in Louisiana. King cakes and other special breads and cakes are found in almost every country. In many Hispanic countries the gifts are brought by the Three Kings. In Italy *La Befana* brings the gifts on Epiphany Eve.

Prayer to the Holy Family

O Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I humbly pray that you will look on me with love and bless me all the day.
I offer you my thoughts and words and everything I do.
Watch over me at all times; keep me free from sin and close to you.
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

The First Noel (Nowell)

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|---|--|
| <p>1. The First Noel, the Angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as
they lay.
In fields where they lay keeping their
sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.</p> | <p>4. This star drew nigh to the northwest
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest
And there it did both Pause and stay
Right o'er the place where Jesus lay.
<i>Refrain</i></p> |
|---|--|

Refrain: Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel!

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>2. They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the East beyond them far
And to the earth it gave great light
And so it continued both day and night.
<i>Refrain.</i></p> | <p>4. Then entered in those Wise men three
Full reverently upon their knee
And offered there in His presence
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense.
<i>Refrain</i></p> |
| <p>3. And by the light of that same star
Three Wise men came from country far
To seek for a King was their intent
And to follow the star wherever it went.
<i>Refrain</i></p> | <p>5. Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord
That hath made Heaven and earth of
nought
And with his blood mankind has bought.
<i>Refrain</i></p> |

January 7: Friday After Epiphany

We continue the last days of Christmas. The Fifth Joyful Mystery is the Finding of Jesus in the Temple. Today we think of that, and think of being about our Father's business. What does that mean for us?

Short Prayers During the Day

Jesus, my God, I love You above all things.

O Jesus, the friend of little children, bless the little children of the whole world.

O my God, I am sorry for having offended You.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, help me. Amen.

Good Christian Men Rejoice

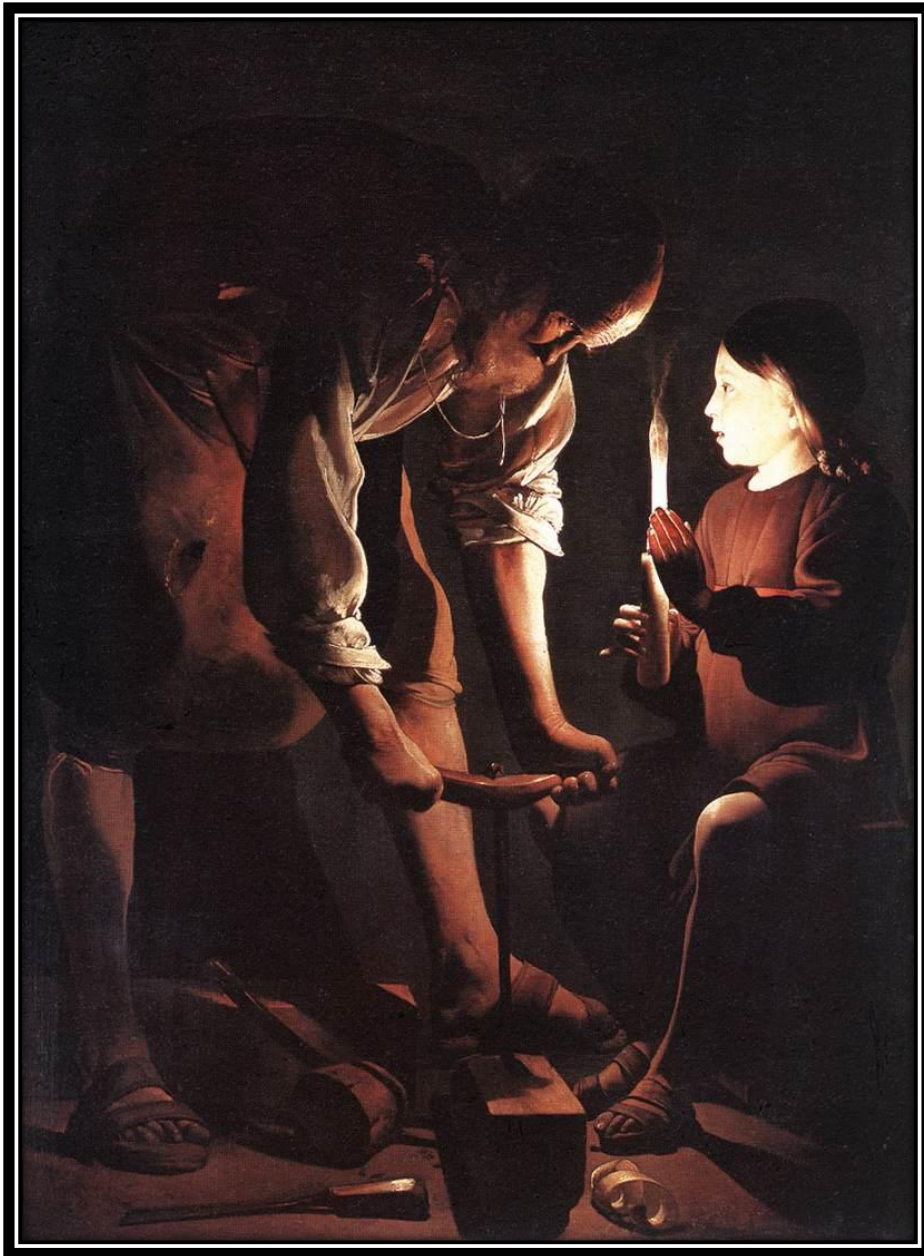
1. Good Christian men rejoice
With heart and soul and voice!
Give ye heed to what we say
News! News!
Jesus Christ is born today!
Ox and ass before Him bow
And He is in the manger now
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

2. Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice
Now ye hear of endless bliss
Joy! Joy!
Jesus Christ was born for this
He hath ope'd the heav'nly door
And man is blessed evermore
Christ was born for this
Christ was born for this.

3. Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice
Now ye hear of endless bliss
Joy! Joy!
Jesus Christ was born for this
He hath ope'd the heav'nly door
And man is blessed evermore
Christ was born for this
Christ was born for this.



*Disputation with the Doctors, 1308-11, Duccio di Buoninsegna
Tempera on wood*



Christ in the Carpenter's Shop, 1645, Georges de La Tour
Oil on canvas

January 8: Saturday After Epiphany

The Christmas season is coming to a close. Not all feast days follow Jesus' life in order. The Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry – with Jesus being a grown man.

Usually people make New Year's Resolutions around this time of year. Here are some rules to live by, from *Come My Jesus* by Rev. Patrick F. Shine:

My Little Rules

These little rules are to help me to be a true child of Christ.

Each Day I Must

Say my prayers.
Be good.
Help others.
Obey my father and mother.
Love my friends and enemies.
Save my soul.

In Church I Must

Pray the Mass with my prayer book.
Look at the altar.
Watch the Priest.
Think of Jesus.
Say my prayers.
Not Talk.

In School I Must

Learn my lessons.
Obey my teacher.
Study Hard.
Do better each day.

At Play I Must

Be fair.
Be a good sport.
Be a good winner.
Be a good loser.
Play square.
Think of the Child Jesus.

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

1. Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

2. Christ by highest heav'n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

January 9: Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Today marks the final day of the Christmas season, the last day the priest wears white for Christmas. Tomorrow we enter Ordinary Time and green is the liturgical color.

If you didn't renew your baptismal promises on New Year's Day, today would be another appropriate feast to do it.

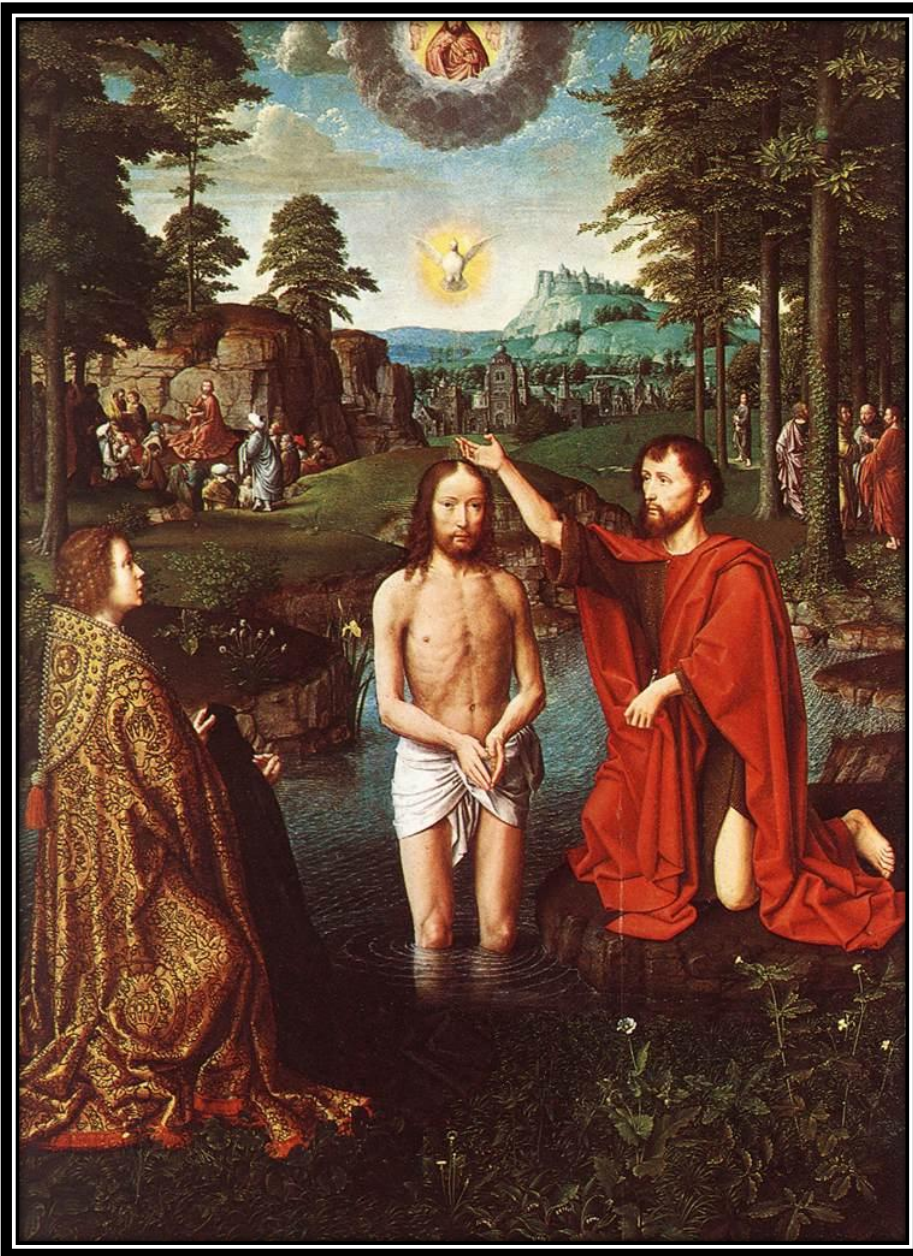
Remember to use holy water frequently. Today can be a day to refill the holy water bottles at church, clean (or hang) the fountains at home, and refresh them with new holy water. Holy Water is a reminder of your baptism. Say this prayer when blessing yourself:

By this holy water, and by your Precious Blood, wash away my sins, O Lord.

✠ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Joy to the World

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.
2. Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills
and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.
3. No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.
4. He rules the world with truth and
grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.



The Baptism of Christ

Triptych of Jean Des Trompes (central), 1505, Gerard David
Oil on wood