



The Start of a New Year

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Special points of interest:

- January 1 - Solemnity of Mary Mother of God
- January 1- World Day of Peace
- January 6 - Epiphany
- January 9 - Baptism of Our Lord
- January 17 - St. Anthony
- January 20 - St. Sebastian
- January 24 - St. Frances de Sales

In the first week of December, I had the opportunity to go to Rome with my 15 year old daughter Samantha. We were blessed to see first hand the history, depth and beauty of our Catholic faith. We attended an audience with Pope John Paul II where he encouraged us to stay close to Christ in the Eucharist. We had daily mass at St. Peter's Basilica as well as Adoration and Reconciliation. We truly experienced the cliché, "Rome wasn't built in a day" and that message resonated through every aspect of my life. The message was one of perseverance. Rome wasn't built in a day and neither is our faith. It is a work in progress that will continue throughout our lifetime. Creating a legacy of faith and family tradition within our families won't be done in a day; it takes years of celebrating the same traditions to create a legacy that will be passed on to future generations.

In Romans 5:4, Paul reminds us that perseverance produces character and character, hope. It is persevering in the small ways each day that we will build a legacy of faith and family tradition within each of our homes. The perseverance of daily prayer, family gatherings, celebrating feast days, attending Mass, blessing our children and other traditions. It is easy for these times to be lost within the busyness of our days, but it is through perseverance that we will bring hope to future generations. We must do the best we can in the years that we are given to build a vision so great that future generations will be able to complete what we have not finished during our time.

We wish you and your families abundant blessings in the New Year and pray that your home be blessed with the laughter of children, the warmth of a close family, hope for the future and fond memories of the past.



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Did You Know?

January 1 Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

On this day we celebrate Mary as Mother of Jesus Christ. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church it states:

495 Called in the Gospels "the Mother of Jesus," Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as "the mother of my Lord." In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father's eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly "Mother of God".

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God is a Holy Day of Obligation in Canada and Poland. Because January 1st falls on a Saturday this year it is not a day of obligation in the United States.

January 1 World Day of Peace

World Day of Peace was launched by Pope Paul VI on January 1, 1968. He stated, "It would be our desire, then, that this celebration take place each year as a sign of hope and promise, at the beginning of the calendar which measures and guides the journey of human life through time, in order that Peace, with its just and salutary equilibrium, will dominate the unfolding of history yet to come".

The theme for World Peace Day 2005 is, "Do Not Be Overcome By Evil But Overcome Evil By Good." **Pope John Paul II encourages us that,** "No man or woman of goodwill can renounce the struggle to overcome evil with good. This fight can be fought effectively only with the weapons of love. *When good overcomes evil, love prevails and where love prevails, there peace prevails.*"

This day gives us a time to reflect on the weapons of love that we have created in our own homes and in the reality that it is only when we have peace and love in our homes that there will be peace and love in the world.



January 17 The Memorial of St. Anthony

St. Anthony was a hermit, devoted to silence, prayer and manual labour. He spent twenty years in isolation, relying on a simple diet of bread and water, once a day.

St. Anthony suffered and overcame many temptations from the devil, by making the sign of the cross. We make the sign of the cross to enter and complete an act of prayer. It helps to remind us to focus. It helps to strengthen us. It also represents a sign to God that we offer to Him our mind (gesture to our forehead), our will (gesture to our heart), and our entire body (gesture from left to right). We need to remind ourselves of the significance of this sign and concentrate on our actions as we use it with prayer.

St. Anthony often stopped throughout his work to pray and think of God. This helped to bring him closer to God. Small prayers can easily be incorporated into our day. Try to stop regularly throughout the day saying, "Jesus, I trust in you", "Jesus, Mary, Joseph", "My Jesus, mercy", "Blessed be the name of the Lord" or "Mother of mercy, pray for us." Create a habit of invoking Christ's name often throughout the day.



Did You Know?

January 20

The Optional Memorial of St. Sebastian Patron of Athletes

Saint Sebastian was condemned to be killed by arrows. He was shot down but restored to health by St. Irene. When discovered, he was again condemned and this time killed by clubs. He is remembered for his strength and endurance.

Create a safe obstacle course within the house. Include climbing, jumping, running, push-ups, sit-ups or variations on other sports activities. You can also make it a family night participating in a favorite family activity like bowling, mini golf, swimming, basketball, skiing or other athletic adventure.



January 24

The Memorial of St. Frances de Sales Patron of Writers

St. Frances became a monk at the age of nine years. He is best known for writing about holiness in everyday life in his two books, Treatise on the Love of God and Introduction to a Devout Life. This feast day gives us the opportunity to discuss as a family the ways we can strive for holiness in our daily lives. In honor of St. Frances' writings, create a family prayer. Keep it by the dinner table to recite before family meals.



Celebrations, Activities & Ideas

January 6

Epiphany of the Lord

Epiphany means "manifestation" and is the celebration of the visit of the Magi or Wise men to the Christ Child. See Matthew 2:1-12 for the story. Epiphany is also the conclusion of the Twelve Days of Christmas.

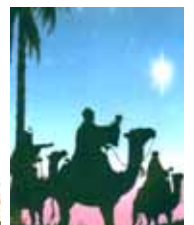
Epiphany Centerpiece: Transform your Advent Wreath in an Epiphany Centerpiece by replacing the purple and pink candles with white ones.

Three Gifts: In some cultures less gifts are given at Christmas and three gifts are given on Epiphany to represent the three gifts given by the Wise Men to baby Jesus. Another variation on the theme is to present three gifts to the family that will be used throughout the year to draw you closer to one another. It may be a new game for family game night, video rental cards for movie night, a family membership to a local attraction or sports complex or homemade coupon books with already planned family nights or weekends to be used throughout the year.

Epiphany Cards or Letters: If you didn't find time to send out Christmas Cards or letters and still want to connect with those distant friends and relatives start a new tradition of an Epiphany letter. Most people will enjoy receiving a joyful message in the first weeks of January.

Blessing of the Home: Take a piece of chalk to your parish priest to be blessed. Over the main entrance to your home write the following: 20+C+M+B+05. The numbers remind us of the current year, while the letters correspond to the Three Kings: Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar. Join in a family prayer including a blessing for all of the activities and people that will take place and enter through the doors of your home throughout the year.

Traveling Kings: If Mary and Joseph traveled to your manger throughout Advent, then this is the time for your Kings to make an entrance. As you draw closer to January 6th, the Kings should be making their way towards the manger scene to arrive on the morning of Epiphany.



Celebrations, Activities & Ideas

January 9

Solemnity of the Baptism of Our Lord

Today the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Baptism of Our Lord. This brings to an end the season of Christmas. It also gives us a chance to acknowledge our own baptisms. Even if throughout the year you celebrate the Baptismal Anniversaries of each family member, today is a good opportunity to celebrate the special gift of baptism for all of God's family.

Bring out baptismal gowns or garments and candles or purchase a white candle for each family member. These candles can also be used for celebrating Baptismal Anniversaries throughout the year. As you light the candles have the father, mother, grandparent or godparent present the candle to each child and repeat the words that were spoken at their baptism:



You have become a new creation, and have clothed yourself in Christ. See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity. With your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven.

Receive this burning light. This light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly. Safeguard your baptism by a blameless life. Keep the Commandments of God, that when our Lord shall come to claim His own, you may be worthy to greet Him, with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom. Amen.



Upon receipt of the candle the child will say, "I (name--) promise to reject Satan, and all his works and empty promises." The adults then present each other with a candle and follow the same format. Once everyone has received their candle and spoken their baptismal promise, recite together the Apostles Creed.

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Scripture Verse

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Ephesians 6:18

Quotation

So you must not stop praying! Let not day go by without praying a little! Nourish your day with as much prayer as you can.

Pope John Paul II

Inspiration

Be kind and merciful. Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier.

Mother Teresa

Creating a Legacy of Faith Series

Creating a legacy can sound daunting but in reality it is built on the beauty of simplicity. It is in the small everyday things that you do that set the footings for a legacy of faith. It is not grand plans, elaborate celebrations or constant planning that creates a legacy. It is the simple things you do as an individual, husband or wife and family consistently that creates a legacy. Here are some foundations for creating a legacy of faith in your home:

1. You can start at any time. You may have been blessed with generations before you that have passed on a legacy to you and it is your mission to keep it going, or you may be starting from scratch. Your children may be young, teenagers or grown and left home. It is never too late. The challenges will be different at each stage, but it is never too late to create a legacy of faith that will benefit you and future generations.
2. It is in turbulent times that a legacy of faith becomes valuable to the current generation. It is important to note that each generation throughout history has described the times in which they live to be turbulent. Prepare your children and future generations for their own turbulent times.
3. Creating tradition and legacy takes depth and time to grow. Be patient and persevere. Trying a new idea may work immediately for your family or it may take some revisions for your own unique family situation.
4. Do what works for your family. God uniquely created you and your family to know Him, love Him and serve Him according to the gifts He gave to each one of you. Take good ideas from other families and adapt them to your own situation.
5. Set yourself up for success. Creating a legacy and tradition takes time and patience. Implement one new tradition at a time and let it take hold within your family. When it becomes routine and natural try a new one. Trying to implement too many ideas at one time may result in failure and/or exhaustion.

Prayer

A legacy of faith begins with prayer. The following questions will help you to determine where you are starting. They will give you an inventory of what you may or may not have already put into action. If you have no answers do not feel embarrassed or be tempted to stop reading. Everyone has the opportunity and choice to create a legacy of faith and it is always a work in progress.

- What are the prayer traditions within your home?
- On a personal level do you feel you have your own prayer traditions or planned prayer time throughout the day?
- Do you have prayer times that your family sees as tradition or take place at a regular time, place or event? Are they consistent enough to be called a tradition?

Personal Prayer Time

Creating personal prayer time and reflecting on Christ's words to us is the foundation for building a legacy of faith. Personal prayer traditions are as simple as:

- Your spouse and/or children seeing you set-aside time for personal prayer and meditation.
- Praying for people when a situation arises. Reminding yourself and your family to pray for those that have requested prayer or you know need prayers.
- Encouraging yourself, spouse and children to pray for your daily needs. Help at school, work, a friend that's bugging them, a teacher, for tests and all the other little worries of the day. Make it spontaneous and natural – like talking to your best friend.



Prayer

- Pray for the different situations that you come across throughout the day. For the ambulance that passed you with its sirens on – you know that someone’s life is being changed as well as their family’s lives. Pray for a farmer’s crop as you see him out on his tractor, for those involved in an accident, for the grouchy co-worker that is making your day miserable or for the meeting that is about to start in the office next door that will affect the direction of your company. Christ gives us so many opportunities in the day to pray for others. Imagine what our communities and the world would be if we all took those opportunities to pray each day.

Prayers at Meal Time

- Create an environment that sets the stage for prayer. -Everyone has their hands folded, no food in the mouth or distraction from forks, knives or spoons. Choose someone to start the prayer or set a day of the week that each member of the family gets to start.
- Start with the same formal prayer each night. An example might be The Lords Prayer along with a meal prayer like: “Bless us O’ Lord, in these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty through Christ our Lord. Amen.”
- Give family members the opportunity to express their own spontaneous prayer. It might be for a friend, family member or a problem that needs solving. You will learn a lot about what is going on in your family’s life through spontaneous prayer.
- Some families like to end dinner with a closing prayer of thanksgiving for the food they have been blessed with but also for the time they have spent together at the table.
- To help family members learn new prayers, print out postcard size prayer cards that can be placed at each table setting. This also works well if you have guests for dinner that may not know your specific prayers. Younger children will learn through daily repetition.

When you create a tradition of prayer around mealtime it is easy to do anywhere with little confusion. It can be done formally sitting at your table, or informally gathered around a kitchen island before dishing up. It can be done at a park during a picnic, in the car while going through drive - thru or before a meal in a restaurant. It is a tradition that becomes as natural as breathing and one that your children will pass on to the next generation.

For a selection of prayers see the Faith Section of <http://www.livingmyfaith.com>

Night Prayers

Ending the day with prayer allows you to reflect on the love that Christ has shown you throughout the day and the many blessings that have occurred. Reflecting on your day allows you to review our own behavior. It allows you to see where you acted with charity, where you could have been more forgiving or gentle, where you did God’s will and where you fell short. It is a chance to do a brief examination of conscience or night balance and set some goals for the next day. The tradition of night prayers trains you and future generations to use the wisdom of each day to grow closer to Christ.

Adult and children’s night balances are available and can be printed from the Faith Section of <http://livingmyfaith.com>

Creating a legacy of faith through prayer is like setting solid cornerstones upon a rock foundation. The building constructed upon it will last for generations to come. Those around it may crumble, fall or rot, but your building will stand – weathering the elements of nature and mankind. Cornerstones of prayer built on the foundation of Christ and the Church will allow our families to stand strong – weathering the elements of society.



A Legacy Album

Tradition within your home is created by celebrating a special day within your family in a specific way. These celebrations need to be experienced consistently throughout the years to be established as traditions that will be passed to future generations. Many celebrations only happen once a year and for many of us it is difficult to remember what we did last week never mind last year. This is where a Legacy Album becomes very valuable not only to your current family but to generations to come.

A Legacy Album is a book that contains all of your family traditions. It is a resource for you to follow throughout the year as a reminder of how your family celebrates.

Getting Started

Find a format that works for you. If you are a computer wiz you may find that creating a word document that has the details of your traditions works great. If you are already a scrapbooker or have always wanted to try, you could create an album with pictures and descriptions of your family traditions. If you love to journal you may want to establish a Traditions Journal. Create a means of recording your family traditions that is a reflection of you and your family and that works with your time given your season of life.

Suggestions for Success

- 1) Organize your traditions into categories. It may be by months of the year or specific subjects like Feast Days, Christmas and birthdays. You will probably find that a combination of the two works best.
- 2) Ask your family members for the details around your celebrations. Children are amazing when it comes to remembering the details. You may remember that you celebrate Valentine's day with a heart shaped cake. They will remember that you use red napkins and sprinkle the table with heart confetti and use the special pink plates!
- 3) Be specific when explaining your celebrations. Write down as many details as possible. This will be helpful not only for yourself but future generations.
- 4) Leave extra space to add to your album. You will find that over the years you will fine tune your celebrations or add to their richness. Leave room to add the extra details.
- 5) Paste an envelope or file into the back of your album and use it for storing new traditions that you are testing. For example: You may decide this year that you want to celebrate the Baptismal Anniversaries of your children. You plan the celebration and it just didn't go as planned but you know the revision you will make next time. While you are testing a tradition keep it in the pending file.
- 6) If you like an idea in your monthly e-magazine print it and cut out the specific idea. Use it to make notes and revisions as you tailor the celebration to your family. Remember to send us your great ideas!
- 7) Refer to your Legacy Album like you would your favorite cookbook. Don't rely on your memory for all of the details. Your children will also learn to turn to it as a valuable resource for your family.
- 8) When your children get married, you can gift them a copy of your traditions as a starting point for their own families.

Creating a legacy of faith and family tradition does not happen by accident. It is an active decision to create and pass on traditions that define your family. A Legacy Album ensures that your ideas and traditions are not lost but treasured for present and future generations.

For examples of Legacy Albums please see the family section of www.livingmyfaith.com after January 15, 2005.

The Year of the Eucharist



Pope John Paul II has declared October 2004-October 2005 The Year of the Eucharist. He is encouraging us as families to draw close to Christ in the Eucharist and has a special message for our youth. ***"I would like the young people to gather around the Eucharist as the***

vital source which nourishes their faith and enthusiasm." This year gives us a chance to evaluate and strengthen the presence of the Eucharist in each of our families. Please send us your plans and experiences so that we can share them with other families within the faith section of www.livingmyfaith.com

We have encouraged our teens to get a few friends together and do a Holy Hour at our parish and then go out for coffee afterwards. This has shown them that other teens care about time they spend with Jesus and has strengthened their friendship. The coffee afterwards is an added bonus.

Coline, Ontario

We have decided that we will go to Mass one extra day out of the week as a family. I checked out our local parishes and found a mass time that suits our family's schedule. At first the kids were a bit reluctant but now they look forward to the time we have as a family and have a greater appreciation for the Eucharist and the role it plays in our lives.

Linda, Idaho

The Year of the Eucharist has prompted us to evaluate how we spend our Sundays. Over the years we have attended Sunday Mass but have treated rest of the day as a normal weekday. Running errands, shopping and working. We have forgotten that it is a holy day that God gave us to rest and enjoy with our family. Our plan for the new year is to keep our Sundays as a day of rest and time together as a family. To once again claim it as a holy day.

Shirley, Tennessee

Our local parish does not have Eucharist Adoration so I have decided to talk to my parish priest and support him in getting adoration established in our parish. I know that it will take some time and hard work but I have also heard from so many friends of the benefits to the church community and its families.

Theresa, British Columbia

Our family has decided to make Sunday Mass a greater priority in our life. In the past we have either fitted mass into what was convenient for our Sunday schedule or sometimes have even missed Sunday mass because our lives were so busy. We have now picked a mass time that works for our family and we schedule our other commitments around that time. We are still flexible when we need to be but now we are putting Christ as our first priority on Sundays and everything else second. I trust that we will see many blessings in our family by making this change in priorities.

Lynne, Alberta

I have been doing a Holy Hour myself for about a year but the Year of the Eucharist has encouraged me to encourage my husband and children to participate as well. I put together a Holy Hour basket that has reading material and meditations for all ages so we are prepared ahead of time and aren't searching for materials. It also contains rosaries. Sometimes we go as a family and other times depending on schedules I take the children separately on different weeks. I thought that it would be hard for them to sit and be quiet but they love the silent time in the presence of Jesus.

Christina, Saskatchewan

What about YOU? We want to know your plans for the Year of the Eucharist as well as any family traditions that you celebrate throughout the year. Email us at livingmyfaith@irun.com.

BE READY FOR FEBRUARY



LOVE HABITS

St. Valentine's Day does not take place until February 14th, but why not take the whole month of February to create "love" habits within your family.

Leave heart shaped sticky notes in special places with the words "I Love You." Be creative. Notes can be placed inside brief cases, on the coffee maker, on pillows before bed or on bedroom doors during the day. Imagine coming home from school and the first thing your children see when they enter their room is that they have been thought of and prayed for during the day.

Special notes in lunch boxes/bags/school agendas saying good luck or I am praying for you during your exams today or basketball tryouts, drama, or any event that your child is nervous about.

A special love message left on your husband or wife's voicemail will brighten their day.

If you homeschool, a note tucked into a textbook on the page you have assigned will brighten a child's day and will encourage them to work joyfully.

Heart confetti works well to sprinkle in lunch boxes, on your table or in an envelope.

For older children be discrete and find ways to tell them they are loved and prayed for without embarrassing them, especially in front of their friends.

Encourage family members to leave notes for one another as well. Practicing concrete signs of love for each other throughout the month of February will create habits that

