

December 2009

St. Anthony of Padua
Parent Newsletter
Lisa Champagne
Parish Catechetical Leader
champagnelisa@myfairpoint.net
857-0492



PowerSource

Ask God:

1. To help your family keep your Christmas celebrations focused on Jesus.
2. To give your family members positive attitudes about trying new traditions.
3. To help you create strong bonds and lasting memories.



Parenting Insights

The editors of *Parents' Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children (Focus on the Family)* share these tips for incorporating new traditions.

- 1. Make them fun!** When your celebrations are filled with laughter, the real message behind them will be reinforced more positively in your family.
- 2. Use Christmas symbols.** Many symbols have Christian origins. For example, St. Nicholas was a shy, generous man who secretly did good deeds for the poor. Decorating with festive Christmas lights also has Christian roots.
- 3. Don't ban all secular traditions.** Take a balanced approach to your Christmas celebrations, for your children's sake. Then they'll be more open to receive the true reason for the season.

OpenTheBook

On the first Christmas, the angels announced Jesus' birth. As we celebrate Christmas, our worship and traditions also focus on our newborn Savior, the King of Kings.

Teachable Moments

1. **Make waiting fun.**

Patience is a difficult life skill to learn, especially during December. Harness children's wonder and anticipation by letting them explore their creativity. Keep red- and green-colored paper, as well as other craft supplies, readily available. Have kids make gift tags, wreaths, cards, and more.

2. **Deck the (stable) halls.**



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD**, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." **Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

What do traditions—and Christmas—mean to your children?

Discover their opinions and insights by asking these questions:

1. What are your favorite things to do around Christmastime, and why? Which do you plan to continue with your own children?
2. How do our traditions help make Christmas more special? How might some traditions interfere with our celebrations?
3. What traditions would you like our family to start or stop, and why? What traditions can kids in our family be in charge of?
4. How would you explain "Christmas" to someone who was unfamiliar with it?

Family Experience: Star-Studde

d FunBrighten up the dark winter nights by trying these joy-filled, Christ-based experiences with your family and friends.

ends:•1 **Follow the Star**—Hang a trail of stars throughout your house, and at each star, place a nativity-scene figure. Hang the last, largest star over a cake with three candles, and place baby Jesus by it. Then follow the stars. Stop at each one and talk about the role of that person (or animal). At the final star, light the three candles. Say, “These candles represent the star of Bethlehem that shone brightly over baby Jesus; Jesus, the light of the world, who was born into a dark night; and how God wants us to be a light for others and point them to Jesus. Sing “Happy Birthday” to Jesus and share the

cake.

•2 **Star Square**—This game, which is ideal for play with extended families, is a reminder of the wise men who followed the Christmas star to find Jesus. With masking tape, divide an 8x8-foot space into four squares. Tape a construction-paper star in one quadrant. Put one person in each square, and have everyone else stand in a circle around the quadrants. The “star” square starts play by tapping the ball into another square. Players tap the ball into another square whenever it enters theirs. Play continues until someone misses, and then that person steps out and a new player rotates in from the circle. Players rotate clockwise toward the star. Whenever a player steps into the star, he or she should share one thing about Jesus or Christ.

What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *The Princess and the Frog* (Dec. 11)

Genre: Animated fairy tale, comedy

Rating: G

Cast: Anika Noni Rose, Angela Bassett, Terrence Howard, Oprah Winfrey

Synopsis: Tiana, Disney's first African-American princess, lives in New Orleans during the Jazz Age. She meets Naveen, a prince who's been transformed into a frog by an evil magician. Naveen mistakes Tiana for a princess, and when they kiss, Tiana becomes a frog, too. They go on adventures to restore their humanity. (Caution: They seek direction from a voodoo priestess.)

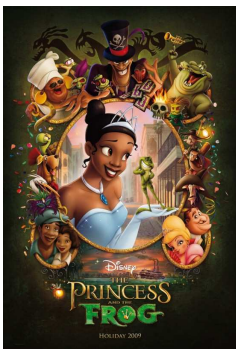
Discussion Questions: What kind of true or untrue assumptions do people often make about you? What can you tell (and not tell) just by looking at someone? Read 1 Samuel 16:7. What do you think God sees when he looks inside your heart?

What Music Is Releasing

Artist: Sara Groves

Album: *Fireflies and Songs*

Artist Info: Groves is a prolific writer of Christian folksongs that contain personal lyrics about faith and relationships. Her tours have benefited several Christian ministries.



Summary: Groves says *Fireflies and Songs* is a candid, confessional album. In the nostalgic "This House," Groves assures her 2-year-old daughter (and her listeners) that "the Lord withholds no good thing."

Discussion Questions: During your life, what are some of the biggest blessings that God has provided for you? How have some of those blessings been disguised at first? Read Psalm 84:11. How might God be using you to be a blessing for other people?

What Games Are Out



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- 0 More restaurants are trying to lure families with "kids eat free" meals. "Free is magic," says professor Barry Schwartz. "It will seduce people into eating out who shouldn't."
- 1 Preschoolers can have chronic depression, new research shows. Symptoms include persistent sadness (even when playing), trouble sleeping, irritability, and frequent tantrums.

Quick Stats

- 2 In this flailing economy, many pregnant women are rethinking adoption. At a Chicago agency, 30% more women are inquiring about placing a child for adoption than a year ago.



(USA Today)

- 3 The U.S. now has between 1.5 million and 2 million home-schooled students. That's a 75% increase since 1999.

(hsllda.org)

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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Jr. High /High School Shopping for Adopt a family						
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Family Christmas caroling followed by cookies and hot cocoa in hall Meet in hall 4pm						Children's Choir rehearsal 1pm Pageant rehearsal 2pm
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Decorating Church for Christmas 1pm				Christmas Eve Family Mass Children's Choir & pageant 4:00pm	<i>Merry Christmas!!</i>	
27	28	29	30	31		