

The Catholic Homeschool Family



Advent & Christmas Guide

Catholic Homeschool Community



from Paola

WELCOME...

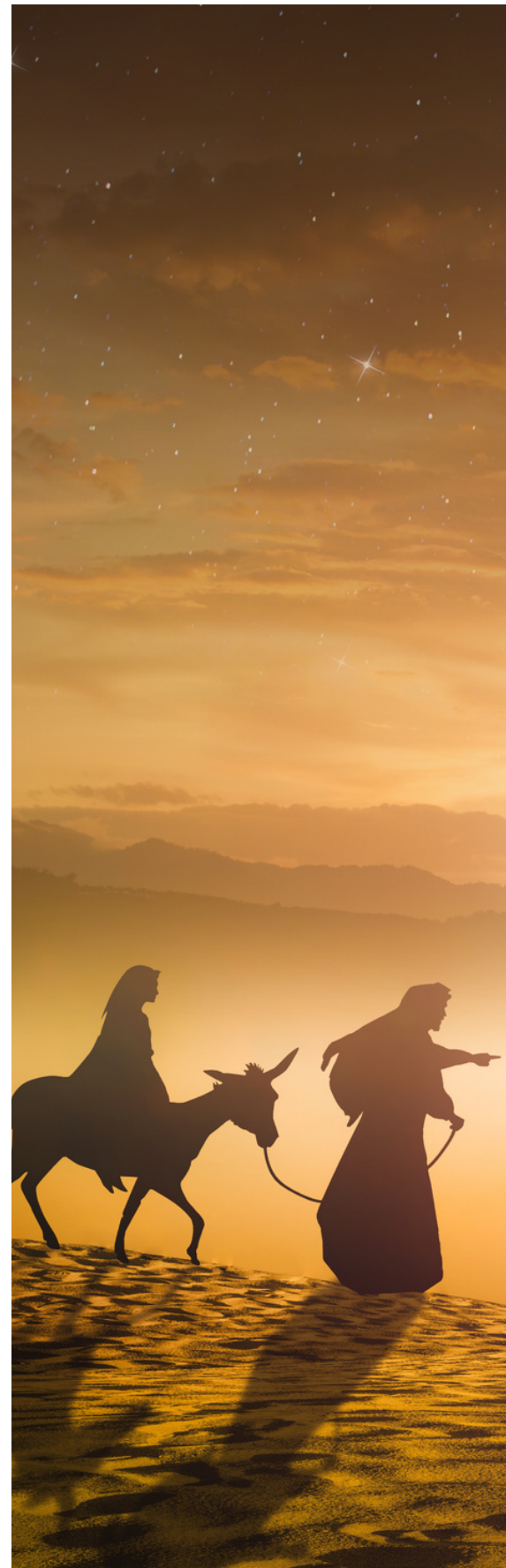
TO THE 2023 CATHOLIC
HOMESCHOOL FAMILY ADVENT
AND CHRISTMAS GUIDE.

I am thrilled to share with you this
EXCLUSIVE collection of Advent
and Christmas specials just for
your family!

Many of the following offerings are
from small, family businesses who
love to support you in your
homeschool life!

Please share this little gem
with family and friends!

Enjoy & Share





HOLY HEROES
Advent
ADVENTURE

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If your family is like ours, Advent is the most hectic time of the year.

With all the work you do to create that joyful Christmas Day, who has the time (or energy) to make Advent into a fruitful time of spiritual anticipation and preparation for your family?

Let the Holy Heroes family take yours on a fun and easy Advent Adventure! This FREE program is easy--all the work is DONE for you, they send you daily emails full of fun for your family!

Sign up for Advent Adventure for free daily resources to keep kids focused during this time of preparation! Check out our daily Jesse Tree ornament videos along with other printables, quizzes, recipes, and more interactive fun!



Helping You Bring the Joy of the Faith to Your Family





BLESSINGS OF ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

by The Davidson Family

Advent/Christmas 2023
By Davidson Family

Blessings are a beautiful way to celebrate the liturgical season. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Blessings consist of prayer, Scripture, and sometimes a special ritual sign" (1668). Blessings can be prayed by anyone who has been baptized and in our family, they are usually led by Dad.

Blessing of the Advent Wreath:

This blessing is said when you first put up the Advent Wreath at the beginning of the season. Then every week, you will say an additional prayer as you first light a new candle on the Advent Wreath. We like to bless the Advent Wreath on the evening before the First Sunday in Advent.

Blessing of a Nativity Scene

Setting up the Nativity Sets is a favorite past time at the Holy Heroes' home. We have several from all around the world (Mexico, Italy, and Africa) as well as other well-loved sets that we look forward to getting out each Christmas. You can make this family activity even more meaningful with the Blessing of a Nativity Scene. Especially for younger children, this is a great way to teach them about what the Nativity scene represents!

Blessing of the Christmas Tree

Finally, the biggest physical symbol of Christmas within the home is the Christmas Tree. For small children, setting up and decorating the tree is the epitome of the Christmas preparations! This year, after you bring the tree inside and decorate it, take time to gather as a family to bless this symbol of Christmas. Note that you are meant to pray this blessing prior to the first lighting of the Christmas Tree. This brings greater meaning to the Christmas Tree by illustrating that Jesus is the Light of the World and it is only through Him that we have light in our lives.

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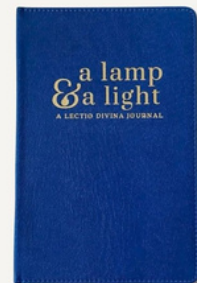
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Advent/Christmas 2023
By Olivia Spears

Maintaining peace of heart as a mother during Advent may, in fact, seem a Christmas miracle.

Lists, activities, shopping, cleaning, cooking, and decorating threaten to turn the bustle into hustle. We can be worn well before we sing "Joy to the World" at midnight Mass.

Of course, none of us set out to live Advent this way. On the contrary, we make resolutions and buy devotionals and really do desire to live with Our Lady and the unborn Jesus in a quiet Advent.

So how can we reconcile the desire we have to live peacefully and prayerfully during Advent with the (often joyful) duties and responsibilities we have as the heart of the home during the season?

I have two suggestions: one external and one internal.

First, the practical. When it comes to maintaining peace in our hearts, it is helpful to make plans beforehand that are based in reality. The end of the previous sentence is especially important.

Set aside an hour or so before Advent begins. Write down all your family traditions, outside commitments during Advent, feast days you want to celebrate, and any larger hosting or shopping days. Then, edit that list. Choose only the most important. Remind yourself of your reality: your kids ages, your school load, your housework necessities, and your general end-of-year need for a break.

“Heavenly Peace” During Advent By Olivia Spears

After you have narrowed down your list to a more manageable feast, add the items to your calendar. Start with the traditions or events that are tied to specific dates. Then, spread the remaining list items as evenly as possible throughout Advent. By incorporating and tackling a little bit at a time, it helps curb procrastination and overwhelm. Once I have this, I even make note of 1-2 things each week that I could let slide if needed. That way, if a child gets sick or we have unexpected guests, I know exactly what is most important to the family and what I can let go.

Know that the first list you made may one day be possible! There are seasons of life, and what may not be doable this year could be doable next year. Trust that your efforts, tailored and spread out, will be much more satisfactory to both you and the people in your home!

Second, the spiritual. As much as we steward our prayer time and the practical layout of Advent, stress will arise. We will become distracted. But we need not lose our peace indefinitely, telling ourselves that "perhaps next year will be peaceful."

This year can still be peaceful! Even if you must begin again each day!

Before Advent begins, choose a spiritual mental image for the season. Perhaps it is Our Lady, heavily pregnant, closing up the house before departing for Bethlehem. Maybe it is the stable with the newborn King where you can hear His slow breathing while He sleeps on her chest. Perhaps you're with the shepherds in the field, beholding the light of Heaven opened up.

Pray about it, and then choose one that particularly strikes your heart and holds your attention.

Then, throughout Advent, let that be the place you go to refocus. There may be noise and demands swirling around you, but you can retreat to the quiet, contemplative image in your soul.

When you're overwhelmed, place yourself in the scene you chose. When you feel pressure, lighten your mind by contemplating the heart of Christmas. When you get distracted, recall your mind to the image that moves your heart to prayer and adoration.

Dwell in this place with Jesus morning, noon, and night. Ask the Holy Spirit to continue to guide you to Himself through that image and your faithful recall and contemplation of it.

And watch how He brings you peace, no matter the circumstances.

[For more articles like this you can reach Olivia HERE: intothedeep.co](https://intothedeep.co)

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Reader A

by Linda Bromeier

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Advent/Christmas 2023!
By Smart Martha

It's time for Advent. I love this time of year, because for our family, it really is a time that we continually look for Christ. Our whole month is scheduled with this purpose in mind.(If only the rest of our year could be that focused.)

Sure, our culture is bombarding us with a materialistic message, but I have found that this just illustrates man's deeper desire for more. It's like the Augustine message that "our hearts are restless until they rest in Christ." Our culture desperately needs Christ and their hearts are searching. When our family sees this society's desire trying to be fulfilled with more and more "things," or the "perfect holiday meal" or the "beautifully decorated house," it can remind us of our own need for Christ. After all, haven't we all tried (and still do try) to fulfill our needs in other ways besides Christ? And we know that these never fulfill. A great shopping trip, a new car, a busy schedule, or even a party with friends satisfies for a while, but we soon are found wanting again.

The Society that we live in is the same way. Christmas is a time when perhaps people feel this desire more. So don't let the culture or society's desperate search to fulfill this need be a distraction to you. We can let it remind us of our own desires and our need for Christ to fulfill them. Remember: There but for the grace of God go I.

Eight Ways That Help Me to Keep Advent By Smart Martha

Keeping this in mind, however, I do try to minimize the hectic-holiday buying, partying, and decorating spree; and to have a more focused and meaningful Advent. I want to remember where my desire is fulfilled. I know that my family and I can get caught up in that holiday frenzy and lose everything that Advent can bring us. Here are some steps that our family takes every year during this time to achieve that:

1) Follow the Church and use Advent as a preparation and penitential time. It is not the birthday party; it is the preparation for the birthday party. Follow the guidelines and examples of the church. The color for the season is purple—which means a time of repentance. It is a little like Lent. The church doesn't ask us to fast and abstain during this time like we do in Lent, but we are to keep in mind that we are preparing for the beautiful celebration of Christ's coming. We should prepare our hearts.

Just like we don't play the games or eat cake before the birthday party, so we should show some restraint during Advent. As much as I am able, I try to postpone as many Christmas parties as I can during this time period. (Nearly impossible when it depends on others, but I control the ones I can control.) If we are going to see "Christmas Lights", we wait until during the 12 days of Christmas, (and they are not nearly as busy then!) We watch the Christmas specials, like Rudolph and Frosty, then. We eat our Christmas cookies and other great Christmas foods then. Have you noticed when your church puts out their Christmas decorations? Can you dare wait until a few days before Christmas to put out yours? Our new neighbors thought we were Jewish one year the weeks before Christmas because we had no Yuletide décor in our yard. In our Baptist -Southern neighborhood, I know they all just assume that we are just too busy to get those decorations out and procrastinate every year until just a few days before.

Unlike Lent, during Advent our family tends to really celebrate those given feast days as ways to prepare us for Christ's coming. We learn from these saints; we honor Mary. Some families may follow a more penitential/strict type of Advent. We control what we can control and try to use all the other Christmas activities as a means to prepare us for Christ's coming, like if the grandparents have to show up before Christmas to deliver their gifts—what a blessing to have such generous grandparents who love us!

Eight Ways That Help Me to Keep Advent By Smart Martha

2) Keep it simple! Sweetheart! You know it is the time of year when we have more activities, more programs, and more on our plate, despite our plans to try to reduce these Christmas activities. This means that we just need to try to simplify in other ways. Although I have a full calendar of Advent observances for us, I still simplify my schedule by postponing dentist appointments, making easier meals, suggesting that weekly or monthly meetings skip meeting in December, and foregoing any big time chores this month (like clean the carpet, clean out the attic, etc.).

3) Make a schedule, but know that everything is optional and interchangeable! .For me, if I don't schedule it, I won't do it. I find that if I schedule something simple everyday, it really helps our family to remember that it is Advent. The types of activities that I plan help us to remember what Advent is all about. Use the church calendar and your family Advent traditions in your schedule and add some new or other activities around these. I write these activities out on little pieces of paper and these make up our Advent Calendar. Everyday, we flip over a picture and pull out one of the papers from the corresponding pocket. (I use the same ones every year with a little bit of switching around and adding a couple of new ones.)

4) Plan a family confession night. And I don't mean that we are all going to confess to each other who left the sink on in the upstairs bathroom or who left the library book out on the patio to be rained upon. I mean find a place in your schedule when you all can go to confession together. Not everyone needs to see the priest for confession. That should be up to everyone's own discretion. But everyone needs to go to at least pray in the church. (If they don't need confession, perhaps they should pray for us who do.) Afterwards, plan something fun together—like going out for pizza.

5) Rely on your own traditions! If you want these events to happen more easily, then begin to make these happen year after year. Tradition cuts out the planning step all together. And if you store the plans and "props" of the tradition, that makes it even easier. Think about if you had never put up a Christmas tree, and you just started your first one this year. You'd put time into planning when, where, who and how. Then, you'd have to go find all the "props" to do it. You think it takes a while now when you do it, but compare that to if you've never done it before. If you would see my Advent schedule you'd say it looks full, but luckily for me, I've done most of these activities before. I know where my books are that I read on certain days. I know where my Advent wreath is. I know how to make a piñata. I know to save the straw from my fall decorations for my manger. I have my Jesse tree and ornaments ready to hang. Some big advice: Don't try to do it all your first year. Take your time. Add one thing new every year. Remember, your children need your presence, not your presents. Ac-

Eight Ways That Help Me to Keep Advent By Smart Martha

-ivities, crafts, baked goods, etc. can never substitute for your full presence to your children. I know I sometimes get so caught in the planning and carrying the activities out, that I forget the whole purpose behind them. Don't let that happen to you. They are a means to a relationship with your child, not a substitute for a relationship.

6) Use an Advent bin. It took me a few years of scrambling through all of the Christmas decorations and through the house looking for what I needed for that day, before trying to simply store all my the Advent stuff together in one bin. This is extremely helpful if you don't get your Christmas decorations out at the beginning of Advent. Shortly after Thanksgiving when I collect all of my fall decorations to store, I simply pull out my Advent bin, and I am ready to go. No more digging.

7) Get all of your Christmas shopping done before Advent begins. I know that this sounds crazy, but it will free you to concentrate on your other Advent activities. It will keep you out of the stores and malls. It will keep you off of the internet searching and searching for the best deals. It is probably too late for this Advent, but keep this in mind for the next year. Sure there are some great deals on Black Thursday and Friday, but I've found that I can get just as great of deals when I am keeping my eyes open in September and October. Spend your Thanksgiving weekend walking in the woods and playing football with the kids, not in the hectic mall. Throw all those shopping fliers away. Remember our children need presence, not presents. And if you don't find them enough presents for under the tree, well, they probably are better off without them.

8) Final Suggestion: Only buy very thoughtful presents and only buy when necessary. There are many reasons for reducing the amount of toys our kids have. Even adults need fewer toys. Do what you can to help reduce the gift buying, especially among adults. Be bold and direct if you have to, "We are trying to save up a little money this year, Sis. Let's not buy each other Christmas presents." I'm not saying we should be stingy. If you've got the means then spread the cash to your postman or babysitter or children's teachers, but don't just buy stuff to spread it around. Make cookies and other homemade goodies. We've all got too much stuff. Shopping before Advent helps us to take the time to be more thoughtful with our gifts as well as not getting caught up in the shopping frenzy that happens when we are in stores and looking through ads and buying gifts that no one really needs.

I hope you have found this advice helpful, and that it will be the beginning of a meaningful Advent and an even more beautiful Christmas. **For more Smart Martha tips and help with the Mary/Martha balance, please listen to my podcast: The Smart Martha Podcast.**

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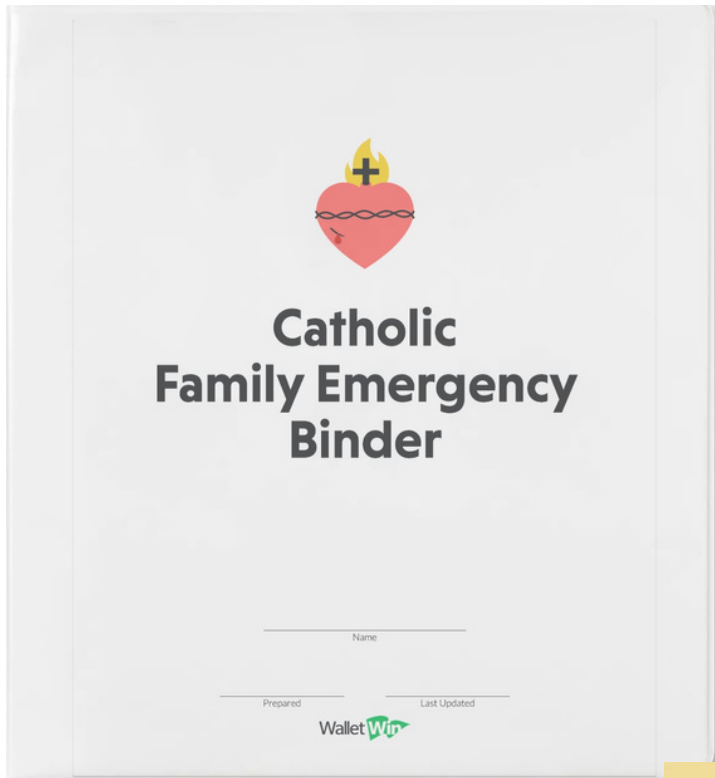
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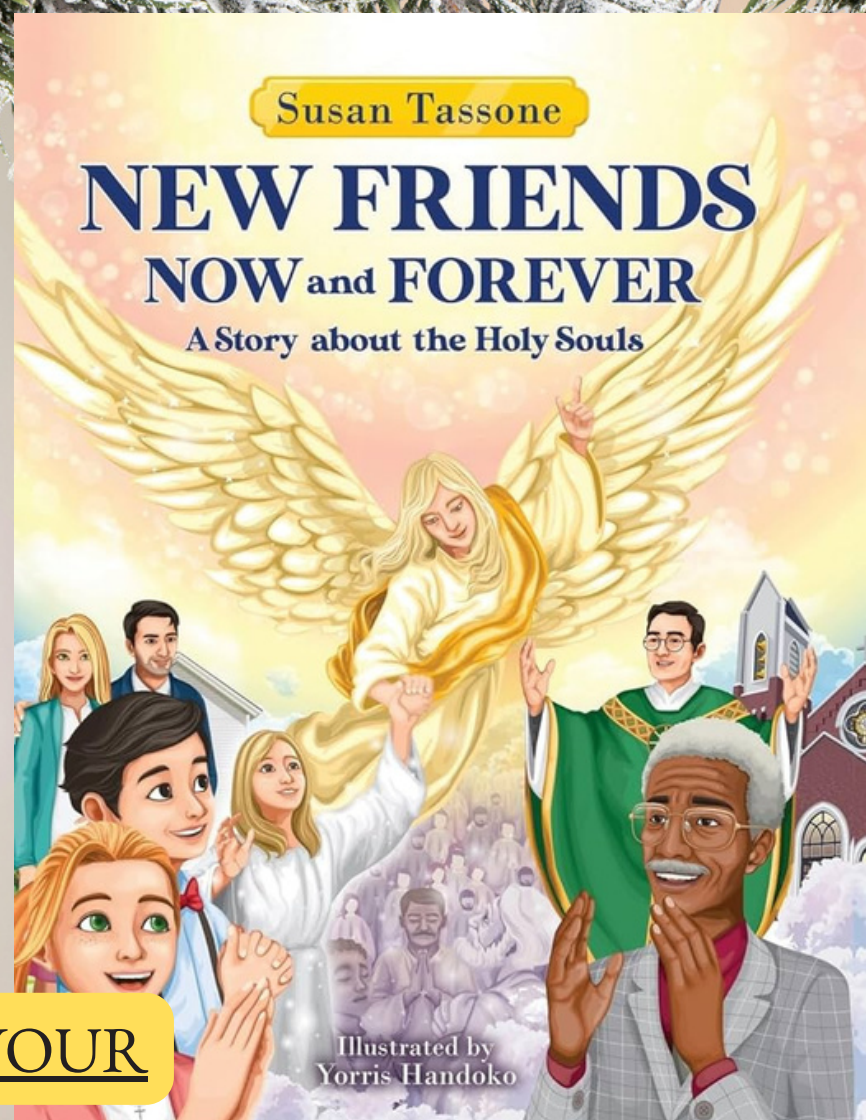


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Jesus taught using parables; he told stories. To reach children of all ages, acclaimed author Susan Tassone created *New Friends Now and Forever* as a delightful story of twins, Ben and Hope, who become “prayer-pals” with Mr. Ray, an elderly friend from their home parish.

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Together they form a beautiful friendship that goes way beyond the here and now, all the way to the Holy Souls in purgatory. It is so sweet in that they decide to pray for each other and help Mr. Ray to pray for his departed wife too!

Along the way, Hope and Ben learn all about the reality of purgatory and how it is special way that our dear Lord shows his love for us. In other words, Purgatory is the masterpiece of God’s mercy.

There really is nothing out there designed for children to engage their hearts and to teach them about this all important gift of our faith. By reading this book this year and every year, your children will learn that the power of their prayers and sacrifices helps the faithful departed reach heaven and that those souls will intercede for them, becoming their “forever friends.”



Advent/Christmas 2023!
By MODG Consultants

While we all want Advent to be a peaceful time of waiting for the coming of the Christ child, it is a challenge to fit in all the liturgical celebrations, preparations for Christmas, and homeschooling on top of everything else!

MODG consultants have decades of experience homeschooling and helping others to homeschool, so we asked for their ideas!

How do you schedule your homeschool time during the busy seasons of Advent and Christmas?

- We slow school down a little, especially for the little ones in the two weeks approaching break. With the older kids we do our best to keep moving forward so we don't have to play catch-up during Christmas break.
- I try and get through week 16 in most subjects by second week of December. I may continue math/phonics through Christmas break.
- In addition to our Christmas break, we take December 8th and January 6th off.

Tips For Homeschooling in Advent By MODG Consultants

What is your favorite Advent tradition to do with your kids?

- My kids of all ages have enjoyed the book Jotham's Journey. You read a little each day of Advent. It tells the story of a boy looking for his family at the time of Jesus' birth. Jotham ends up finding baby Jesus on the journey. It is very dramatic and keeps both boys and girls interested and begging for more.
- On December 6th we put our slippers in the hallway for St. Nicholas to leave chocolate coins. The children really love this tradition. We also make chicken enchiladas on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We love food!
- Years ago, my homeschool group had a Jesse Tree ornament exchange, where each family made tons of one ornament and then everyone ended up with a set. I still have those and they are a treasured memory of those people, as well as beautiful ornaments for the Advent season.
- This year I am planning on watching Season 2 of The Chosen with my family. We're waiting for my children to come home from college to watch it together. I can't recommend the show enough—it has been a real blessing for me and my family.
- We use the Advent Magnificat Companion daily, light the Advent wreath candles and pray the Christmas Novena, which begins on the feast of St. Andrew, Nov. 30.
- We would hang a Christmas panel with 24 ribbons and tie a family name or intention along with a candy cane or chocolate. Sometime during the day the child would untie the name or intention and say a prayer and eat the candy.
- We have begun the practice of ending each day at bedtime with the seasonal Marian Antiphon. At our parish, we began this year to sing the Marian Antiphon before Father processed out. It is so beautiful to hear a church full of people chanting these Marian prayers in Latin. Here is a link with YouTube videos if you want to give it a try.



Tips For Homeschooling in Advent By MODG Consultants

How do you incorporate academics into Advent activities and Christmas prep?

- In Fine Arts, we would listen to sacred music while making and decorating a manger (we used a shoe box) and cutting out strips of hay from card stock. Each child had his/her own color to use throughout the season. Throughout the Advent season, as each student completed good school work and demonstrated good behavior, they would be able to add the pieces of hay to the manger.
- We would have scavenger hunts for catechism questions (or math problems, or lines of poetry, etc.) written on the strips of hay. Each child would hunt for his/her own color strips. After answering the questions or problems correctly, the children could add them to the manger.
- We would incorporate math, reading, etc. while waiting for Christmas. For example, while baking cookies, I wrote recipes in small increments for my children's reading levels, put them in a sheet protector for them to read and check off each step. We would work on multiplication (doubling/tripling recipe), conversions, and more.
- We worked on budgeting by making grocery lists for a family Christmas party, going to the grocery store and following our list, comparing prices, etc. Younger children would be working on sequencing, following directions, etc. with his/her own list. We always read a spiritually enriching book in the evenings as a family. Sometimes we would read Catholic Advent devotionals.

Everyone at Mother of Divine Grace School wishes you a blessed and peaceful Advent season!





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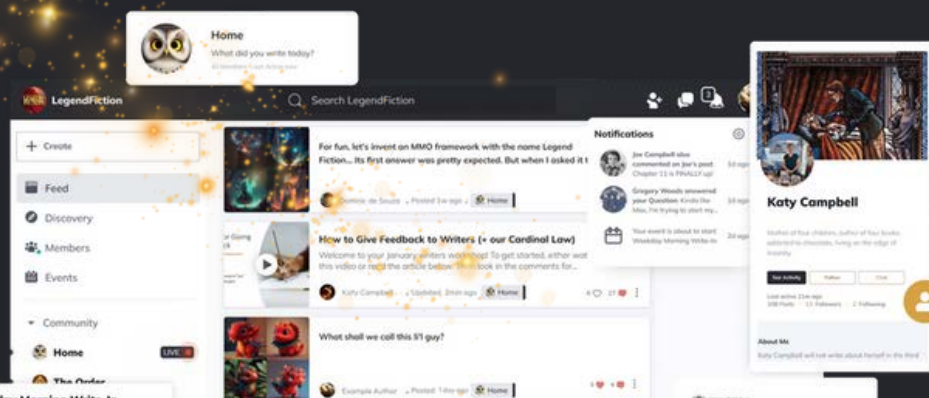
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There are many things in life we cannot control, but when it comes to preparing for the Advent and Christmas seasons, there is plenty we CAN anticipate and “control,” to a degree. After all, we know that Christmas is going to fall on December 25 every year, so there’s no reason it should sneak up on us!

Hello! We’re Dave and Debbie Cowden - authors of ***The Prayer Book for Tired Parents: Practical Ways to Grow in Love of God and Get Your Family to Heaven*** and fellow homeschooling parents. If you’re looking for ways to keep the peace and minimize stress this time of year, here are some tips:

- Do your shopping and card-writing early. The sooner these necessary tasks are finished, the sooner they’re off your mind. Write out your budget, purchase and wrap the gifts, address the Christmas cards (even if you plan to wait to send them). Procrastinating rarely ends well here.
- Organize and guard your schedule. There tend to be many events, activities, and parties this time of year. Set realistic expectations for what your family can handle, and recognize that it’s OK to decline invitations and forego festivities if it will be too much for your kids - or for you!
- Focus on the faith. It’s too easy for the liturgical season of Advent to get lost in the commercial and secular elements of the Christmas shopping season. Depending on your kids’ ages, make a point of incorporating a devotion into your day - the Advent wreath, Jesse Tree, daily Advent calendar, St. Andrew’s Christmas Anticipation Novena, and so on. Don’t try to do ALL of these - pick one or two and do them well.
- Give alms. There are countless ways to do this. Discuss as a family the ways you’ll serve your community, from donating directly to charitable organizations or missions to purchasing gifts from your parish’s “give-a-Christmas” tree. Give back in gratitude for all of God’s blessings in your life.
- REALLY make Jesus the “Reason for the Season.” How often is your family going to Daily Mass? Eucharistic Adoration? Praying the Rosary together? Adjust your schedule to allow your family to worship the Lord more together. As we joyfully await His coming, commit as a family to spending more time in the presence of Jesus, the King of Kings, the Savior of the World!

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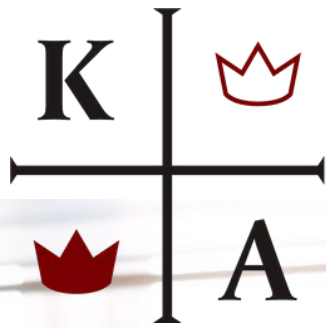
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Crafted with devotion and attention to detail, this planner seamlessly blends practicality with the richness of the Catholic faith. It encompasses a comprehensive Liturgical calendar, guiding you through the seasons, feasts, and celebrations of the Church.

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FREE ST. ANDREW CHRISTMAS NOVENA HOLY CARD



FREE HOLY CARDS

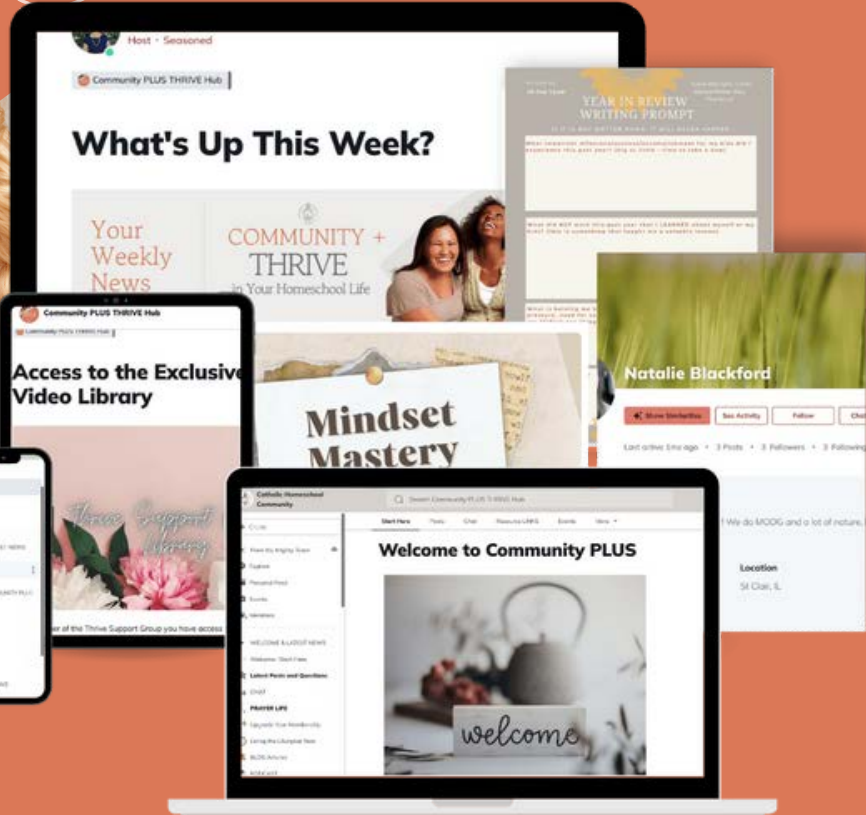
Christmas Anticipation
Prayer, also known as
the St. Andrew
Christmas Prayer, starts
November 30 the feast
of St. Andrew to
Christmas Eve,
December 24th

[**CLICK HERE**](#)



St. Andrew Christmas Novena

November 30 - December 24



COMMUNITY PLUS

membership

Your safe place to be transformed into confident parents as pray together, spend time together being honest and vulnerable with the challenges we face, and share our hearts for the Lord as we live the homeschool life!

FREE TRIAL

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Merry
CHRISTMAS

*Wishing your family a joy-filled
Advent and Christmas Season*

LOVE AND BLESSINGS
FROM ALL OF US AT
THE CATHOLIC HOMESCHOOL
COMMUNITY

