



**Don't Mess with Holiday Stress**  
Three simple ways to help your kids relax this season

Page 3

ADVENT 2009 • \$2.50

# Take Out<sup>®</sup>

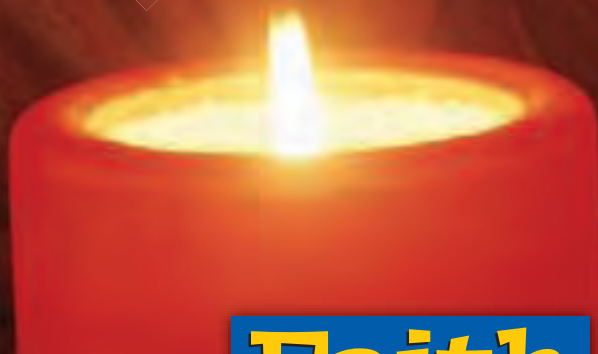
*Family Faith on the Go*



Immaculate Conception  
Page 8

## Wait, Watch and Wonder

Copyright 2009  
Our Sunday Visitor



◆ A Go-To  
Advent Guide  
Pages 4-5

**Faith  
in  
Action**

◆ My Peace I Give to You  
Page 6



◆ Advent(ure)!  
Page 7



# Advent Snapshots

## This Is Real Life

By Heidi Busse

Anyone who knows me will tell you that I'm crazy about Christmas. I love everything about the season, the snow and the shopping, the decorating and the music, the gift wrap and the greeting cards, the manger scene and the little kids with sticky fingers at Christmas morning Mass. It also helps that my birthday is Dec. 26 — oh, what a glorious time of year. So, I must confess that I understand the temptation to skip the season of Advent altogether and dive right into Christmas.

But think of all we would miss! Advent is a time of joyful anticipation of the birth of Christ. As with any celebration, the planning and preparation is half the fun. This special issue of *Take Out* is absolutely brimming with ideas and activities to help your family dive into Advent with both feet. On Pages 4-5 of this issue, we give you the essential Go-To Guide for celebrating the season of Advent. We hope you'll tear it out and hang it up in your kitchen as a way to help your family wait, watch and wonder throughout the month of December.

Of course, as Christians, we know that the real preparation of the season must take place in our hearts. This month's Faith in Action article explores the Church's call to peacemaking and how we can help our children foster peace in our homes, communities and throughout the world. After all, the one whom we are waiting for during these long nights of Advent shall be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Is 9:6, RSV).



## A Peace Pledge

I am a peacemaker.

I treat myself and others with respect.

I listen. I share.

I care for all of God's creation.

I am important to this very big world.

I know that "Peace begins with me."



Visit us online at [www.osv.com](http://www.osv.com)

At our website you can find many more Advent activities for the entire family. Click on the OSV4Me tab and find the link to Church seasons in the column on the left. Also, this month, we provide links to organizations that promote peace (see Page 6) and a fascinating website on St. Nicholas.

Advent 2009 • Volume 4, Number 4 • \$2.50

**Publisher:** Greg Erlandson  
**Editor:** Heidi Busse

**Design Director:** Tyler Ottinger  
**Production Manager:** Christopher Rice

**Editorial:** Beth McNamara, John Christensen, York Young, Amy Thomas, Tyler Ottinger, David Dziena

**Our Sunday Visitor, Publishing**

**Chairman of the Board:** Bishop John M. D'Arcy **President:** Greg Erlandson  
**Associate Publisher:** Msgr. Owen F. Campion

Copyright © 2009, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Editorial address: *Take Out*, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750. *Take Out* is published monthly September thru June. To order call 1-800-348-2440.

"A dark canvas is spread across the sky. Softly, a prayer rises. Perhaps a silence makes its way to heaven."

~ Rabbi David Wolpe

## Help your Kids with Holiday Stress

**SET EXPECTATIONS.** Talk to your kids about expectations for gifts and holiday activities, and try to avoid blowing events out of proportion. This will help your kids keep things in perspective, including what type of, and the number of, gifts they receive.



**STICK TO YOUR REGULAR ROUTINE.** In a season filled with Christmas concerts, parties and more, it is easy to over-schedule your family's time. As much as possible, keep your regular schedule the same as usual. If Sunday is a time for family dinner, say no to holiday gatherings during that time. If you have young children with an early bedtime, don't expect them to suddenly stay up until midnight there will be consequences! If you are traveling for the holidays, sticking to a regular meal schedule and bedtimes is essential.

**NOTICE SIGNS OF STRESS.** Younger children who are dealing with too much stress may throw tantrums, act out by hitting or biting, or refuse to share toys. Older children may retreat to their rooms or refuse to participate in family/school events. Cranky behavior is often a sign that you're doing too much. Stop! Take a break from the rush of the season and spend a quiet day (or evening) at home together.

Dear God,  
help us to  
care for one  
another and  
share what  
we have  
been given.  
Amen.

## A Sweet Saint

St. Nicholas Day is celebrated each year on Dec. 6 (his feast day). Tradition holds that kids who leave their shoes out on the hearth or by the door before they go to sleep on Dec. 5 will wake up with their shoes filled with candy or small treats, which means St. Nicholas has been there! Including St. Nicholas in your family Advent traditions is a great way to learn more about one of our greatest saints and emphasize giving over receiving.

Nicholas (died about 350) came from a wealthy family, with parents who always were generous to the poor. When they died, Nicholas gave their money away to help people in need. He became a priest and was soon made a bishop. He was known for caring for children in trouble, healing the sick, feeding the hungry and saving sailors from storms. He often performed secret acts of kindness, such as leaving coins in the shoes of those who left them out for him. After he died, stories of his goodness spread to many countries. He became known as Nicholas the Wonderworker.

Images: Jupiter Images, Shutterstock

# Wait, Watch and Wonder

By Julianne Will

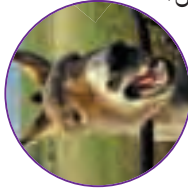
Everybody talks about finding the real meaning of Christmas. But there's already a special time set aside to do that: Advent. It's a time to wait for Jesus coming, to watch for signs of the Holy Spirit all around us, and to wonder at the miracle of God sending His son as a tiny baby. It's a time to prepare.

## Ways to Wait

And Mary said, My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. Luke 1:46-47



Sometimes the holidays bring long waits at restaurants, in stores just about everywhere. Remember, there is a blessing in waiting. Advent waiting is filled with excitement and energy we are waiting for a baby to be born! And while a baby's birth is always miraculous, the birth of this baby is the greatest miracle of all time.



The next time you are waiting in line with your kids, use the time to think about and describe the Nativity scene using your five senses. What did it sound like in the stable? What did it smell like? What did Baby Jesus see? Immerse yourselves in that beautiful night.

Make clear the connection between church and home by making an Advent wreath for your table. The Advent wreath, its circle often made of evergreens, symbolizes God's unending and unfading love for us. There are four candles—three purple and one pink. A purple candle is lit on the fourth Sunday prior to Christmas. Two purple candles are lit on the third Sunday prior to Christmas. The pink candle is lit on the second Sunday prior to Christmas—its bright color represents our growing joy. And all four candles are lit the Sunday before Christmas. It's a very visual way to mark the progression of Advent.

## Ways to Watch

There were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. Luke 2:8-9

## Cut and Paste Advent Wreath

Supplies you'll need:

- a paper plate
- a pencil
- scissors
- a bowl
- several sheets of green construction paper
- glue
- three purple candles
- one pink candle
- four candleholders
- matches

Place the bowl upside down in the center of the plate and trace around it. Cut the circle out of the middle of the plate to make a paper wreath. Trace your family members' hands onto green construction paper. Cut out each person's hands and glue them onto the wreath until it's covered. Place the four candles in candleholders and arrange them and the wreath on your table. Light the wreath at some point each day as a warm, peaceful reminder of Jesus' presence drawing near as you all say together, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Watch for signs of Jesus all around you each day. Watch for the opportunity to hold a door for the next person, or shovel a neighbor's walk, or help carry something heavy. Watch for the chance to offer a compliment, or to share a seat on the train, or to give away a treat. Each night at dinner, take turns describing the ways you saw Jesus in others.

Watch for ways to be Jesus to those around you each day. Watch for opportunities to say hi to someone who looks lonely, or to cheer up a crying child, or to clean up a mess that you didn't make. Offer these moments up to Jesus in silent prayer at dinner each night. Or write those moments on slips of paper and add them as cushion for Baby Jesus in the manger in your Nativity scene.



## Ways to Wonder

They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Matthew 2:10-11

Watch for the first star of the evening one night. Sit in silence as the sky turns darker and fills with stars. Think about the wonder and majesty of the one who is to be born in a manger.

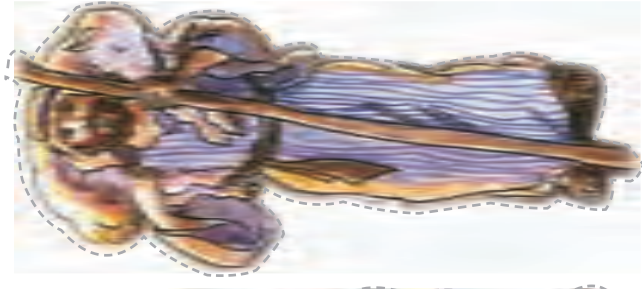
It's impossible to hear the Hallelujah Chorus without getting chills. Go see a performance (a CD can substitute if necessary) and wonder at the power and beauty of human voices raised in harmony to honor the Lord God omnipotent.

When our children were small, they would amaze us with the tiniest things a word spoken, a step taken or a simple smile. Advent is a time to recapture a bit of that wonder and awe. Take a walk or a drive and absorb the beauty of the Christmas lights in your city or neighborhood. Wonder at just how many there are! One house is illuminated, then another, and another, until we have enough light to welcome the Light of Lights, the King of Kings, the Wonder of Wonders Jesus Christ!

## Cut and Paste Nativity Scene

To create your own Nativity scene, cut these figures out and glue them on cardboard or poster board for a fun and simple Advent activity.

To read the Christmas story, visit our Advent pages at our website, or open your Bible to chapter 2 in the Gospel of Luke.





# Faith in Action

## Promote Peace this Advent

By Anne Neuberger

Christ said, **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you** (Jn 14:27).

Peace. That little word holds the key to a better world. Something so important should become part of who we are, of how we think, act, love. Yet, do we understand the many aspects of peace?

One important aspect of Catholic social teaching is the promotion of peace. Catholic teaching promotes peace as a positive, action-oriented concept. In the words of Pope John Paul II:

Peace is not just the absence of war. It involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements. There is a close relationship in Catholic teaching between peace and justice. Peace is the fruit of justice, and is dependent upon right order among human beings.

During the four weeks of Advent, take the time to explore peace for yourself and with your children.

### WEEK 1: BECOMING AWARE

Start by brainstorming all the peace phrases you can think of, such as, Nobel Peace Prize, peacemakers, the peace sign, inner peace, etc. For the rest of the week, each family member can look for something pertaining to peace to report to one another. Sources can be from anywhere (a news story, a T-shirt, a children's book, a section in a history textbook, or the words to a song).

### WEEK 2: CREATING DEFINITIONS

Peace is like water — touching our lives in so many ways, and connecting us to others around the world. This week, try to create a definition of peace as a family. Discuss:

- What are words that mean peace to you? (relaxed, no fighting, content, etc.)
- When do you feel peaceful?
- Why do wars start? What is needed for peace?

### WEEK 3: PEACEMAKERS EVERYWHERE

Have fun researching peacemakers in the Church and the world. St. Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of peace. He once summed up the mission of the community he founded. Brothers, he said, we have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way. The prayer attributed to him begins with the words, Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Check out the Pax Christi USA and Institute for Peace and Justice websites — [www.paxchristiusa.org](http://www.paxchristiusa.org) and [www.ipj-ppj.org](http://www.ipj-ppj.org), respectively — for more information about peacemaking within the Catholic Church.

### WEEK 4: BECOMING PEACEMAKERS

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. — Matthew 5:9

Christmas is close, the birthday of the greatest peacemaker of all! Follow Jesus and help make peace every day.

- Pray for peace in the world.
- Try not to talk negatively about others.
- Call a representative in Congress, urging them to work on issues that bring peace.
- Pray for someone who makes you angry.
- Welcome someone new to your community.



# Advent(ure)!

By Cory Busse

Each time my wife and I learned she was pregnant, those first, heady, nervous months seemed interminable. From the moment we knew we were expecting, we wanted to rush to a healthy, happy baby. But we couldn't. We had to live in the in-between the liminal space until the moment when a child would change our lives forever.

We often treat Advent the same way. Advent has become flyover territory in what should be an exciting and hopeful time. We skip over the in-between and barge headlong into Christmas. But as any parent will tell you, the lead up is nearly as sacred as the event itself. And to rush it is to miss some of the best parts.

Here are four ways your family can remember to treat Advent not as the run-up to Christmas, but as a deservedly sacred season.



## 1. Away in a Manger But Not Too Far Away

It's pretty easy to get carried away with Christmas decorations (just ask the editor of this publication, who also happens to be my wife). And, yes, stockings hung by the chimney are great. And the ornaments the kids made in school are priceless. But in our house the manger takes center stage. A gift from my parents several years ago, it serves as a constant reminder of the true meaning of Christmas. Even if your Baby Jesus is made of matchsticks, find a place of honor for it in your house. Talk about the true meaning of Christmas. Do it more than once.



## 2. Birth Narratives

Santa, the Grinch, Charlie Brown, Rudolph, Frosty and George Bailey get plenty of airtime during Advent. And their stories aren't half as important as Jesus'. This Advent, instead of plopping down in front of the edited-for-television version of "Elf," read (aloud and as a family) the story of Joseph and Mary's journey, Jesus' birth and the annunciation by the Angel Gabriel. Then, tell your children their own birth narratives, from the journey to the hospital to the first time you held them in your arms. One of ours goes a little like this: "On the way to the hospital, Mama had a contraction and nearly climbed out the sunroof of the car..."



## 3. Take a Hike

A long walk together as a family can help commemorate the last, literal leg of the journey from Advent to Christmas. For those in cold-weather states, this can be a challenge. Bundling the entire family can take longer than the actual walk itself. (Advice for families in warmer climates: maybe pack a light sweater and a bottle of water.) Mary and Joseph's trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem was about 100 miles. And while no one expects your family to do an iron-man walk with a donkey, walking and talking about the challenges of the original First Family can help us remember to be thankful for what we have.



## 4. Count it Down

An Advent calendar is a perfect way to make waiting for Jesus' birth a daily, active part of your Advent celebration. Turn it into a morning ritual with your family. Before heading out the door for work and school, open the small door for each day and remember that Jesus is coming. Many modern Advent calendars are little more than cardboard cut outs with pieces of chocolate inside. But your family's Advent calendar can be more unique (and less fattening); draw small pictures depicting your family's blessings and hang them on a piece of corkboard. The point is to stop each day in December to remind one another of the real reason for the season.

## Bringing the Sunday Gospels Home

Sister Janet Schaeffler, O.P.

### ■ Dec. 6 Second Sunday of Advent

**LUKE 3:1-6:** Today we meet Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist. John prepared the way for Jesus by inviting people to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. This then makes the path clear for Christ to come into their lives, and all people shall see the salvation of God."



*If you were John the Baptist in today's world, what would your message be?*

*If you met John the Baptist today, what advice would he give you for your life during these weeks of Advent?*

### ■ Dec. 13 Third Sunday of Advent

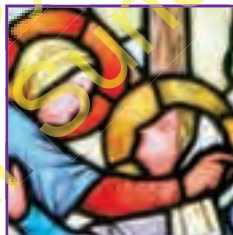
**LUKE 13:10-18:** Today's Gospel continues with John the Baptist as he tells the people what they need to do to be followers of Jesus. As they listen, they wonder if he is the Messiah who is to come. John quickly tells them that "one mightier than I is coming."

*Jesus told the crowds to share. During this season, when all the commercials tell us to buy more, how can we be more simple?*

*How can we share with others?*

### ■ Dec. 20 Fourth Sunday of Advent

**LUKE 1:39-45:** Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist. Elizabeth recognizes that Mary is blessed because she trusted in the words of God.



*How did Elizabeth greet Mary?*

*Like Mary, is there someone who needs your visit during this Advent/Christmas season?*

### ■ Dec. 27 Feast of the Holy Family

**LUKE 2:41-52:** After celebrating Passover at the Temple when Jesus was 12, Mary and Joseph start home, but Jesus remains behind with the religious teachers. When His parents discover Him missing, they search frantically for Him. Once found, Jesus explains His Father's work, but Mary and Joseph did not understand. Jesus returned to Nazareth with them, obedient to them, growing in wisdom and age and favor before God and man."

*What are some of the ways we can learn about God today?*

*Why did Jesus stay at the Temple?*

## ON THIS DAY WE CELEBRATE:

December

1

### Eat a Red Apple Day

Our custom of placing decorations on a tree derives in part from the medieval tradition of placing apples on branches during the holidays in remembrance of Adam's fall, which led to Christ's sacrifice. Have an apple, or apple pie, today.



December

7

### Letter Writing Day

St. Paul didn't write his epistles thinking they were going to be part of Sacred Scripture. He was simply writing letters to the churches he loved. Write a real letter (not e-mail) to someone on your card list today.



December

8

### Immaculate Conception

(holy day of obligation)

This feast celebrates Mary's birth; we believe that she was born without sin. Say the Hail Mary as your family dinner prayer tonight in honor of the mother of Jesus.

"The Immaculate Conception", by Bartolom Esteban Murillo

December

12

### Our Lady of Guadalupe/ National Poinsettia Day

The story goes that a poor young Mexican girl had no present for the Christ Child, so she picked some leaves. When she reached the church, the leaves had turned scarlet. Buy a poinsettia for your house today. Red is traditional, but pink and white are popular too.



December

13

### St. Lucy

Lucy is the patron saint of eyesight.

Have you had your family's vision checked recently? Now might be a good time to make an appointment.



December

24

### Christmas Eve

In the Polish tradition, Christmas Eve is called "Wigilia," which means vigil. This night was also said to be a fresh start for the coming New Year — "as goes Christmas Eve, so goes the year." Practice *Wigilia* in your home this year, by being extra kind and generous with family members on this night (and all through the year)!

