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Family Faith on the Go



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CATHOLIC LIFE



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This Is Real Life



HEIDI
BUSSE

I have an inspiring quote hanging in my parish office: "If nothing ever changed, there would be no butterflies." It reminds me that change is inevitable and, although uncomfortable, can lead us to new growth.

My family is in the middle of change at the moment, as we joyfully await the birth of our second baby. Even though we're thrilled with the new life that God is giving us, we are a little anxious about the transition of expanding our family by one.

The holidays often bring life's changes into sharp relief. This issue of Take Out is devoted to preparing for the holidays and celebrating all of God's good gifts with joy — even the gift of change. Jean Buell's article on traditions and transitions is a wonderful reflection on how to work through life's changes as a family.

This season is also a time of welcoming friends and family into our homes. For help with the stress of entertaining, we believe the ancient wisdom of St. Benedict applies today as ever.

Our hope is that after spending some time with this month's Take Out, you'll feel ready to celebrate the holiday season in the peace of Christ.

For more tips, practical information and tools for Catholic parents, visit us online at

www.osv.com

This month Take Out offers the Rule of Benedict (see Pages 4-5), two additional reflections on whether God answers our prayers (this page) and a reflection of thanksgiving by Abraham Lincoln, which proclaimed a national holiday focusing on thanks to God. To access Take Out web pages, click on the Periodicals button and scroll down to the Take Out tab.

Q: Does God Answer Our Prayers?

ANSWER

The first thing we must remember is that God is *present* when we pray. God yearns to be in a relationship with us just as we long to know God. Sometimes, simply to be heard is enough. Prayer is less about asking for things (a new bike, a boyfriend, the newest gadget) and more about listening. When we are with our closest friend, do we come to him or her with a laundry list of what we want to be done for us? No, we simply take the time of "being with" our friend to deepen our friendship and enjoy one another. Prayer is like this. It has been said that prayer isn't "for anything"; prayer convinces us more and more of how much God loves us totally and unconditionally.

God answers prayers in our hearts: If we are still and mindful, if we look within ourselves and listen well, we can know God's response. God does not often respond to prayers with a booming voice and a loud answer. Rather, God works through people. God acts in the world today, answering prayers, through us. He uses our hands. If we pray for the suffering, the sick, the poor, God will respond to them through our actions.



DesignPics

Christ the King

The feast of Christ the King is the final Sunday in the liturgical year (Nov. 25 this year; the first Sunday of Advent begins a new Church year). It is fitting that the Church celebrates Christ as king on this final Sunday of the year because Christ's central mission was to proclaim the presence of the reign of God here and now and forever.

We believe that Christ is king, not in an earthly sense but as the Anointed One (in Hebrew, Messiah), the savior of the world. White vestments are worn at Mass on this feast to symbolize Christ's victory over death and eternal life. The white garment we are given at baptism at the beginning of our lives and the white pall laid over the coffin at our time of death are reflections of our own victory over death in Christ. Alleluia, Alleluia!



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TURKEY CROSSING

Turkey Trivia
(Answers in bold)

1. When was the first American Thanksgiving celebration? **1492; 1621; 1776.** 2. What great American statesman lobbied to make the turkey the national symbol?

The Sacred Connection of Extended Family

When it comes to grandparents and grandkids, a truly memorable and blessed holiday season hinges on you, Mom and Dad. No one has to tell you that those



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extended family gatherings during the holidays can take some planning. But what you might not realize (or simply fail to notice in the crush of day-to-day parenting) is that for your youngsters, time spent with Grandma and Grandpa will become a part of “the good old days.” And, for your parents, time spent with their grandchildren truly are the golden days right now.

You make that possible. And what a blessing it is for both generations. A part of your God-given vocation as a son or daughter who is also a mother or father is to be the link between those two generations — the bond of love that connects the sacred history of your parent’s life with the incredible potential of your child’s. A shared meal, prayer, carol or family story can create a gift that will be enjoyed by your parents today and treasured by your children for many tomorrows to come.

To Be Thankful for Our Freedoms

Anne E. Neuberger

The holiday of Thanksgiving is a combination of secular and sacred. It is associated with football, parades and shopping, and is not on the Church’s liturgical calendar. Yet the word “thanksgiving” implies an awareness of God’s gifts to us. Some people attend church services that day and include ways they are thankful in their meal prayer before they feast.

While many cultures and countries observe a thanksgiving, it is a national holiday in the United States. In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called for a world founded on four essential human freedoms: the freedoms of speech and of religion, and the freedoms from want and fear. Roosevelt was addressing the U.S. Congress in this speech, but he repeatedly said he sought these freedoms “everywhere in the world.”

You can find a copy of Roosevelt’s speech at www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/4free.html.

“I Thank God Always for You”

(This family prayer can be prayed several times during November.)

Parent: I light this candle for our family, thanking God for every one of us, each with different gifts and ways of showing forth God.

Family member: A reading from the Book of Philemon:

“I thank God always for you, as I remember you in my prayers, for I keep hearing of your love and faith toward the Lord Jesus and all God’s people.”

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Silent Reflection

Who are the people in our lives for whom we are thankful?

Encourage the family to think of people they see all the time, people they see infrequently, relatives and friends, teachers, neighbors, co-workers, parish leaders, etc. (As people are mentioned, have one or more family members write the names down on a scroll or poster. If done more than once, continue adding names.)

Parent: For all those people who generously care about us,

All: Thank you, Lord.

Parent: For all those who have taught us, challenged us to be our best,

All: Thank you, Lord.

Parent: For those who have been with us through the hard times and celebrated during the happy times,

All: Thank you, Lord.

Parent: For those who have always been ready to help us and called us to help others,

All: Thank you, Lord.

Parent: So many special people you have given us, Loving God. Thank you! Continue to bless them as we appreciate them, as we thank them for their goodness. Amen.

(As a family Advent activity, write a family note to these people — or some of them — telling them of your gratitude.)

— Sister Janet Schaeffer, O.P.

Ben Franklin; Thomas Jefferson; James Madison. 3. About how many feathers does a mature turkey have? **100; 1,750; 3,500.** **4.** How fast can wild turkeys run? **5 mph; 25 mph; 50 mph.** **5.** Approximately what percentage of American families eat turkey on Thanksgiving? **50; 70; 90.** **6.** Which state produces the most turkeys annually? **Ohio; Texas; North Carolina.**

St. Benedict's Rule Leads to Hospitality

By Lorene Hanley Duquin

As Thanksgiving and Christmas approach, brace yourself for a barrage of advice from women's magazines on how to create the perfect holiday. There will be tips on shopping, decorating, cooking, baking, what to wear and how to entertain family members and friends. If you follow all that advice, by the time the holidays are over, you'll feel exhausted, and no matter how hard you tried, you may feel a little disappointed because things did not go as perfectly as the magazines promised.

It doesn't have to be that way.

There's an older and wiser expert on hospitality, whose advice contains no slick commercialism or pressure for perfection. His name is St. Benedict, and his Rule offers guidelines that eliminate stress and bring a sense of balance into your life. In fact, the prologue of Benedict's Rule says he proposes "nothing harsh, nothing burdensome."

Sound interesting?

The foundation for Benedict's concept of hospitality is a balanced life of prayer, work, rest and hospitality — with all things done in moderation. Prayer is not something to be squeezed into a spare moment here or there. Benedict suggests that prayer and work should take place at specific times throughout the day. Rest should also be built into the daily structure.

For example, as you prepare for the holidays, it would mean that you would structure your day so that baking, shopping or decorating would be part of an overall plan that would include time for rest and time for prayer along with your other responsibilities at home or at work.

Imagine how different your holiday preparations would be if you took regularly scheduled prayer breaks five or six times throughout your busy day. It wouldn't have to be long periods of prayer. Remember, Benedict stressed moderation in all things! Perhaps you could just stop at spec-



Work Prayer Play LIVING A

ified times throughout the day to say a Hail Mary, reflect on a Scripture passage, read a psalm, or simply ask God for help with whatever you are doing at that moment.

According to Benedict, when prayer, work and rest are in balance, your life will develop on a calming sense of order. No more angst over what has to be done. No more pressure to be perfect. No more feeling guilty about stopping for a moment to rest or to pray. No more craziness.

This calming sense of order in your life will become the foundation for a deeper sense of hospitality.

Benedict says real hospitality is to "Let everyone that comes be received as Christ." That means seeing past anything that you don't like about the person you are welcoming. It means letting go of resentments, irritations and past hurts. The key, according to Benedict, is to try to see Christ in each person who walks through your door.

How different would your holiday celebrations be if you took Benedict's advice rather than that of women's magazines? It may be the best gift you ever gave to yourself and to your family!

To read St. Benedict's Rule, visit www.osv.com, click on the Periodicals tab and scroll down to the Take Out link.



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THE SAINT OF GOOD SENSE

By Thomas J. Craughwell

For 1,500 years, the Rule of St. Benedict has been the touchstone for virtually every founder of a new religious order. The first person to adopt it was Benedict's twin sister, St. Scholastica, foundress of the Benedictine nuns.

The genius of the Rule is its balanced, sensible approach to growing in holiness. Based on his own experiences as the abbot of a monastery, Benedict laid out an orderly daily routine of prayer, study, manual labor and recreation. He insisted on healthy, satisfying meals and adequate hours of sleep. According to Benedict, if the body's basic needs are met, then it cannot distract the mind and soul from focusing completely on God.

A family is not a monastery, of course, but the Rule can offer laypeople advice on how to balance spiritual and temporal obligations. Read the Rule and discover for yourself Benedict's sane approach to sanctity.

BALANCED LIFE

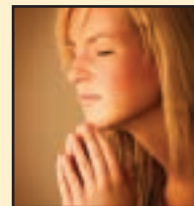
Inviting St. Benedict into Your Family

Here are some suggestions on how you can make St. Benedict's rule part of your family life:



WORK: St. Benedict reminds us that work is an important part of a balanced life. Talk to your children about the work that you do in your job or as a volunteer. Help them to understand that using your talents and abilities helps give meaning to your life. Explain to them that school is part of the work they do. It's also important to help children understand that maintaining a home requires work. Involve the entire family in the work of cooking, cleaning, laundry, home maintenance and repairs.

PRAYER: St. Benedict encourages us to set aside specific times throughout the day for prayer. Morning prayers, bedtime prayers and prayers before meals can be part of every family's daily routine. You might also want to set a time in the middle of the day — perhaps at noon or 3 p.m. — when everyone in the family promises to say a silent prayer for each other as a sign of family unity.



PLAY: St. Benedict recognizes the importance of rest and recreation. Make sure that bedtimes are set so that everyone is getting enough sleep. Be careful not to over-schedule your children with organized sports and activities. Try to set aside time throughout the week for family fun. Whether it is an outdoor activity or an indoor game, the time you spend playing together can restore the spirits of everyone in the family.

HOSPITALITY: St. Benedict urges us to welcome everyone as if they were Christ. Teach your children how to be hospitable to family members, friends and neighbors. Help them see that when we are kind to others, we are doing what God wants us to do. Make your home the kind of place where everyone feels welcome and wanted.



Traditions and Transitions

By Jean Buell
Preparing for and Working Through Change

One of my favorite holiday traditions is to look at my extended family's group photo from the year before ... and the year before ... and the year before. Sometimes we take the photo on Thanksgiving. Sometimes we take it on Christmas Day. And sometimes we take it on my son's birthday, which is halfway in between. The setting is usually my childhood home.

In all, I have more than 20 annual photos. I spread them on my kitchen table to see them all at once. Then I look for changes from year to year. Some changes bring a smile: One year someone is pregnant, and the next year Grandma is holding the baby. Some changes bring a giggle: Did we really wear our hair like that? And some changes bring a tear: Oh ... that's the year Papa died.

With my eyes, I see the external changes. That's easy. With my heart, I seek the internal changes. That's more difficult.

Change is inevitable, and the holidays can flash that fact right into our faces. By definition, traditions give us a sense of stability, but even that can be shattered when changes are

too big to absorb. We wonder how to mesh our internal reality with external expectations. And the holidays are notorious for expectations!

Are you and your family absorbing some big changes this year? Here are some suggestions on handling it.

FRAME THE CONTEXT: In your mind's eye, picture your family over the last few years. What changes have you experienced? Which ones bring smiles? Which ones bring tears? Keep a balanced perspective, even when one element overshadows the others. **CHILDREN AND CHANGE:** Look at old photo albums with your children and talk with them about all of the changes in the family through the years. Discuss how change can be good, and how some changes are difficult but are not to be feared.

FOCUS ON THE MOMENT: Stay open. The season's symbols, songs, scents and special foods can stir powerful memories and emotions. Ponder them; they reveal what is sacred. **CHILDREN AND CHANGE:** Remember, if you are absorbing changes, your children are, too. Set aside time everyday to listen to your kids' feeling about change. Older children may be pondering similar experiences. Younger children are waiting with wonder.

FOLLOW YOUR HEART: Be gentle with yourself. Seek support. Spend some time in silence, even if it's only five minutes each day. This will give you space to decide what you need. **CHILDREN AND CHANGE:** Collaborate with your family about your needs and expectations — and theirs. You might continue the same traditions. You might alter your expectations or the traditions themselves. Or you might develop some new ones.

FIND THE CONTENT: Keep polishing your lens of faith. You have known the Christmas songs and Scriptures for many years. Now, with a heart that's seeking, you might experience them differently. **CHILDREN AND CHANGE:** Children often reveal God's love in unexpected ways. Take a cue from your kids this holiday season and let the mystery unfold — God is with us!

This year, I will surely see big external changes: My childhood home will be out of the picture — forever. I don't know when or where we will gather for the holidays, let alone our group photo. But that's only part of a bigger picture. I will seek internal changes as well. With that practice, I will find true stability in our holiday traditions ... this year ... and next year ... and beyond. I invite you to do the same.



Joy to Your Family's World



Embrace the Holidays Together

By Heidi Busse

The holidays at the back end of each calendar year bring an extra level of stress to most couples. The extra financial burdens, the mile-long to-do list and the high expectations surrounding the holiday season are enough to push any couple to the limit.

Each year, beginning around mid-November and continuing through the first of January, my husband and I begin our intricate dance through the holidays. I shop, plan meals, make lists, decorate the house and try to make this Christmas more perfect than the last. My husband does his best to help in little ways, but mostly he just tries to stay out of the way. We avoid talking about money until after the season, and even then we gloss over our spending habits. And every year, it seems, there is less time for genuine memory making, less time for each other and less time for solitude and prayer.

Last year, my husband and I decided to try something new — to celebrate the holidays on our terms. We felt a bit selfish, sure, but we agreed that something had to change. We called our extended families and told them when we would be available on Thanksgiving Day (after going to Mass, watching the Macy's parade and lingering over coffee and cartoons). We laid out our plans for Christmas in the same fashion, telling our extended families how much we love them, but also how important it was to celebrate Christmas in our own stress-free way.

We stopped rushing. We bought pies instead of baking them. I only put up half of the loads and loads of Christmas decorations I own. We adjusted our schedule to give our toddler time to nap. We gave gift cards and charitable donations as gifts and spent more time conversing with those we love than shopping for them. We invited a few friends over for New Year's Eve (who also have young children) and feasted on homemade pizza and soft drinks. We had a wonderful, wonderful holiday season.



Here are some tried-and-true ways that can help you and your spouse break free from the harried, hurried holiday whirl:

■ SET A FAMILY GIFT-BUYING BUDGET.

Before the holiday season begins, talk with your spouse about what is realistic for your family to spend on gifts. Together set a holiday budget and try your best to stick to it.

■ REMIND ONE ANOTHER THAT IT IS OK TO SAY NO. Just because there is an invitation to a party, that does not mean you have to attend.

■ TALK OVER EXPECTATIONS. Over dinner this fall, have a conversation with your immediate family about one tradition that is important to each person and one event or ritual that each person would be willing to do without.

■ AS A COUPLE, REALIZE THAT THE HOLIDAYS WILL NOT BE PERFECT. The kids will probably throw a tantrum at some point, the turkey may be dry and the sweater you bought your sister-in-law may be too small. Remember, this is real life!

■ PRAY TOGETHER BEFORE GOING TO SLEEP EACH NIGHT. Even a short prayer asking God to be with those we love and thanking God for all of His blessings will help ease stress and surrender worry.

■ BE CREATIVE! If sending out dozens of Christmas cards is too stressful and time consuming, send friends and relatives New Year's greetings or take a family picture for St. Patrick's Day and send it out in March.

■ TRY AND GET SOME PHYSICAL EXERCISE AND EAT RIGHT. Nothing clears your head like getting outdoors and working off some stress.

■ CALL YOUR PARISH AND ASK ABOUT ANY COUPLES RETREATS IN YOUR AREA. Even a short retreat (one night) can bring the peace of Christ into our hearts: read, pray, reflect and remember why you fell in love in the first place.

November's Sunday Gospels

SISTER JANET SCHAEFFLER, O.P.

NOV. 4 — LUKE 19:1-10: JESUS MEETS ZACCHEAUS. When did somebody believe in your goodness or make you feel good about yourself because they believed in you? If Jesus came to your house, what would He say to you? What good things would He see about you? If He came to your home for dinner, how would you get ready?

NOV. 11 — LUKE 20:27-38: JESUS IS ASKED ABOUT THE RESURRECTION. What do you think heaven will be like? What does Jesus said that to God all people are alive. What do you think He meant? Jesus reminds us we are a people of hope. How can we bring a message of hope to someone this week?

NOV. 18 — LUKE 21:5-19: JESUS SPEAKS OF TROUBLES TO COME. Jesus doesn't want us to be afraid because He will always take care of us. What do you do when you're afraid? During this week's difficult times, was Jesus with you? Did other people help you? Is this one way Jesus was with you?

NOV. 25 — LUKE 23:35-43: JESUS' FINAL CONVERSATION ON THE CROSS. Jesus' great love reaches out even when He is dying. Who needs our love this week? Celebrate a prayer service of forgiveness as a family. Most people didn't recognize who Jesus was. Where do we recognize Jesus today?

NOVEMBER

CALENDAR

By Karen Whiting

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>4 Enjoy donuts and talking to friends after Mass.</p> 	<p>5 The board game Monopoly is released in 1935. Get a game going with your family.</p> 	<p>6 Play basketball. Shoot some hoops in your driveway or a neighborhood park.</p> 	<p>7 Let the men in the family cook tonight.</p> 	<p>8 National Parents as Teachers Day. Think about the most important lesson or value you would like to pass on to your children — honesty, integrity, a strong work ethic...</p> 	<p>9 Have a small parade. Read about David's parade of thanks in 2 Samuel 6:13-15.</p> 	<p>10 Make a memory. Pull out old photo albums and look through them as a family.</p> 
<p>11 Read to your kids 15 minutes each day (even older kids love hearing a favorite book read out loud).</p> 	<p>12 VETERAN'S DAY is observed. Write notes to military families thanking them for their many sacrifices.</p> 	<p>13 Have a race with buttons sitting on spoons.</p> 	<p>14 Clean Out the Refrigerator Day. Toss out the bad and be creative in using good leftovers.</p> 	<p>15 AMERICA RECYCLE DAY. Make sculptures from recyclable material.</p> 	<p>16 Kids: Make breakfast and serve your parents.</p> 	<p>17 Take a Hike Day. Walk around your neighborhood or hike at a nearby park.</p> 
<p>18 National Bible Week. Read a passage from the Psalms every night this week before dinner.</p> 	<p>19 Equal Opportunity Day. Talk with your kids about how we were all created in God's image and likeness and should be treated equally.</p> 	<p>20 Universal Children's Day. Go to www.gameskidsplay.net and click on international games. Play for children around the globe.</p> 	<p>21 What do you love about America? Make a list of American towns and cities that you would like to visit as a family.</p> 	<p>22 THANKSGIVING DAY. If your family is hosting a dinner, have the kids help set the table by making homemade name plates for guests.</p> 	<p>23 Christmas shopping begins. Avoid the malls and talk about ways to get back to the real meaning of Christmas this year.</p> 	<p>24 National American Indian Heritage Month. Appreciate the history and culture of American Indians at www.nps.gov/history/nr/feature/indian.</p> 
<p>25 CHRIST THE KING. The white vestments at Mass today symbolize Christ's victory over death.</p> 	<p>26 Bake a cake to give to a lonely neighbor.</p> 	<p>27 Pins and Needles Day. Talk with your kids about their fears and how to be calm when afraid.</p> 	<p>28 National French Toast Day. Enjoy French toast for breakfast or dinner.</p> 	<p>29 Advent starts Sunday. Set up an Advent wreath. The circle (wreath shape) is a sign of God's everlasting love.</p> 	<p>30 ST ANDREW THE APOSTLE, patron of Scotland. He was martyred on a diagonal cross, and that became the symbol used on the Scottish flag.</p> 	