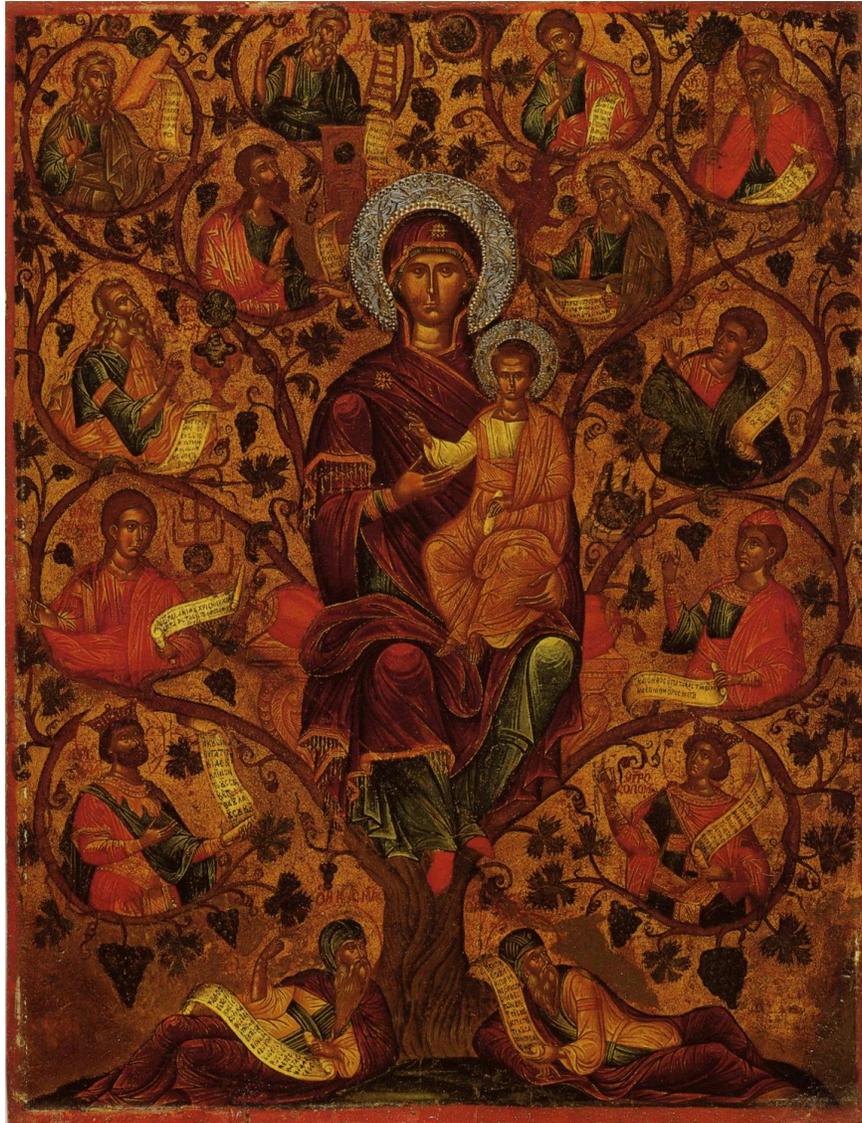


# The Jesse Tree

Our Family Guide  
Through the Season of Advent and Philipovka



by  
Lynne Drozdik Wardach

With much prayer and love,  
for  
My Little Disciples,

Anastasia

Paul

Andrew

Alexandra

&

Victoria

May this book help you  
to pass on this wonderful  
tradition to your own families,  
and may you always remember  
the joy and inspiration it has  
brought to ours during Philipovka.

Love,

-Mommy

# Daily Scripture Study

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Welcome Dear Family!

When I undertook the task of compiling material for this book, in no way did I ever envision it as a finished product. As any young Catholic mother, I strove constantly to weave the threads of the faith into the fabric of our daily lives wherever I was able. With the shopping, and baking, and wrapping, and visiting and every other secular activity that seemed to occupy the minds of my little disciples at Christmas time, it occurred to me that the preparation for the season seemed the perfect time to do just that, but how? I began my search and fell upon the concept of the Jesse Tree. This was quite a novel idea to me at the time and reading the Old Testament scripture stories was something my children enjoyed already. As the advent season approached that year, I made a small list of their favorite stories, pulled out my parents' old Christmas tree and set it up in the family room. We began with the creation of the world that year and my two oldest made little earths from some modeling clay, just as God would have done when He sculpted our world. We spoke of how God must have felt that day as He did so. "Do you think He ever mashed the world back up into a ball like that and started over, like you just did?" "Don't forget those polar ice caps! Where do polar bears live?" My son made all the planets and the stars too as he loved to look at them at night. So much to learn! We ran a loop of string through each one, and tagged it with the child's name and the year it was made. These precious creations are beloved still and grace our tree every year when these same little disciples, now adults themselves mind you, rush to the box to search for them. We talk now about those little lessons that went with each ornament, more deeply and practically now, of course. They remember all the little talking points I used when I was their primary teacher of life, illustrating God's point for my little disciples. It was my goal at the time that they not forget any of them, so I wrote them all down at night after they went to sleep. This, dear parents...THIS is why I worked so hard compile it all and share this advent adventure with you. At that time, my own mother looked me in the eye and tearfully and somewhat prophetically told me that THIS was the happiest time of my life. This was the busiest, craziest, messiest, most emotional time with five small children all clamoring for my attention, but it was wonderful! She was so very right. This activity was more to my family than just catechesis; it took those teaching points and attached precious memories that hopefully will live on in them when God entrusts them with their very own little disciples. Perhaps they will remember me too! Now, to speak practically, it took me over fifteen years to write the material in this book. You may notice that there are 40 lessons. We are a Byzantine rite Catholic family, so for us the pre-Christmas preparatory season begins on November 15. It is called Philipovka, or St. Philip's fast, because it begins the day after the feast of St. Philip and lasts for 40 days until Christmas. We realize this is much more material than the average Christian family might use in their own home as they celebrate Advent, but bear in mind that you need not use it every day to be practical. Some families may choose to do the even days one year, and the odd days the next. Some may do one per week, skipping around the lessons as they like and do more over the next several years. In my own family, we did this, and found that as the children grew, it became more practical to review the story and the lesson and then let them search for past ornaments, now keepsakes, that they had made to adorn the tree. It may also be the case that the tree itself may be difficult to display due to space and size. A friend of mine has solved this dilemma by copying and laminating the icon that accompanies each lesson, and crafting that into a flat ornament to tack to a wall in her kitchen, in the form of a tree. Each family will come to use this book as it suits them best. This book is intended to help each family develop a greater understanding of salvation history over the span of many years. The ways in which each family will use this material will also evolve over time and grow and change as the little disciples in the family grow and change. Use this in whatever way works best for you! I hope that it becomes a beloved tradition in your domestic church and that it brings your family as much joy as it has brought to mine.

God bless!

# How to Use This Text

Each day of the Philipovka Fast is dedicated to an event in salvation history.

## **Step 1: Read the account from Scripture as a family.**

After so many years of looking up these passages and finding that there were many verses in each bible story that my children just did not understand, because they were either too difficult or of too mature a nature for them to comprehend or were just not pertinent to the story, I began to type out the edited versions you see in the book each day. These accounts are directly taken from Holy Scripture, but many verses or even whole chapters are left out so that the children may follow a coherent storyline.

## **Step 2: Read the Lesson to the Children**

These “lessons” are addressed specifically to the children as they are compiled from countless cherished conversations that I’ve had with my own little disciples over the years. After reading the scriptures we would talk about the reason that God had inspired the Old Testament writers to put these stories on paper for us to read centuries later and apply to our own lives today. Many of these conversations became inspired moments for our family, and it was my wish that we never forget them, so when they had all gone to sleep each night, I began to write them down. I hoped then that my disciples would share them with their own families someday, and now I share them with you!

## **Step 3: Make a Commemorative Ornament:**

Each story is accompanied by a craft that will reinforce the scripture story of the day. The materials needed for these projects are usually household craft items that most families with young children will probably have on hand anyway. Feel free to tailor these craft ideas to suit the needs and desires of your own little disciples and let them make them as they will! They will surely become treasures! One thing that I wish I had done differently is that I would have used a sturdier medium than paper for many of the crafts, such as felt, since all our little paper ornaments are beginning to wear out a bit by now. Do be sure to tag them with each little artist’s name and the year it was made in order to enjoy them for years to come.

## November 15: Introduction of the Jesse Tree

**1 Sam 16: 1-13**

1 Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons."

2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'"

3 "You shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you."

4 So Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to Bethlehem and the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, "Do you come in peace?"

5 He said, "In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

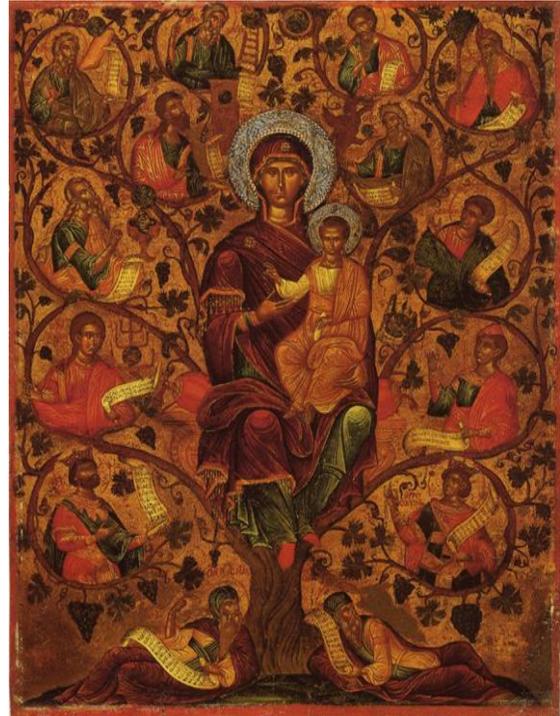
6 When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD'S anointed is before Him."

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either."

9 Next Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either."

10 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."



11 And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the children?" And he said, " There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here."

12 So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance and the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he."

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

### **Isaiah 11:1-10**

- 1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,  
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
- 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,  
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The spirit of counsel and strength,  
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
- 3 And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,  
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,  
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;
- 4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor,  
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;  
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,  
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.
- 5 Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,  
And faithfulness the belt about His waist.
- 6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,  
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,  
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;  
And a little boy will lead them.
- 7 Also the cow and the bear will graze,  
Their young will lie down together,  
And the lion will eat straw like the ox.
- 8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,  
And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.
- 9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,  
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
As the waters cover the sea.
- 10 Then in that day  
The nations will resort to the root of Jesse,  
Who will stand as a signal for the peoples;  
And His resting place will be glorious.

## **Matthew 1: 1-17**

1 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.

3 Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram.

4 Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon.

5 Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse.

6 Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah.

7 Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa.

8 Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah.

9 Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah.

10 Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah.

11 Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

12 After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel.

13 Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor.

14 Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud.

15 Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob.

16 Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

**Symbol: The tree itself**

How many generations was it from Abraham till David?...14. How many from David till the deportation to Babylon?...14. How many generations from then till the Messiah came to them? 14. Fourteen, Fourteen, FOURTEEN!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Matthew seems to scream that to us, doesn't he? Why? Did you realize that in the Hebrew written language, each letter of the alphabet corresponds to a number? Here's how it goes:

Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Value x 1	א Alef	ב Bet	ג Gimei	ד Dalet	ה He	ו Vav	ז Zayen	ח Het	ט Tet
Value x 10	י Yod	כ Kaf	ל Lamed	מ Mem	נ Nun	ס Samekh	ע Ayin	פ Pe	צ Tzadi
Value x 100	ק Qof	ר Resh	ש Shin	ת Tav					

Notice the letter Dalet. It makes the "D" sound and has the value "4". The letter Vav makes the "V" sound and has the value 6. The Hebrew language doesn't have vowels as we do in English, they are not written, so if someone wrote the name David, he would write DVD. Dalet, Vav, Dalet. What numbers do these letters represent? 4, 6, 4. Did you notice that 4+6+4=14? WOW! When Matthew pointed out the 14 generations three times, he was pointing to the fact that even in His ancestry Christ was proving to us that He was the promised son of DVD...I mean, David, who would redeem Israel! He truly thinks of everything! God proved to us in His orchestration of Christ's family how He controls our coming and going; our very being is planned by Him. Each and every human being is crafted by God

over generations to become the unique individual that he is, in the time that was chosen by God, just for him! How special we all must be!

Assemble the tree today and discuss how the Lord had chosen David from among the sons of Jesse to be the ancestor of the Lord Jesus. Discuss how the Lord has chosen each of us from among all the other inhabitants of the Earth to complete the special mission that each of us has been chosen to do. No two people are alike; each is a priceless and precious creation, crafted

by the Master for a specific purpose and place in the Kingdom. What is your place? Well right where you are, of course. He not only makes the plan, but gives us each the means to fulfill it. What is your mission? To know Him, love Him and serve Him. Yes, it truly IS that simple. In each and every moment of the day, God gives us opportunity to know Him, show our love for Him by loving those He loves, and serve Him by serving those He loves. When we do this, we fulfill our purpose and He can work great miracles through us! Yes, He can! All we need to do is know it to be so, accept His will, and *desire* to bring it to completion with His help. He takes care of the rest! So be at peace, little ones. Your mission will be made known to you as you go, day by day, moment by moment. Just stay close enough to Him that you can listen to the instructions in peace. Pray often and ask for the grace to fulfill your tasks willingly and perfectly. He does not like to leave His precious creations all alone and unprotected. God will always help you.

### The making of a Family Icon

Each member of our family has their own specific patron saint. This is a saint whose name we were given at our baptism, or have chosen as our special heavenly friend. To construct a family icon, we have collected prints of each of our family patrons and have placed them on a craft board. This can be as elaborate or simple as you desire, as long as you achieve the goal of educating your children about the role of their patron saints, and show them how the structure of your family was important in making them the unique individuals they are. Let them see the role God has played in the construction of your family, just as He constructed the family of Christ.



### *Prayer for Healing the Family Tree*

*Heavenly Father, I come before You as Your child, in great need of Your help. I have physical health needs, emotional needs, spiritual needs, and interpersonal needs. Many of my problems have been caused by my own failures, neglect and sinfulness, for which I humbly beg Your forgiveness, Lord. But I also ask You to forgive the sins of my ancestors whose failures have left their effects on me in the form of unwanted tendencies, behavior patterns and defects in body, mind and spirit. Heal me, Lord, of all these disorders.*

*With Your help I sincerely forgive everyone, especially living or dead members of my family tree, who have directly offended me or my loved ones in any way, or those whose sins have resulted in our present sufferings and disorders. In the name of Your divine Son Jesus, and in the power of His Holy Spirit, I ask You, Father, to deliver me and my entire family tree from the influence of the evil one. Free all living and dead members of my family tree, including those in adoptive relationships, and those in extended family relationships, from every contaminating form of bondage. By Your loving concern for us, heavenly Father, and by the shed blood of your Precious Son Jesus, I beg You to extend Your blessing to me and all my living and deceased relatives. Heal every negative effect transmitted through all past generations, and prevent such negative effects in future generations of my family tree.*

*I symbolically place the Cross of Jesus over the head of each person in my family tree, and between each generation; I ask You to let the cleansing blood of Jesus purify the blood lines in my family lineage. Set Your protective angels to encamp around us, and permit Archangel Raphael, the patron of healing, to administer Your divine healing power to all of us, even in areas of genetic disability. Give special power to our family members' guardian angels to heal, protect, guide and encourage each of us in all our needs. Let Your healing power be released at this very moment and let it continue as long as Your sovereignty permits.*

*In our family tree, Lord, replace all bondage with a holy bonding in family love. And let there be an ever deeper bonding with You, Lord, by the Holy Spirit, to Your Son Jesus. Let the family of the Holy Trinity pervade our family with its tender, warm, loving presence, so that our family may recognize and manifest that love in all our relationships. All of our unknown needs we include with this petition that we pray in Jesus precious Name.*

*Amen.*

## November 16: The Creation and Fall of the Angels

**Rev.12: 7-17**

**7** And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war,

**8** and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

**9** And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.



**2 Peter 2:4**

**4** For (if) God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

**Isaiah 14:12-15**

**12** "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning? How art thou cut down to the ground, who didst weaken the nations!

**13** For thou hast said in thine heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.

**14** I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.'

**15** Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

**Symbol: A string of lights, snowflakes, angels**

As you add a string or two of lights to your Jesse tree, discuss how the angels are beings of light. There are as many as the stars in the sky, and each, like snowflakes, is unique. Remind the children how the good angels rushed to console God the Father after those who defected had been cast down.

When I was a little girl, my younger brother went home to live with Jesus one day. Although he had been sick from birth, on the day he left us, we were surprised and unprepared for the loss. The next morning, my sisters and I woke to find our mother grief-stricken and we ran to her to console her and remind her that she had not lost everyone. But we knew too well that none of us could replace that one who was lost, we could only try to fill the hole in her heart with our love and let her know that we were still there with her. This must be something like the

sadness that God must have felt at the loss of His precious angels on that sad but fateful day. He had created each and every one of them, knew them and loved them, and intended them to be with Him in heaven forever. They deserted Him. At least my family had the comfort of knowing that we would joyously meet my brother again someday, but the Heavenly Father's loss would be eternal. We must rush to console Him every time we, or those we observe in the course of our day, have chosen to disappoint the Father by choosing sinful behavior.

### **Make Paper Snowflakes**

I love to contemplate the angels during an especially beautiful snowfall. I think of how each



snowflake is crafted by God and no two are exactly alike. I think of the vast number of snowflakes that fall and how it must resemble what it looked like the day the disobedient angels fell from heaven. Your own guardian angel was there that day. He saw the whole thing. Be grateful to him that he remained to defend and console God. Tell him in prayer how proud of him you are and how happy you are that he remained faithful to take such good care of you! To remember this, let's make some paper snowflakes by folding and cutting some white paper and hang them on the Jesse tree today.

### **Make a Natural Angel**

Collect a pinecone, two milkweed pods, an acorn, a chenille pipe cleaner, and a golf tee. Using a hot glue gun, arrange the angel as follows. The pinecone becomes the body; the acorn, the head. The milkweed pods are glued to the back as wings. Wrap the chenille wire around the pinecone to form arms and entwine them around the golf tee as if he were holding a trumpet. Last but not least, spray paint the whole thing gold and using gold thread add a loop for hanging.

From the Byzantine Liturgy

O leaders of the heavenly armies, although we are always unworthy, we beseech you that with your prayers you may encircle us with the protection of the wings of your angelic glory. Watch over us as we bow low and earnestly cry out to you: Deliver us from trouble, O princes of the heavenly armies.

THE CHAPLET OF ST. MICHAEL

V. O God, come to my assistance.      R. O Lord, make haste to help me. [Glory Be on the medal].

I. Salutation ----- 1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys: in honor of the SERAPHIM.

[Said on the first large bead and three small beads.]

By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Seraphim, may the Lord make us worthy to burn with the fire of perfect charity. Amen.

II. Salutation ----- 1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys: in honor of the CHERUBIM.

By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Cherubim, may the Lord grant us grace to leave the ways of wickedness and run in the paths of Christian perfection. Amen.

III. Salutation ----- 1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys: in honor of the THRONES.

By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Thrones, may the Lord infuse into our hearts a true and sincere spirit of humility. Amen.

IV. Salutation ----- 1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys: in honor of the DOMINIONS.

By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir Dominions, may the Lord give us grace to govern our senses and subdue our unruly passions. Amen.

V. Salutation ----- 1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys: in honor of the POWERS.

By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir Powers, may the Lord protect our souls against the snares and temptations of the devil. Amen.

VI. Salutation ----- 1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys: in honor of the VIRTUES.

By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Virtues, may the Lord preserve us from evil, and not allow us to fall into temptation. Amen.

VII. Salutation ----- 1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys: in honor of the PRINCIPALITIES.

By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Principalities, may God fill our souls with a true spirit of obedience. Amen.

VIII. Salutation ----- 1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys: in honor of the ARCHANGELS.

By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Archangels, may the Lord give us perseverance and Faith in all good works in order that we may gain the glory of Heaven. Amen.

IX. Salutation ----- 1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys: in honor of the ANGELS.

By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Angels, may the Lord grant us to be protected by them in this mortal life and conducted hereafter to the eternal glory. Amen.

On the four large beads nearest the medal:

- 1 Our Father in honor of St. Michael.
- 1 Our Father in honor of St. Gabriel.
- 1 Our Father in honor of St. Raphael.
- 1 Our Father in honor of your Guardian Angel.

*Invocation*

O glorious Prince St. Michael, Leader and Commander of the Heavenly Host, Guardian of souls, Vanquisher of rebel spirits, Servant in the house of the Divine King, and our glorious Guide, thou art brilliant in holiness and power.

Deliver us from all evil, for we turn to thee with confidence and enable us by thy gracious protection to serve God more faithfully everyday.

V. Pray for us O glorious St. Michael, Prince of the Church of Jesus Christ.

R. That we may be made worthy of His promises.

*Let Us Pray.*

Almighty and everlasting God, since in Thy infinite goodness and mercy Thou desireth the salvation of all men, Thou hast appointed the most glorious Archangel, St. Michael Prince of Thy Church. Make us worthy, we beg of Thee to be delivered by his powerful protection from all our enemies, that we may not be overcome by them at the hour of death, but that we may be conducted by St. Michael into the holy presence of Thy Divine Majesty. This, we beg through the merits of Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

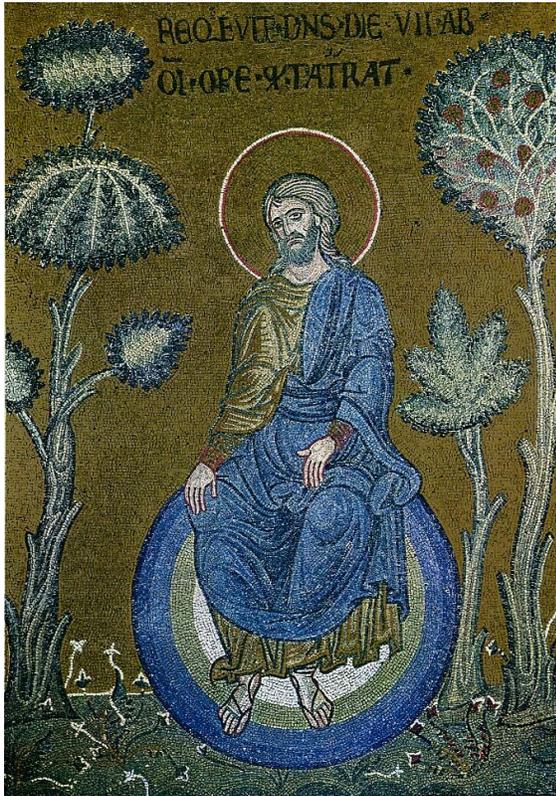
Prayer to St. Michael, the Archangel  
[Promulgated by Pope Leo XIII]

Short Version:

St. Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and the other evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

# November 17: Creation of the Earth

Genesis 1:1-31



1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was moving over the surface of the waters.

3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

5 God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

6 Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."

7 God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the

waters which were above the expanse; and it was so.

8 God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

9 Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.

10 God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good.

11 Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so.

12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.

13 There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

14 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years;

15 and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so.

16 God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also.

17 God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,

18 and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.

19 There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

20 Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens."

21 God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

23 There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

24 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so.

25 God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

29 Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so.

31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

**Symbol: clay figures of Earth, animals, etc.**

What a perfect place God made! He made all that exists not in one day, but slowly and perfectly, over time as an example to us that we must be patient in our tasks too, going one perfect step at a time until it is all just right. We must not get discouraged that we can't learn all our letter sounds today, or read a chapter book like our older brothers and sisters yet. We need to go step by step as God did when He made the world, and make sure each step gets our very best effort. Someday we will finish our task and see that it is good. God made plants with seeds for their own propagation, and for our food. He made animals, scripture plainly tells us, not for food, but to eat plants as well. You see, in perfect paradise, as God made it to be, there is no need for violence. All is perfect and at peace. God tells man and woman to be fruitful, fill the earth and take care of it. That is why we have our families, and why we accept all life as God has created it to be. We must be responsible to each other for the care of all that God has created. You see, birds and fish and animals, air and water and plants, are not meant take care of themselves. They exist for the service of man. God made it that way. When we act responsibly and do not waste or destroy that which God has made, we are following the directive that He gave to the first man and woman, to rule over the plants and animals of the earth, and this makes God happy.



### Make Clay figures of Creation

After reading this account in Genesis, it is easy to picture God the Father molding the universe as if He were an artist with a lump of clay in His hands. My children have enjoyed using modeling clay to mold and shape their own little "Earths" to hang upon the Jesse tree. Don't forget the blue oceans, the green continents and the white polar ice caps. Using a needle it is possible, while the clay is still soft, to run a loop of thread or yarn through as a hook. Your little artists may want to make some clay figures of the animals and plants that God made, or an artistic interpretation of the ocean life, or the universe. The possibilities and the fun are endless! Remember to tag each creation with the name and age of each little artist, and perhaps the "title" of the piece to refresh your memory in time to come! This is my favorite part of this entire activity. Every year, each child eagerly searches for his special ornament, made years before, and we all remember the day it was made and the little hands that made it!



**This cornstarch salt dough recipe comes from my friend Beth Shimkus, and works very well.**

Combine:

2 cups salt and

1 cup cornstarch in a small saucepan. Add

1 cup of water.

Cook over low heat stirring constantly until the mixture becomes a stiff dough. Add a few drops of food coloring if desired. It takes a little while and you really should stir it constantly. Make sure it is play-dough consistency. Then turn it out onto a plate to let it cool a little. Make sure to put a little cornstarch on the surface you are working on. Bake them at 200 degrees on parchment-lined sheets. For dough that is the thickness of cut-out cookies, bake them for an hour on one side then flip them and bake them for another 45 minutes.

When they are cool they can be painted and hung on the tree.

# November 18: The Creation of Adam and Eve

Genesis 2: 1-9, 15-24

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed and all their hosts.

2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.

5 Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.

6 But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

8 The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

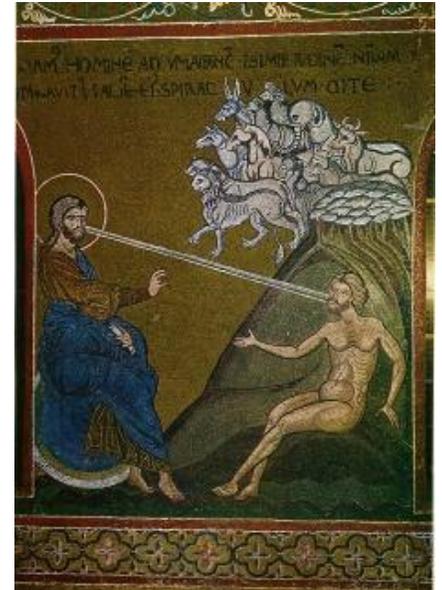
9 Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."



19 Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.

20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.

21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.

22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

23 The man said,  
"This is now bone of my bones,  
And flesh of my flesh;  
She shall be called Woman,  
Because she was taken out of Man."

24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

### **Symbol: Adam and Eve**

When God created Adam, he declared him, as well as everything else He created, to be "good", and perfect. But God took part of Adam to create Eve. So it is clear that woman is part of man, the part that he is missing. He is no longer whole and complete. Together, the man and his wife make up a whole and complete person. This is marriage: when the two are united and that which was once the man's is returned to him again in his wife to make one complete and whole person once again. In other words, "the two shall become one flesh". Two men cannot combine to form that complete flesh (not enough ribs!). Nor can two women, (too many ribs!). Only one man and one woman can recombine perfectly in this way. So, you see that marriage is God's creation too. Eve's purpose was to be a perfect partner for Adam, a "helper suitable for him". But what will she help him do? What is his purpose? O yes! We learned that in our catechism; his purpose is to know God, to love God and to serve God in this world so he can be with Him forever in the next. This is what Eve will help him do! Think of it, isn't that what all moms help their families to do? Who prays? Who teaches? Who intercedes? Who sacrifices and loves as God loves in a family? What an awesome responsibility women have!

Notice as well that God created all the earth and all it contains perfectly, step by perfect step in six days. Yet, there are seven days in a week. What did He do on that seventh day? He rested. Work is a wonderful and necessary thing in life, but so is rest. God knew this. We rest with our heavenly Father when we keep the Sabbath holy on Sunday. We do not work on that day out

of respect for the fact that God did not work on that day either. Instead, we spend time with our family, and in so doing we spend time with Him!

There are many ways to make images of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Perhaps you can use up some clay leftover from yesterday's crafts or perhaps gingerbread images of them will do! My children have done both, but this gingerbread clay, made with white craft glue for durability, was a sure hit. After baking and cooling our figures, we painted them and hung them on our tree. They smell wonderful too!

## Adam & Eve Gingerbread Clay

1c shortening  
1 c. water  
1 c. dark brown sugar  
6 c flour  
2 c dark molasses  
1 Tbsp baking soda  
1 c. white glue  
3 T. ground cinnamon, ginger or pumpkin pie spice

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

Cream the shortening, sugar, molasses and glue. Separately, combine the dry ingredients and add to the mixture slowly. Finally, knead the dough and add enough extra flour to make it workable. Roll to ¼ inch thickness and cut into ornament shapes. Bake for 1 hour and then turn off the oven and let the cookies cool inside to ensure proper hardness. When they are completely cool, they are ready to decorate!

We have found that the ornaments come out best when they are decorated with the paint in the squeeze bottles. It seems to suit a little artist's hands better and we are a lot neater when we are done!

Also, a word of caution: This recipe makes A LOT of ornaments. Perhaps the extras would make good gift ornaments for the children to share with family and friends this Christmas, or could be used to make gift tags! This dough also makes a wonderful holiday ornament for the car, as it fills the air with such a great smell!



# November 19: The First Sin

## Genesis 3: 1-25

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'"



2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'"

4 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

12 The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 The LORD God said to the serpent,  
"Because you have done this,  
Cursed are you more than all cattle,  
And more than every beast of the field;  
On your belly you will go,  
And dust you will eat  
All the days of your life;

15 And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her seed;  
He shall bruise you on the head,  
And you shall bruise him on the heel."

16 To the woman He said,  
"I will greatly multiply  
Your pain in childbirth,  
In pain you will bring forth children;  
Yet your desire will be for your husband,  
And he will rule over you."

17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it';  
Cursed is the ground because of you;  
In toil you will eat of it  
All the days of your life.

18 "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;  
And you will eat the plants of the field;

19 By the sweat of your face  
You will eat bread,  
Till you return to the ground,  
Because from it you were taken;  
For you are dust,  
And to dust you shall return."

20 Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"--

23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the Garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the Cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

Go to your room! This is what the Father said to His disobedient children that day. He was so upset that He sent them away from Himself for a while. Did that ever happen to you? How did you feel? Lonely? Frightened? Sad? Why did Adam and Eve do such a thing? The Father was so disappointed in them that He punished them severely. No more fruit from any of the trees in Eden. No more Eden! It was their comfortable home and now they were sent away to work and struggle for the rest of their lives. Oh yes, that was different now too. They wanted to go behind God's back and make themselves more exalted than God, and now they were cast down and humbled..."for you are dust, and to dust you shall return". They used to walk with God, and would have lived forever in His company, but now they had to die. When they did die they couldn't return home to the Father even THEN, they had to wait. And wait. And wait...for the Redeemer. You see, only sinless beings can be with God in heaven (remember the disobedient angels?) Now the souls of all men had to go to a special place. There they would have to wait without the presence of God, until Christ would come. You see, when Jesus came to Earth as a man, He had two natures. He was all God and all man all at the same time. We remind ourselves of this when we tuck our two little fingers under just so when we make the sign of the cross. Because he was a man, he had to go where the souls of all men go, to the waiting place without God...but wait a minute...He IS God! You can't be in a place without God and be with God all at the same time! So now, all the souls were with God once again when Jesus joined them in that place! He saved Adam and Eve and all the souls from that fate forever. Now, when we die, we may go to be with Jesus, who will vouch for us before the throne of God and make us welcome in the Heavenly Kingdom once again. This is why the people of God waited so hopefully for the coming of the Messiah! He truly saved us!

As for the serpent... the evil one was driven out of the presence of God not temporarily, like Adam and Eve, but he actually *chose* to be without Him forever, in the story we read yesterday. Scripture says that he was hurled from heaven to earth. It was there that he tempted mankind to sin. You see, he would not serve God because he was proud. He believed himself to be better than he was created to be, better than even God, Himself! He wanted to tempt mankind to feel the way he felt too. When God informed the angels that it was part of His divine plan that Christ become a man, and that the angels would serve not only Him, but his human mother as well...this was too much for Lucifer to bear. No way would he, a brilliant and beautiful angel, condescend to serve a mere woman! He would have his revenge! When he saw the first woman, he knew that from her would eventually come that Christ of whom the Father spoke. He would get Eve, and then, in turn, the Christ. He would get even. This is why he hates us.



This is why he wants us to leave God and follow him! Don't be fooled! Stay close to our Redeemer, Jesus and be a humble little soul who knows God, loves God and serves God and you will indeed be a happy soul.

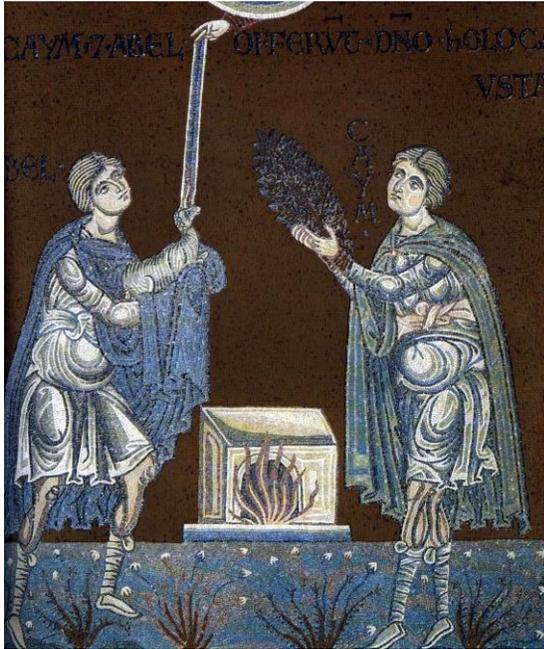
**Symbol: Snake, apple**

It was fun to make apple symbols from horizontal slices of real apples (revealing a star inside) that we studded with cloves and then dehydrated. They smelled delicious and were quite pretty too! Spiral serpents were also fun to make by starting with a large paper circle, or piece of green felt (older children should be sure to cut two of these, the belly from a lighter color felt, and then sew them together). Cutting concentrically around and around, going farther and farther inward till you reach the center, the outside becomes the tail, and the innermost part, the head. These spiral downward as the children lift up the "heads" of their snakes, and make an interesting addition to the tree. Be sure to add beady eyes and a red tongue to your serpents!



# November 20: Cain and Abel

Genesis 4: 1-16



1 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a man-child with the help of the LORD."

2 Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.

4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

7 "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

8 Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

10 He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.

11 "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

12" When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!

14 "Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

15 So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him seven fold " And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.

16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

**Symbol: cornucopia and lamb**



Cain's gift was not as pleasing to God for some reason, scripture does not say why. Perhaps he gave of his abundance while Abel gave the best that he had to God. Perhaps Abel's attitude was more pleasing. Remember what God said to Cain about his attitude? "Why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, your attitude will be lifted up and you will be happy again, but if you don't do well, sin is waiting to overtake you!" Be careful, Cain! Whatever the reason, Cain's jealousy resulted in the anger that overcame him and caused him to kill his brother. Jealousy is a very dangerous emotion. If it motivates us to change and do better, as God said, it can be a good thing. If, however, we are overcome by it and are no longer motivated and reasonable, it can destroy us. Are we ever jealous of our brothers and sisters? Do we ever get so angry that we injure them? When we do, we are like Cain. What did God say about this type of jealous anger? Was He pleased with Cain? No way! He cursed him and punished him for it. So will He be angry with us if we injure our brothers and sisters out of jealousy. The lesson this day is to always strive to give our very best gifts to God. This way, our

countenance will be lifted up as God promises and we will always be pleasing to God and happy ourselves as well.

A cornucopia can be made using brown paper (bag?) shaped into the form of a cone and filled with different colored pompon "fruits & veggies" and perhaps some paper leaves. The lamb, likewise can be made of pompons glued onto a cardboard or foam board cut-out. These can be attached to the same loop of yarn and hung on the tree together.

# November 21: Noah and the Great Flood

## Genesis 6: 11-22, Chapter 7-8

5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

7 The LORD said, " I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

9 These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.

10 Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.

12 God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

14 "Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.

15 "This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

16 "You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.

17 "Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.



18 "But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark--you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

19 "And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.

20 "Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive.

21 "As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them."

22 Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

1 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.

2 "You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female;

3 also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth.

4 "For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made."

5 Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him.

6 Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.

7 Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood.

8 Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground,

9 there went into the ark to Noah by twos, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

10 It came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

12 The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

13 On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

14 they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, all sorts of birds.

15 So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.

16 Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and the LORD closed it behind him.

17 Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth.

18 The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water.

19 The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered.

20 The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.

21 All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind;

22 of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died.

23 Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

24 The water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days.

1 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.

2 Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained;

3 and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased.

4 In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat.

5 The water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.

6 Then it came about at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made;

7 and he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth.

8 Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land;

9 but the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he put out his hand and took her, and brought her into the ark to himself.

10 So he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark.

11 The dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth.

12 Then he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; but she did not return to him again.

13 Now it came about in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up.

14 In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

15 Then God spoke to Noah, saying,

16 "Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you.

17 "Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."

18 So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him.

19 Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark.

20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

22 "While the earth remains,  
Seedtime and harvest,  
And cold and heat,  
And summer and winter,  
And day and night  
Shall not cease."

1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

2 "The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.

3 "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.

4 "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

5 "Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.

6 "Whoever sheds man's blood,  
By man his blood shall be shed,  
For in the image of God  
He made man.

7 "As for you, be fruitful and multiply;  
Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."



8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying,

9 "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you;

10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.

11 "I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth."

12 God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations;

13 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.

14 "It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud,

15 and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

17 And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

**Symbols: ark, rainbow, dove**

The flood must have been a very scary thing. I can only imagine how frightened everybody must have been when the rain came down day after day after day and the waters began to rise higher and higher and higher. What does scripture say was the reason for this flood? God was angry. He was sorry He ever made people in the first place, so selfish and wicked had men become; but not Noah. Scripture tells us that he was the only just and good man alive whom God did not regret. Did God punish Noah along with all the wicked men? No. God is just. Because Noah respected God, God respected Noah and kept his covenant with him. Noah was told just what he had to do to be safe, not just for himself, but all those whom he loved as well. In an ark, designed by God, Himself, the little family floated safely upon the flood waters that would be so devastating to the rest of the world. Safely, they would wait for the wrath of God to pass, and they would begin a new life together with God when the waters subsided. Just as those who were inside the ark passed safely through the tribulations of their day, those who remain safely inside the Church can safely navigate the turbulent times in which we live. We must remain inside the ark of the Church, following the directions that God has given the captain of our vessel, our Pope, so that we can sail safe and sound through the sea of life, continuing to live on when others are in danger of losing their lives to wickedness. God will see to it that those who love Him are safe, just as He did for Noah. When the flood was over, and it was safe for the family to come out of the ark, the Lord gave them a wonderful signal. He sent a beautiful rainbow for them all to see. Whenever we see this awesome sign in the sky, we can think of how plain white light is refracted into it's component parts, clarifying it and showing it to us for what it really is. We remember that God does this for us in all things. With Him, there is no confusion, no hiding from the truth; He sees and understands all and can reveal the truth to us whenever and however He wants. We also remember that God promised mankind that He would never again destroy the inhabitants of the earth in this same way. One day, while driving, we saw an especially beautiful rainbow, and recalled God's promise. Our youngest child asked if this sign meant that God was sorry for what He did, as if He was making an apology to us. Oh no, not at all! God is never mistaken. He is all truth, perfect knowledge and all loving. What He might have been sorry about was the choices we humans had made. He gave us the gift of free will, which means we are free to say no to Him too, even if it means we lose eternity with Him. He loves us that much. Sometimes we force God to act in a way that He wouldn't necessarily choose, only because he is perfect and will never go back on His promise to allow us to freely make decisions. When we decide poorly, He must act in response to our choice, allowing what may not be His perfect plan. For this, He is sad, but not sorry, because He is doing what is just. God sees into eternity and knows what is in store for each person, and knows what is in store for our planet; He is in complete control. He tells Noah, and by this scriptural record of this event, tells US that we can rest assured that we will never have to fear this kind of flood again. What a comfort this must have been to the frightened family! How good and compassionate is our God!

Milk carton arks are a favorite among my little disciples. After they are washed and dried, we either painted them or covered them in brown paper and cut out little doors and windows. Mr. & Mrs. Noah, as well as little paper animals may be made to stick their heads out of the windows. Paper rainbows were made to attach by string above the ark as it hangs on the tree. Little white doves as well, with an olive branch drawn in their mouths, can be suspended over the whole scene on one ribbon.

# November 22: The Tower of Babel

Genesis 11:1-9



1 Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.

2 It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

3 They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.

4 They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

5 The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

6 The LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose do will be impossible for them.

7 "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they will not understand one another's speech."

8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

## Symbol: tower

Why did these people desire to build such a tall tower in the first place? Did they remember to thank God for their great abilities and desires? How did God feel about this? We must always remember that every desire of our hearts, every ability and talent we possess, every effort we are able to make, we owe to God. We must desire what He desires, and do what He wills. When we act without God, He will humble us in order to keep us from harming ourselves. Let's make a tower for our Jesse tree today. This tower however, will be built to honor God, not to compete with Him! When we see it we will think of the tower of Babel and how God humbled those who wished to exalt themselves before Him. We can use clay, styrofoam peanuts, even cereal or popcorn glued onto a plastic lid for a base!



to  
so

## November 23: Abraham

Genesis 12: 1-7, 15:1-6

1 Now the LORD said to Abram,  
"Go forth from your country,  
And from your relatives  
And from your father's house,  
To the land which I will show you;  
2 And I will make you a great nation,  
And I will bless you,  
And make your name great;  
And so you shall be a blessing;  
3 And I will bless those who bless you,  
And the one who curses you I will curse  
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

4 So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

5 Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.

6 Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land.

7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "to your descendants I will give this land" So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.

1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying,  
" Do not fear, Abram,  
I am a shield to you;  
Your reward shall be very great."

2 Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir."



4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir."

5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them" And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

**Symbol: starry sky**

God always keeps His promises! Abram counted on this when God told him that he would become the father of a great nation, Israel. It was hard for him to believe this at the time because he and his wife were along in years and were still childless. Nevertheless, God told him that his children would number as many as the stars in the sky! How many stars do you see in the night sky? How many Israelites are there in the world today? These are indeed Abraham's children! From them, the Lord Jesus Christ would be born, the true Promise of the Father. Let's remember this story when we are tempted to doubt the word of God.

We can make an ornament today to remind us of this story. Let's take a piece of blue felt, the sparkly kind is especially nice, to represent the sky and glue some stars to it and hang it as a banner on our Jesse tree!



## November 24: The Three Visitors

Genesis 18: 1-16

1 Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

2 When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth,



3 and said, "My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by.

4 "Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree;

5 and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant." And they said, "So do, as you have said."

6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it and make bread cakes."

7 Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave it to the servant, and he hurried to prepare it.

8 He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.

9 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "There, in the tent."

10 He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him.

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.

12 Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

13 And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?'

14 " Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

15 Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh."

16 Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off.

**Symbol: Trinity icon, shamrock, triangle**

We believe that there are three Persons in One God. We call this the Trinity and we commemorate our belief in the Trinity each time we make the sign of the cross, using three fingers. One finger is for the Father, one for the Son, and one for the Holy Spirit, pressed together to represent the Holy Trinity. In this way, we understand that God is not a singular being, but a family, like our family on earth. There is a creator and provider in our family (that's Daddy!) and a redeemer, example and intercessor,(that's Mommy!) and a spirit of love that comes forth from them which is so great that it forms another person (That's YOU!!! ...the children!) Our family is a type of trinity too! God is showing us something about His complex nature by giving us a family structure that mimics the essence of Himself.

Although this is so, it is difficult to understand exactly how there are three persons in One God. It is a mystery. Because of this, there are many people who will try to convince you that there is no such thing as the Trinity; three persons in one God is too difficult a concept for some people, to accept. Here we see scriptural support for such a belief. Scripture clearly says that the Lord God appeared to Abraham as three men, not just one. We celebrate this revelation by making a symbol of the Trinity for our Jesse Tree today. Let's take a copy of the famous Trinity icon and trim it to the shape of a triangle and paste it to a triangular cardboard or foam board backing. We can decorate the frame with beads, sequins or jewels and then attach a string for hanging.



## November 25: The Offering of Isaac



Genesis 22:1-19

1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

2 He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

4 On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.

5 Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."

6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.

7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

8 Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

10 Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

12 He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

14 Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."

15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,

16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son,

17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

**Symbol: ram**

Here we see how God rewards those who love Him before all else. Abraham was willing to do something very, very difficult in order to be an obedient servant of God. Yet God knew this already, and did not truly will that Abraham do such a terrible thing! He merely wanted us to see an example of what He would eventually do for us when He allowed His only son, Jesus to die for our sins. God wanted us to know how much He loves us, so He asked Abraham to act out the sacrifice of his son for us to read about and understand! Do you understand how much God must truly love you?

Let's make a symbol of the sacrifice that Abraham finally made to God. Take a triangular piece of craft fur and holding it pointed-end downward, poke a hole, with a scissors, at each of the top angles. Run a chenille pipe-cleaner through both of the holes and shape them into horns for our ram. He needs some googlie eyes and a string for hanging to make him complete.



## November 26: Jacob

Genesis 27:41 - Genesis 28:22

41 So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

42 Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, "Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you.

43 "Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban!

44 "Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides,

45 until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

46 Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

1 So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

2 "Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

3 "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.

4 "May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham."

5 Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

6 Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he charged him, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,"

7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram.

8 So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac;

9 and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.

10 Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

11 He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place.

12 He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

13 And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.

14 "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

15 "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."



16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."

17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top.

19 He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz.

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear,

21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God.

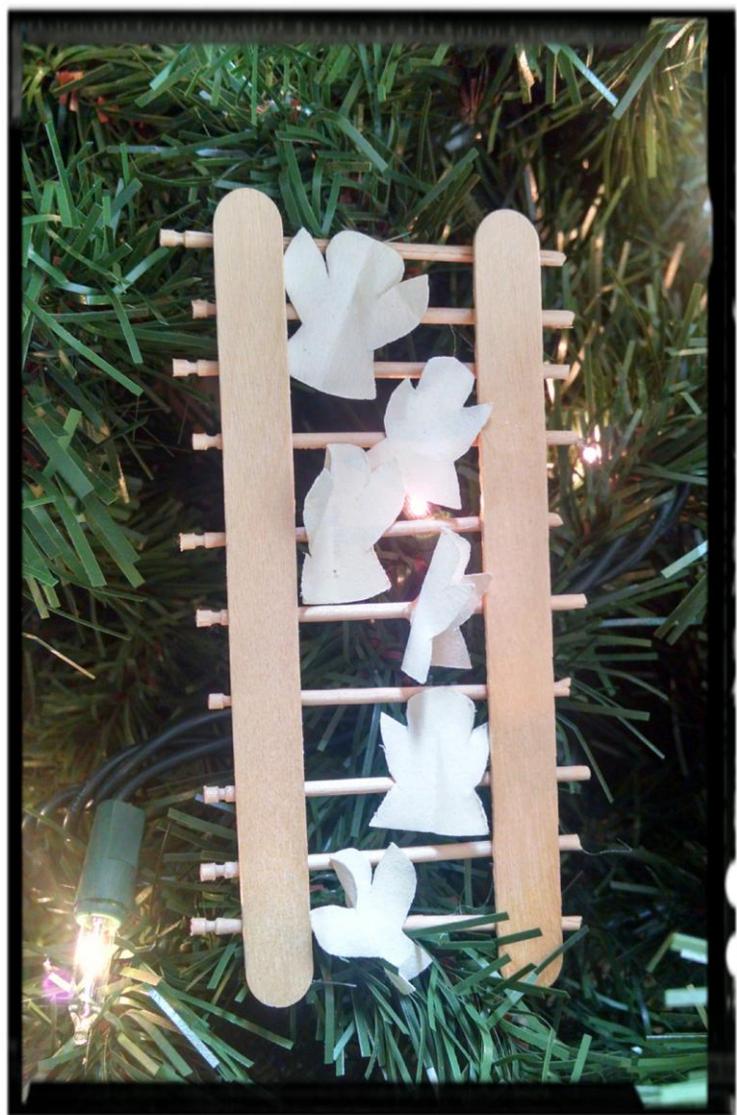
22 "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

**Symbol: ladder**

In today's scripture reading, Jacob begins a tradition that is adhered to by Christians to this very day. He promised God that of all the gifts he was given throughout his lifetime, he would give one tenth of it back to God. This practice is called "tithing" When we tithe, we acknowledge that the Heavenly Father is the one who gives us every good and perfect gift. By giving him back a portion of that gift, we show that we are grateful, and that we trust Him to continue to provide.

Jacob had received the blessing from God. This meant that he had the assurance that he would be an ancestor of the Messiah. When he was traveling through the land that would become his family's home, he had a dream in which he saw a ladder of angels reaching up to heaven and heard God tell him that his descendants would bless all mankind! Let's make a ladder to remind us of the dream that Jacob had and of the vow he made to God. God gives us all the food we eat, all the clothing we wear, the house we live in and the family we love. He even gives us His own family, the Church, to have as our very own! Let's renew our own vow to love the Lord God with all our hearts and to obey His will always!

We can use almost anything to make our Jacob's Ladder ornaments. In our house we used popsicle sticks, and once some sticks we gathered from the back yard. These we glued with craft glue, but I'd recommend a hot glue gun to reinforce the work of the little ones. You could even glue some little paper or confetti angels to the ladder!



## November 27: Joseph

Genesis 37: 1-36, 39: 1-8, 19-21, 41:1-57 42:1-3, 19, 24-31, 43:1-10

1 Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan.

2 These are the records of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.

4 His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

5 Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

6 He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had;

7 for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf."

8 Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

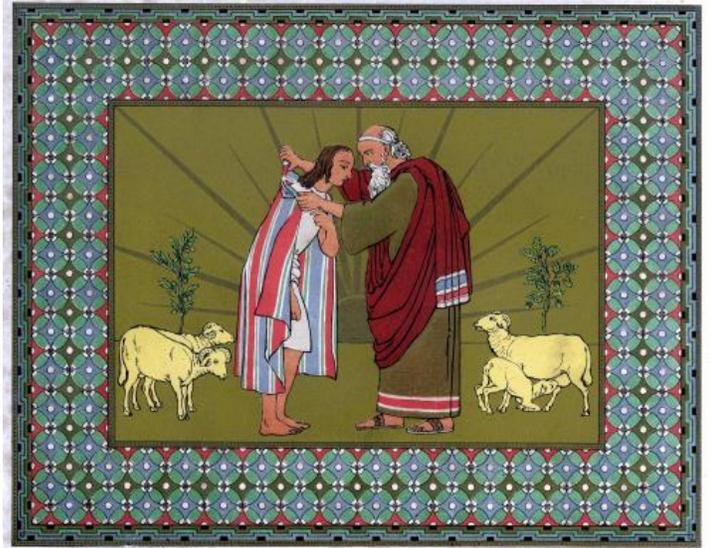
9 Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

10 He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?"

11 His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

12 Then his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem.

13 Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." And he said to him, "I will go."



14 Then he said to him, "Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

15 A man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, "What are you looking for?"

16 He said, "I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock."

17 Then the man said, "They have moved from here; for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

18 When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death.

19 They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer!

20 "Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!"

21 But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, "Let us not take his life."

22 Reuben further said to them, "Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him"--that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father.

23 So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him;

24 and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it.

25 Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt.

26 Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood?

27 "Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his



brothers listened to him.

28 Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt.

29 Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments.

30 He returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?"

31 So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood;

32 and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not."

33 Then he examined it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!"

34 So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. 35 Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him.

36 Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.

1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there.

2 The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.

3 Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge.

5 It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field.

6 So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

7 It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

8But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge.

19Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me", his anger burned.

20 So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.

21 But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.

1 Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile.

2 And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass.

3 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile.

4 The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke.

5 He fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good.

6 Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them.

7 The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

8 Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

9 Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, "I would make mention today of my own offenses.

10 "Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker.

11" We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream.

12 "Now a Hebrew youth was with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related them to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his own dream.

13 "And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him."

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh.

15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

16 Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

17 So Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, "In my dream, behold, I was standing on the bank of the Nile;

18 and behold, seven cows, fat and sleek came up out of the Nile, and they grazed in the marsh grass.

19 "Lo, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such as I had never seen for ugliness in all the land of Egypt;

20 and the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows.

21 "Yet when they had devoured them, it could not be detected that they had devoured them, for they were just as ugly as before. Then I awoke.

22 "I saw also in my dream, and behold, seven ears, full and good, came up on a single stalk;

23 and lo, seven ears, withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them;

24 and the thin ears swallowed the seven good ears. Then I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me."

25 Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do.

26 "The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same.

27 "The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine.

28 "It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do.

29 "Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt;

30 and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land.

31 "So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe.

32 "Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.

33 "Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

34 "Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance.

35 "Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it.

36 "Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine."

37 Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants.

38 Then Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?"

39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are.

40 "You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you."

41 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

42 Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck.

43 He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt.

44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

45 Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt.

46 Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt.

47 During the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly.

48 So he gathered all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields.

49 Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure.

50 Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore to him.

51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household."

52 He named the second Ephraim, "For," he said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

53 When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end,

54 and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

55 So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do."

56 When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt.

57 The people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth.

1 Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, "Why are you staring at one another?"

2 He said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from that place, so that we may live and not die."

3 Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt.

19 So they came near to Joseph's house steward, and spoke to him at the entrance of the house,

24 Then the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder.

25 So they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there.

26 When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present which was in their hand and bowed to the ground before him.

27 Then he asked them about their welfare, and said, "Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?"

28 They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive. "They bowed down in homage.

29 As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "May God be gracious to you, my son."

30 Joseph hurried out for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he sought a place to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there.

31 Then he washed his face and came out; and he controlled himself and said, "Serve the meal."

1 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, "Have everyone go out from me." So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

2 He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it.

3 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

5 "Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

6 "For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

7" God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

8 "Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

9 "Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay.

10 "You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have.

**Symbol: Joseph in his coat of many colors, Sack of grain**

Who does Joseph remind you of? How many silver pieces did his brothers sell him for? Who else was sold for silver pieces? This is a story to help us understand how Jesus will deal with those of us who have sold him into slavery by enslaving ourselves to sin. Suffering on the cross was unbelievably hard, but Jesus knew that it had to be that way so that we would be safe with Him for eternity. He wants us to know how willing he is to forgive humanity for the suffering He endured for our sakes.

What a story of family love! How much courage and love it must have taken for Joseph to have forgiven his brothers like that, and to have seen God's plan for his family even amidst their sufferings and his own isolation from them! Do we forgive our brothers and sisters when they have done something small against us? Let's think of Joseph and Jesus when we need to forgive, and let's vow to be more like them.

Our ornament today will be Joseph, himself, made from a clothespin and decorated with a striped ribbon "coat of many colors"! A permanent marker provides his face, hair and beard, and felt clothing can be glued into place. An alternate idea would be a sack of grain, perhaps made of an old sock, filled with rice.



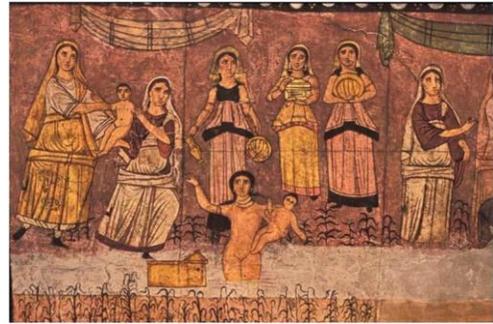
## November 28: Moses

Exodus 2: 1-10, 11:1-20

1 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi.

2 The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months.

3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.



4 His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him.

5 The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her.

6 When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for you?"

8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go ahead." So the girl went and called the child's mother.

9 Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him.

10 The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

1 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

2 The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.

3 So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."

4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

5 Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."



6 He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob "Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 The LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings.

8 "So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.

9 "Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.

10 "Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"

12 And He said, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

13 Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"

14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

15 God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,

has sent me to you ' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

16 "Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt.

17"So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey."

18 "They will pay heed to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt and you will say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us So now, please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.'

19 "But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion.

20 "So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go.

**Symbol: a burning bush, baby Moses in a reed basket**

Moses, like Joseph, was raised in an Egyptian home, even though he was a Jew. Jesus was raised in a human home, even though He was God! Like



Jesus, powerful people wanted to kill him even from his birth, but God saw to it that he, like Jesus, was safe. God had special plans for both Jesus and Moses, and He has special plans for you! If we stay close to Him, God will keep us safe too.

Let's make a figure of baby Moses to hang on our tree today. We can make the basket of woven brown paper and a baby of rolled white paper with a pink little face drawn on. Maybe we can decorate it with green chenille reeds with rolled up brown paper cat-tails pasted on top!

Another idea is to make a burning bush by pasting red leaves onto a brown stick from the yard.

To make a basket: Cut 2 squares from paper, foam or felt (etc.) and, holding them together, cut strips, as you would cut fringe, from one side almost to the other, without cutting through the other side. Now separate the squares and cut only one of them all the way through, making it into strips. Weave the strips onto the other square, alternating in and out to form a basket. When all the strips are woven together, gather the ends together and staple each side closed. Then do the same to the other open side of the square, and last but not least, finish cutting the fourth side through and gather those ends and staple the last side closed to form a perfect basket. Now just cut one more strip to use as a handle and staple this into place.

## November 29: The Passover and Exodus

**Exodus 12:1-14 13: 1-51**

1 Now the LORD said to Moses, "One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out from here completely.

2 "Speak now in the hearing of the people that each man ask from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor for articles of silver and articles of gold."

3 The LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians Furthermore, the man Moses himself was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, both in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

4 Moses said, "Thus says the LORD, 'About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt,

5 and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the millstones; all the firstborn of the cattle as well.

6 'Moreover, there shall be a great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again.

7' But against any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark, whether against man or beast, that you may understand how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.'

8" All these your servants will come down to me and bow themselves before me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who follow you,' and after that I will go out "And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

9 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt."

10 Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.

1 Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,

2 "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you.

3 "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household.

4 'Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb.

5 'Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

6 'You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.

7 'Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.



8'They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

9 'Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails.

10 'And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire.

11 'Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste--it is the LORD'S Passover.

12 'For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments--I am the LORD.

13 'The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 'Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance.

15 'Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

16 'On the first day you shall have a holy assembly, and another holy assembly on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them, except what must be eaten by every person, that alone may be prepared by you.

17 'You shall also observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance.

18 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.

19 'Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is an alien or a native of the land.

20 'You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.'"

21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay the Passover lamb.

22 "You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning.

23 "For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you.

24 "And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever.

25 "When you enter the land which the LORD will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite.

26 "And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?'



27 you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes "'And the people bowed low and worshiped.

28 Then the sons of Israel went and did so; just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

29 Now it came about at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle.

30 Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead.

31 Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, worship the LORD, as you have said.

32 "Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and bless me also."

33 The Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We will all be dead."

34 So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders.

35 Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing;

36 and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

37 Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children.

38 A mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock.

39 They baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of unleavened bread. For it had not become leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

40 Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.

41 And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

42 It is a night to be observed for the LORD for having brought them out from the land of Egypt; this night is for the LORD, to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations.

43 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it;

44 but every man's slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it.

45 " A sojourner or a hired servant shall not eat of it.

46 "It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it.

47 "All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this.

48 "But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it.

49 "The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you."

50 Then all the sons of Israel did so; they did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.

51 And on that same day the LORD brought the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.

**Symbol: red door lintel, loaf of unleavened bread**

Remember that every event that happened in Old Testament times happened so that those who would read about it in scripture would recognize similar events in their own lives, and give glory to God. The people of God fled the slavery of Egypt and followed Moses into the land that was their heritage, given to them and meant for them by God. When we celebrate the Passover in our Catholic Church, we call it Paskha, and celebrate the release of the souls from the slavery of Hades, that dark void that human souls had to go into upon their deaths due to the sin of Adam and Eve. When Jesus who was "all man and all God, all at the same time" died, he had to go there too...yet He WAS God. You can't be away from God, and BE God; that's impossible. For this reason all the souls of the departed who were enslaved there, had to be released into the place that was their true heritage, the place meant for them by God from the beginning. Adam and Eve and all the other souls of every person who ever lived and loved God, entered into Heaven with Christ that day, never to be slaves to death again. Remember that the door posts and lintels of the people of God were painted with the blood of the lamb used for their sacrifice. The new people of God, the people of the Catholic Church, adorn the lintels and door posts of our souls, with the blood of the real Lamb, Jesus Christ, in the Eucharist. When we receive Him, we mark our souls indelibly, that means permanently, with His Precious Blood, so that all who spiritually "see" us will know that we belong to Him, and we will be safe. The "angel of death" will surely leave us alone. Notice how, in the account of the first Passover meal, which represents the Liturgy, no one who was not a Jew, who did not dedicate himself, body and soul, to the Lord, was able to participate in the sacrifice. This is true today as well. If anyone who is a foreigner to the truths of the Catholic Church is present at the Liturgy today, he may witness the Divine Liturgy, but not eat of the sacrifice which is the Holy Eucharist. He must first dedicate himself completely, body and soul through baptism, to the One True God and His One True Church! See! Everything about our faith is found to be supported by scripture! We just need to know where to look! Isn't our God wonderful?

Once again, those popsicle sticks can come in handy. How many popsicles do you eat in your house? We may need to run to the store yet again! If we glue three together as the door posts and lintel, we can use a red marker to paint on the "blood of the lamb", before we hang it on our tree.



# November 30: The Parting of the Red Sea

Exodus 14: 1-31



1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

2 "Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea.

3 "For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.'

4 "Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." And they did so.

5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from

serving us?"

6 So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him;

7 and he took six hundred select chariots, and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.

8 The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly.

9 Then the Egyptians chased after them with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

10 As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD.

11 Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt?"

12 "Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

13 But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.

14 "The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent."

15 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward.

16 "As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land.

17 "As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen.

18 "Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen."

19 The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them.

20 So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided.

22 The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

23 Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea.

24 At the morning watch, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion.

25 He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians."

26 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen."

27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained.

29 But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

31 When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

### **Symbol: The Staff of Moses**

Remember when we spoke yesterday, of the souls who left Hades and went with Jesus into Heaven when He died and came for them? Well, just as the slave-owner, the Egyptian Pharaoh, changed his mind and wanted the Israelites back, the evil one wanted the souls of the dead back too. He hates them because of their faithfulness to Christ, and wants to enslave them and us. He chases after our souls, trying to entice us back to death by sin. But if we stay close to Jesus Christ as the Israelites followed closely behind Moses, and stand under the cross as they stood under Moses's staff, we will pass through our lives safely. God will see to it that when we make the passage from our earthly lives to Heaven, the evil one who chases after our souls will be drowned in his own misery, and we will be safe.



Anything can be used to make the staff. We used plastic covered wire found at a hardware store. Just shape and hang!

# December 1: The Ten Commandments

Exodus 19:16-25, 20: 1-22

16 So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

18 Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently.

19 When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder.

20 The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

21 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down, warn the people, so that they do not break through to the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish.

22 "Also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, or else the LORD will break out against them."

23 Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds about the mountain and consecrate it.'"

24 Then the LORD said to him, "Go down and come up again, you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, or He will break forth upon them."

25 So Moses went down to the people and told them.

1 Then God spoke all these words, saying,

2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

3 " You shall have no other gods before Me.



to

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 "Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

11 " For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

13 "You shall not murder.

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

15 "You shall not steal.

16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

18 All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance.

19 Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die."

20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."

21 So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.

22 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven.'

**Symbol: the tablets**

Do you have rules in your house? What are they? Do you follow them? Why? If we want to have a peaceful and loving home, we must all agree to follow the rules. They are provided by those in authority so that we may do what is pleasing and right, and therefore be happy. What kind of parents expect good behavior, yet have no rules? How

will the child know when he is right or wrong in his behavior? A good parent tells his children what they may and may not do. God is no different; in fact, He is the best parent. He gave us rules to follow so that we may know what pleases Him, and so that we may be happy too!

Let's make a replica of the tablets of the law given to Moses by God. We can cut a piece of gray foam in the shape of two conjoined tablets. Upon the first, we can make the roman numerals I, II and III. These are the commandments that tell us how we must treat God. On the second we can write IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX and X. These tell us how we must treat each other. Can you recite all Ten Commandments? Let's review them today:

- 1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before Me.**
- 2. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.**
- 3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.**
- 4. Honor your father and your mother.**
- 5. You shall not kill.**
- 6. You shall not commit adultery.**
- 7. You shall not steal.**
- 8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**
- 9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.**
- 10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.**



## December 2: Joshua and the Fall of Jericho

Joshua 1:1-11, 6:1-20

1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying,

2 "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.

3 "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.

4 "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory.

5 "No man will be able to stand before you, all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

6 "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

7 "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.

8 "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

11 "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it.'"



1 Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in.

2 The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors.

3 "You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days.

4 "Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.

5 "It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."

6 So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD."

7 Then he said to the people, "Go forward, and march around the city, and let the armed men go on before the ark of the LORD."

8 And it was so, that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward and blew the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.

9 The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while they continued to blow the trumpets.

10 But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I tell you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout!"

11 So he had the ark of the LORD taken around the city, circling it once; then they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp.

12 Now Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.

13 The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew the trumpets; and the armed men went before them and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while they continued to blow the trumpets.

14 Thus the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp; they did so for six days.

15 Then on the seventh day they rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times.

16 At the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.

17 "The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.

18 "But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet them and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it.

19 "But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD."

20 So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city.

### **Symbol: Joshua's horn**

What can we learn from our friend Joshua? God told him that he would be the one who would lead the Israelites into the land that they had been promised. He had a hard time understanding God's plan because the city that God had promised to them was occupied, and by a very hostile nation. The Israelites were afraid to enter it! Three times God told him that he had to be courageous and do exactly as he was told. Have you ever been afraid to do something that you were told to do? Joshua listened.

God instructed him to get seven priests with seven trumpets to circle around the city for seven days. He told him that they should march around the city walls seven times on the seventh day and then, and only then, at the command of Joshua, as instructed by God, should the people shout and expect the city walls to fall so that they could easily enter and occupy the city that God had promised them. So now we must ask ourselves, what's with all the sevens? The number seven in Hebrew numerology symbolizes the perfection of God. Let's think a bit about the virtue of perfection. Some people consider themselves to be followers of God, yet they hardly follow God at all. They do the bare minimum that is necessary to call oneself a Christian. They follow only those directives that are pleasing to them and are easy to do. This is not what God requires of us. What would have happened if the Israelites decided that they were too

tired, and only marched around the city three or four times? What if they decided to shout on the second day instead? God would not be pleased. It would not be perfect, as He is perfect, and His perfect plan would not have been achieved.

Perhaps Joshua was just as perplexed over his instructions as we readers are. Why would God give such specific instructions? We do not know. Presumably, Joshua didn't know either, but one thing he DID know is that he believed and trusted in the power of God to do what seemed impossible. He knew that God had expected him to follow the instructions exactly as they were given to him, without deviation, and that if he did so, God would be true to His word and he would achieve His goal. God wants us all to follow His directives perfectly! If we do so, we can expect great things to happen!



So what is the lesson we must learn today? God gives us all instructions, just as he gave instructions to Joshua. We are taught by our parents, by His Word, and by the teachings of His Church. When we learn our catechism, it is important that we are perfectly obedient, even if we do not completely understand why the directive is so. Yes, we have an obligation to investigate and try to learn why God has ordained things this way and we must always pray for enlightenment to His will, but in the meanwhile, we must obey, even if we don't yet understand. There are many things that must remain a mystery to our simple human minds while we remain here on this earth. We just don't have the ability to grasp

everything yet. We must remain faithful to the God who created all things and knows well the order of everything in the universe. We must trust that He has a perfect plan for each of us and that His perfect love would never lead us astray. We must offer Him the gift our love and our trust and always strive to obey Him perfectly!

A simple horn can be made of paper or craft foam and decorated with "jewels" or "gold" paint. Remember to attach a ribbon or string to it so that Joshua can hang it from his belt!

## December 3: Gideon

Judges 2: 6-23, 6: 1-40, 7:1-25, 8:28-35

6 When Joshua had dismissed the people, the sons of Israel went each to his inheritance to possess the land.

7 The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

8 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten.

9 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

10 All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.

11 Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals,

12 and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger.

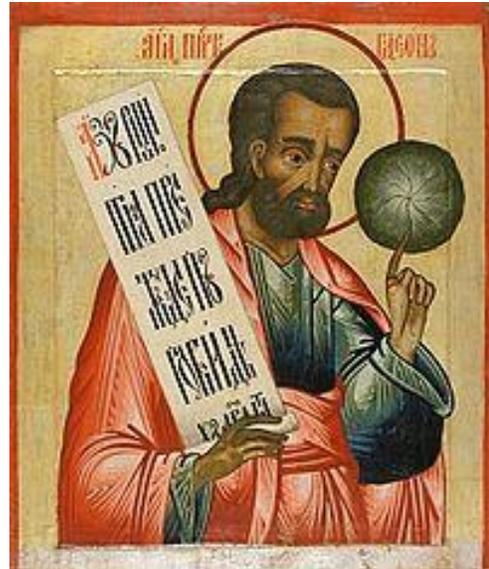
13 So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroath.

14 The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.

15 Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had spoken and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.

16 Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them.

17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as their fathers.



18 When the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.

19 But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.

20 So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not listened to My voice,

21 I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died,

22 in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not."

23 So the LORD allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua.

1 Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD gave them into the hands of Midian seven years.

2 The power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds.

3 For it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them.

4 So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey.

5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it.

6 So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the LORD.

7 Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD on account of Midian,

8 that the LORD sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery.

9 'I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land,

10 and I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me."

11 Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites.

12 The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior."

13 Then Gideon said to him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."

14 The LORD looked at him and said, "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?"

15 He said to Him, "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."

16 But the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man."

17 So Gideon said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me.

18 "Please do not depart from here, until I come back to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You." And He said, "I will remain until you return."

19 Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them out to him under the oak and presented them.

20 The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so.

21 Then the angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight.

22 When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face."

23 The LORD said to him, "Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die."

24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and named it The LORD is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

25 Now on the same night the LORD said to him, "Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it;

26 and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down."

27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night.

28 When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was torn down, and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built.

29 They said to one another, "Who did this thing?" And when they searched about and inquired, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash did this thing."

30 Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it."

31 But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar."

32 Therefore on that day he named him Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he had torn down his altar.

33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel.

34 So the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him.

35 He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.

36 Then Gideon said to God, "If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken,

37 behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken."

38 And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water.

39 Then Gideon said to God, "Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more; please let me make a test once more with the fleece, let it now be dry only on the fleece, and let there be dew on all the ground."

40 God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and dew was on all the ground.

1 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon), and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

2 The LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.'

3 "Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.'" So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained.

4 Then the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."

5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink."

6 Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men; but all the rest of the people kneeled to drink water.

7 The LORD said to Gideon, "I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; so let all the other people go, each man to his home."

8 So the 300 men took the people's provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men; and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

9 Now the same night it came about that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands.

10 "But if you are afraid to go down, go with Purah your servant down to the camp,

11 and you will hear what they say; and afterward your hands will be strengthened that you may go down against the camp." So he went with Purah his servant down to the outposts of the army that was in the camp.

12 Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

13 When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, "Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat."

14 His friend replied, "This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand."

15 When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, "Arise, for the LORD has given the camp of Midian into your hands."

16 He divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers.

17 He said to them, "Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do.

18 "When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you also blow the trumpets all around the camp and say, 'For the LORD and for Gideon.'"

19 So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.

20 When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing, and cried, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

21 Each stood in his place around the camp; and all the army ran, crying out as they fled.

22 When they blew 300 trumpets, the LORD set the sword of one against another even throughout the whole army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the edge of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath.

23 The men of Israel were summoned from Naphtali and Asher and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian.

24 Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against Midian and take the waters before them, as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan." So all the men of Ephraim were summoned and they took the waters as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.

25 They captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb, while they pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan.

28 So Midian was subdued before the sons of Israel, and they did not lift up their heads anymore. And the land was undisturbed for forty years in the days of Gideon.

29 Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and lived in his own house.

30 Now Gideon had seventy sons who were his direct descendants, for he had many wives.

31 His concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech.

32 And Gideon the son of Joash died at a ripe old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

33 Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god.

34 Thus the sons of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side;

35 nor did they show kindness to the household of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) in accord with all the good that he had done to Israel.

**Symbol: clay pitcher**

See how well God provides success to those who believe in Him and walk according to His commandments! A pure heart is what is necessary. When God called Gideon to defeat the Midianites, Gideon was sure that God had called the wrong man! Surely He wanted someone

better, stronger, more worthy of the task. But God proved to him that he was indeed the one for the job by sending him a sign, not once, but twice...the fleece. Then Gideon called the army forth, and God scaled it down, and scaled it down again, so much so that Gideon was really afraid. Surely something was wrong! Then God strengthened Gideon, in His mercy, by allowing him to hear the dream about the humble little barley loaf. Only Israelites ate barley loaves, because the Midianites had taken all their wheat. This meant that God would allow the little, humble barley-eating Israelite army which was led by Gideon, to defeat the enemy; but not



with weapons, with pitchers of clay. All things are possible with God. He wanted His people to see what would happen if they simply trusted Him. He needed them to renew their covenant with Him and indeed be His people so that He could be their God. Needless to say, they achieved their victory and defeated the Midianite army. Now, what happened to the people when Gideon died? Did they remember the lesson they learned from him and worship only the one true God? It is easy to be good when you are among good people. It is even easier when you are obedient to a good and holy leader. Keep good company and place yourself under the direction of holy people.

To remember the success of Gideon's army, let's make a pitcher out of clay.

## December 4: Ruth

Ruth 1:1-18,22, 2:1-17, 4:13-22



1 Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

2 The name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Now they entered the land of Moab and remained there.

3 Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons.

4 They took for themselves Moabite women as wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. And they lived there about ten years.

5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and the woman was bereft of her two children and her husband.

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the land of Moab, for she had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD had visited His people in giving them food.

7 So she departed from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return, each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead, and with me.

9 "May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

10 And they said to her, "No, but we will surely return with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?"

12 "Return, my daughters! Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I should even have a husband tonight and also bear sons,

13 Would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me."

14 And they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15 Then she said, "Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

16 But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.

17 "Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me."

18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

22 So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

1 Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

3 So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

4 Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, "May the LORD be with you." And they said to him, "May the LORD bless you."

5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman is this?"

6 The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.

7 "And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' Thus she came and has remained from the morning until now; she has been sitting in the house for a little while."

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids.

9 "Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw."

10 Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?"

11 Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know.

12 "May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."

13 Then she said, "I have found favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and indeed have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left.

15 When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his servants, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her.

16 "Also you shall purposely pull out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife,... And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.

15 "May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."

16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.

17 The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

18 Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron,

19 and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab,

20 and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon,

21 and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed,

22 and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.

**Symbol: a stalk or bundle of wheat**

What a great reward for Ruth! Because she was faithful to God, and didn't return to her pagan gods when her husband died, she became the grandmother of King David! King David was an ancestor of Jesus! Ruth became an ancestor of Jesus! Let us not forget that God used the Old Testament Bible stories to give us a clue about the lessons we would learn in the New Testament. Ruth's story was useful to explain truths about our Blessed Mother. Now let us think, if we stand by our Blessed Mother when we find ourselves alone, and learn from her how to worship the one true God, just as Ruth learned from Naomi, we will become a member of Jesus' new family, the Church!

Ruth found Boaz, her new husband by gleaning wheat from his field. We strengthen our relationship with our family, the Church, by gleaning food for our souls from the wisdom of the Church which can be found in the Catechism and the Holy Scriptures. To remind us of this, let's make bundles of real wheat to hang on our Jesse tree today!



## December 5: Samuel

1 Samuel 3:1-28, 2:18-21, 3:1-21, 4:1-11, 7:1-17, 8:1-22, 9:1-2 & 15-10:22

1 Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.

2 He had two wives: the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

3 Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to the LORD there.

4 When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters;

5 but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had closed her womb.

6 Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb.

7 It happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she would provoke her; so she wept and would not eat.

8 Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

9 Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD.

10 She, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly.

11 She made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head."

12 Now it came about, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli was watching her mouth.

13 As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk.

14 Then Eli said to her, "How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you."

15 But Hannah replied, "No, my lord, I am a woman oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the LORD.

16 "Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation."

17 Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him."

18 She said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight " So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad.

19 Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned again to their house in Ramah, and Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her.

20 It came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the LORD."

21 Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and pay his vow.

22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD and stay there forever."

23 Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you. Remain until you have weaned him; only may the LORD confirm His word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him.

24 Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh, although the child was young.

25 Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli.

26 She said, "Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the LORD.



27 "For this boy I prayed, and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of Him.

28 "So I have also dedicated him to the LORD; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD " And he worshiped the LORD there.

18 Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD, as a boy wearing a linen ephod.

19 And his mother would make him a little robe and bring it to him from year to year when she would come up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

20 Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, "May the LORD give you children from this woman in place of the one she dedicated to the LORD." And they went to their own home.

21 The LORD visited Hannah; and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters and the boy Samuel grew before the LORD.

1 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent.

2 It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see well),

3 and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was,

4 that the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am."

5 Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he went and lay down.

6 The LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he answered, "I did not call, my son, lie down again."

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him.

8 So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli discerned that the LORD was calling the boy.

9 And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."

11 The LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

12 "In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.

13 "For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them.

14 "Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

15 So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.

16 Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am."

17 He said, "What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. May God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the words that He spoke to you."

18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD; let Him do what seems good to Him."

19 Thus Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fail.

20 All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD.

21 And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, because the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.



1 Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek.

2 The Philistines drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield.

3 When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies."

4 So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts who sits above

the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

5 As the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded.

6 When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What does the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp.

7 The Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before.

8 "Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness.

9 "Take courage and be men, O Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews, as they have been slaves to you; therefore, be men and fight."

10 So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers.

11 And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

1 And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took the ark of the LORD and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.

2 From the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim, the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

3 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines."

4 So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the LORD alone.

5 Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah and I will pray to the LORD for you."

6 They gathered to Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the sons of Israel at Mizpah.

7 Now when the Philistines heard that the sons of Israel had gathered to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the sons of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

8 Then the sons of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines."

9 Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it for a whole burnt offering to the LORD; and Samuel cried to the LORD for Israel and the LORD answered him.

10 Now Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, and the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel.

11 The men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as below Beth-car.

12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us."

13 So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

14 The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

15 Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

16 He used to go annually on circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places.

1 Then his return was to Ramah, for his house was there, and there he judged Israel; and he built there an altar to the LORD.

1 Now there was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah, the son of a Benjamite, a mighty man of valor.

2 He had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome man, and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people.

15 Now a day before Saul's coming, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel saying,

16 "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to Me."

17 When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, "Behold, the man of whom I spoke to you! This one shall rule over My people."

18 Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, "Please tell me where the seer's house is."

19 Samuel answered Saul and said, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you go, and will tell you all that is on your mind.

20 "As for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's household?"

21 Saul replied, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?"

22 Then Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall and gave them a place at the head of those who were invited, who were about thirty men.

23 Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion that I gave you, concerning which I said to you, 'Set it aside.'"

24 Then the cook took up the leg with what was on it and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, "Here is what has been reserved! Set it before you and eat, because it has been kept for you until the appointed time, since I said I have invited the people." So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

25 When they came down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the roof.

26 And they arose early; and at daybreak Samuel called to Saul on the roof, saying, "Get up, that I may send you away." So Saul arose, and both he and Samuel went out into the street.

27 As they were going down to the edge of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Say to the servant that he might go ahead of us and pass on, but you remain standing now, that I may proclaim the word of God to you."

1 Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?"

2 "When you go from me today, then you will find two men close to Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, 'The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. Now behold, your father has ceased to be concerned about the donkeys and is anxious for you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?"'

3 "Then you will go on further from there, and you will come as far as the oak of Tabor, and there three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a jug of wine;

4 and they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from their hand.

5 "Afterward you will come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is; and it shall be as soon as you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and a lyre before them, and they will be prophesying.

6 "Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man.

7 "It shall be when these signs come to you, do for yourself what the occasion requires, for God is with you.

8 "And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do."

9 Then it happened when he turned his back to leave Samuel, God changed his heart; and all those signs came about on that day.

10 When they came to the hill there, behold, a group of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him mightily, so that he prophesied among them.

11 It came about, when all who knew him previously saw that he prophesied now with the prophets, that the people said to one another, "What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

12 A man there said, "Now, who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

13 When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place.

14 Now Saul's uncle said to him and his servant, "Where did you go?" And he said, "To look for the donkeys. When we saw that they could not be found, we went to Samuel."

15 Saul's uncle said, "Please tell me what Samuel said to you."

16 So Saul said to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found." But he did not tell him about the matter of the kingdom which Samuel had mentioned.

17 Thereafter Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah;

18 and he said to the sons of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought Israel up from Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.'

19 "But you have today rejected your God, who delivers you from all your calamities and your distresses; yet you have said, 'No, but set a king over us!' Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans."

20 Thus Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot.

21 Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the Matrite family was taken. And Saul the son of Kish was taken; but when they looked for him, he could not be found.

22 Therefore they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" So the LORD said, "Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage."

23 So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.

24 Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people. "So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!"

### **Symbol: Saul's crown**

So it was for Saul. He didn't really want to be king. In his humility, he didn't realize that he could do such a great thing, but God had other plans for him! Sometimes we don't even know what we are capable of doing, but God does. He will see to it that we accomplish all that is required of us, if we have a willing spirit. Remember that it was the people themselves who wanted a king, not God. He heard their request and let them have their way, even though it probably would have been better, maybe even easier if they had no king, but instead trusted solely in Him. Sometimes God does this for us too. We ask and ask and ask for things we do not truly need, so much so that God finally lets us have our way, to see and learn how foolish we are. He uses all things for good, even our own free will. We need to remember to trust Him more and ask for less.

Once again, paper or craft foam can provide the perfect medium for Saul's crown. Craft beads and jewels are useful for decorating it to befit a king.



## December 6: David & Goliath

### 1 Samuel 17: 1-58

1 Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; and they were gathered at Socoh which belongs to Judah, and they camped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephesdammim.

2 Saul and the men of Israel were gathered and camped in the valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array to encounter the Philistines.

3 The Philistines stood on the mountain on one side while Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with the valley between them.

4 Then a champion came out from the armies of the Philistines named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

5 He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was clothed with scale-armor which weighed five thousand shekels of bronze.

6 He also had bronze greaves on his legs and a bronze javelin slung between his shoulders.

7 The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and the head of his spear weighed six hundred shekels of iron; his shield-carrier also walked before him.

8 He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel and said to them, "Why do you come out to draw up in battle array? Am I not the Philistine and you servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me.

9 " If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us."

10 Again the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together."

11 When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.



12 Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons. And Jesse was old in the days of Saul, advanced in years among men.

13 The three older sons of Jesse had gone after Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and the second to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah.

14 David was the youngest. Now the three oldest followed Saul,

15 but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's flock at Bethlehem.

16 The Philistine came forward morning and evening for forty days and took his stand.

17 Then Jesse said to David his son, "Take now for your brothers an ephah of this roasted grain and these ten loaves and run to the camp to your brothers.

18 "Bring also these ten cuts of cheese to the commander of their thousand, and look into the welfare of your brothers, and bring back news of them.

19 "For Saul and they and all the men of Israel are in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines."

20 So David arose early in the morning and left the flock with a keeper and took the supplies and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the circle of the camp while the army was going out in battle array shouting the war cry.

21 Israel and the Philistines drew up in battle array, army against army.

22 Then David left his baggage in the care of the baggage keeper, and ran to the battle line and entered in order to greet his brothers.

23 As he was talking with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine from Gath named Goliath, was coming up from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke these same words; and David heard them.

24 When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid.

25 The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel."

26 Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?"

27 The people answered him in accord with this word, saying, "Thus it will be done for the man who kills him."

28 Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle."

29 But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just a question?"

30 Then he turned away from him to another and said the same thing; and the people answered the same thing as before.

31 When the words which David spoke were heard, they told them to Saul, and he sent for him.

32 David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

33 Then Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth."

34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock,

35 I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him.

36 "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God."

37 And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and may the LORD be with you."

38 Then Saul clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with armor.

39 David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. So David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." And David took them off.

40 He took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine.

41 Then the Philistine came on and approached David, with the shield-bearer in front of him.

42 When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, with a handsome appearance.

43 The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

44 The Philistine also said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field."

45 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted.

46 "This day, the LORD will deliver you up into my hands and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,

47 and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands."

48 Then it happened when the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, that David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.

49 And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground.

50 Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David's hand.

51 Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.



52 The men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the valley, and to the gates of Ekron And the slain Philistines lay along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron.

53 The sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps.

54 Then David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent.

55 Now when Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" And Abner said, "By your life, O king, I do not know."

56 The king said, "You inquire whose son the youth is."

57 So when David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand.

58 Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

### **Symbol: David's slingshot**

Just because you are little doesn't mean you are not powerful! David was only a child, and no match for the giant enemy, yet with God on his side, he was courageous and overcame him. Not only did he save himself, but his whole family and all those around him. You may be younger than those around you, but you can be a powerful tool for God when you do His will for all to see. When grown-ups notice your love for God, they remember that they need to be more like you so that they can be pleasing to God too. You can evangelize for Christ just by being the best Christian you can be!

We usually need to take a bit of a nature walk around the yard to find the perfect "Y" shaped stick to transform into our slingshot. I hope it's warm and sunny where you are today! When you have found the perfect stick, use a thick rubber band to wind around the top to form the sling. Remember, it's only an ornament for our tree, not a toy or a weapon to use against your brother! Hmmm.....maybe there should be an 11<sup>th</sup> commandment: Thou shall not use thy slingshot against thy family members! It's very useful for Philistines; not so much for sisters and brothers.

## December 7: David the Shepherd

2 Samuel 5: 1-5, 7:1-19, 24-29

1 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh.

2 "Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.'"

3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the LORD at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel.

4 David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years.

5 At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.



1 Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the LORD had given him rest on every side from all his enemies,

2 that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains."

3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your mind, for the LORD is with you."

4 But in the same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying,

5 "Go and say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in?"

6 "For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle.

7 "Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"

8 "Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel.

9 "I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth.

10 "I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly,

11 even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you.

12 "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.

13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

14 "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men,

15 but My loving-kindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

16 "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."

17 In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

18 Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD, and he said, "Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?

19 "And yet this was insignificant in Your eyes, O Lord GOD, for You have spoken also of the house of Your servant concerning the distant future And this is the custom of man, O Lord GOD.

24 "For You have established for Yourself Your people Israel as Your own people forever, and You, O LORD, have become their God.

25 "Now therefore, O LORD God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and his house, confirm it forever, and do as You have spoken,

26 that Your name may be magnified forever, by saying, 'The LORD of hosts is God over Israel'; and may the house of Your servant David be established before You.

27 "For You, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have made a revelation to Your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house'; therefore Your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to You.

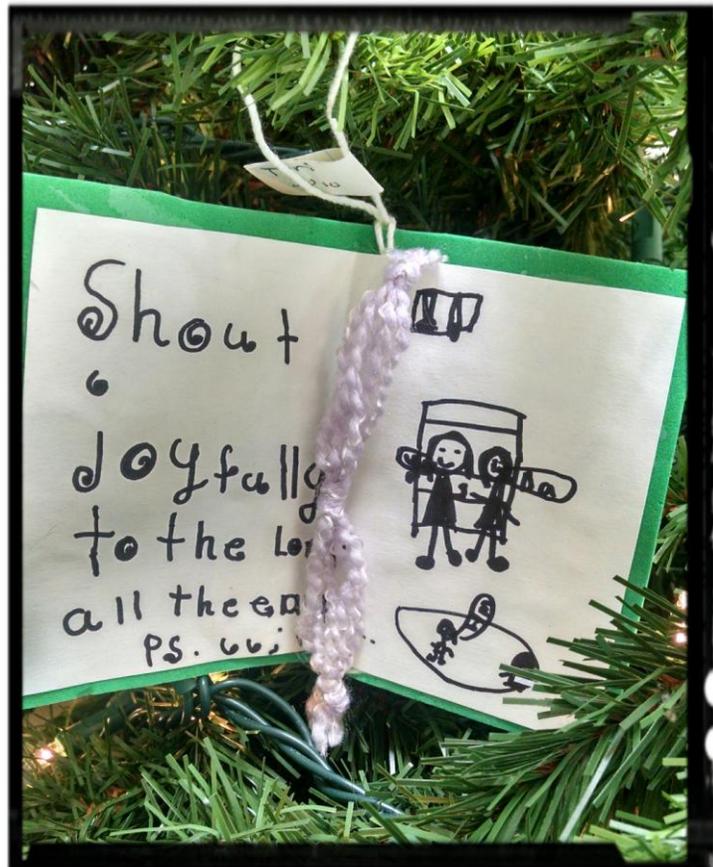
28 "Now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant.

29 "Now therefore, may it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You. For You, O Lord GOD, have spoken; and with Your blessing may the house of Your servant be blessed forever."

**Symbol: harp, song book**

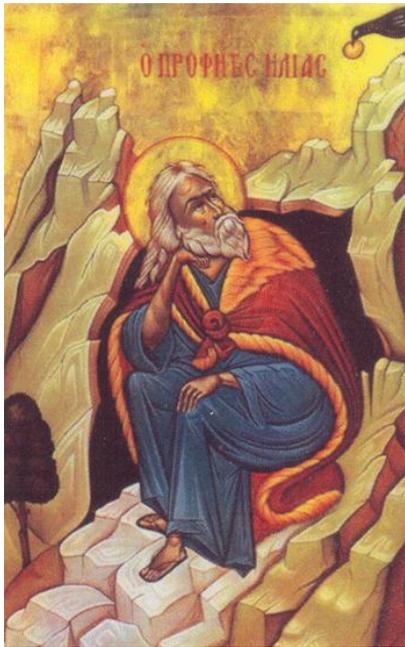
When King David was a boy, his job was to herd and protect his father's flock of sheep. When he was in the pasture with them, he often played his harp and composed songs of prayer to God called the psalms. These are found as a book in the Scriptures today and are often used in prayer, especially in the Divine Liturgy and other church services. The psalms are prophetic, meaning that they were inspired by God to tell us about Him. Many of the psalms speak of Jesus, who was not born for hundreds of years. How did David know about a descendent of his who would not be born for hundreds of years? God told him so, of course. When Jesus would appear and fulfill the things David spoke of in his psalms, the Jews, who would study these scriptures, would surely recognize him! This was God's merciful and loving plan. Those who would hear would understand. Later on, after David became king he would build God a home, the first real Temple. David built the temple in Jerusalem to house the Ark of the Covenant permanently and for the first time. This would become the most sacred place of worship, and because of his love of music, David would organize choirs that would sing constant antiphonal praises to God there. Our church singing is based upon the choirs established by King David. How pleasing this must be to God! Remember, the antiphon says "save us who sing to you, Alleluia!", and not "save us who stand here silently like mopes!"

Look at our songbooks! They can be easily made, using cardboard or craft foam, and paper. We made them look old by rubbing the pages with cooking oil and then lightly singeing the edges before gluing them in place. (Mommy or Daddy should do this part!) The frame of the book is cut from an old cardboard box which was covered on the outside with some fabric scraps. After gluing the inside pages in place, we tucked in a ribbon bookmark. Be sure to write the words of your favorite psalm inside!



## December 8: Elijah

1 Kings 17: 1-16, 18:17-46



1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand; surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."

2 The word of the LORD came to him, saying,

3 "Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.

4 "It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there."

5 So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.

6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the

brook.

7 It happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying,

9 "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."

10 So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink."

11 As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand."

12 But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die."

13 Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son.

14 "For thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth.'"

15 So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days.

16 The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.

17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is this you, you troubler of Israel?"

18 He said, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals.

19 "Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

20 So Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel.

21 Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word.

22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.

23 "Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it.

24 "Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people said, "That is a good idea."

25 So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it."

26 Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made.

27 It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened."

28 So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them.

29 When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.

30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down.

31 Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name."

32 So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed.

33 Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood.

34 And he said, "Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time.

35 The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water.

36 At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word.

37 "Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again."

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God."

40 Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

41 Now Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower."

42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees.

43 He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go back" seven times.

44 It came about at the seventh time, that he said, "Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.'"

45 In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.

46 Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.

### **Symbol: stone altar**

Once again, we see a wonderful example of how God can, and often does, what seems impossible in order to convince us that He loves us! Through Elijah, His prophet, the Lord God is called down upon a soaking wet offering, burning it up in flames from heaven. How awe-struck, and then how sorry, those priests of Baal must have been!

We also see a wonderful pre-figuration of the New Testament account of the multiplication of the loaves and fish! Remember the story of the little boy who shared his lunch? When Jesus was speaking to a crowd one day, it got so late that the people became hungry and needed dinner. A little boy went up to St. Andrew and gave him five loaves of bread and two fish that he had brought with him for his own lunch. He wanted to share! Andrew took the food to Jesus, who blessed it and told the disciples to pass it around to all those present. Now this looked like a problem since there were about 5 thousand men there, with their wives and children too, and only five small loaves and two fish! When they began to share, as Jesus told them, a wonderful thing happened. Everyone had all they wanted to eat and then collected 12 baskets full of scraps that were left over! The same thing happened to Elijah! When he asked the woman for a loaf of bread, she told him she didn't have any more flour and oil to make bread after that day. When she did as Elijah told her, she found she had enough for months! Now, what can we learn from this lesson? If we do as God directs us, we will ALWAYS have what we need. Just like the little boy who shared, and just like the woman who shared with Elijah, we must always share with those in need, and trust that God will take care of us too. When we share what we have, we will ALWAYS have more!

We can make a stone altar for our tree today to remember Elijah. Since real stones are somewhat heavy and could damage our tree, we can make some out of modeling clay. We can glue the stones together with hot glue, (grown-ups need to be on high alert!) with roundish ones along the sides and a large flat one on top. Maybe we could attach some blue clay around the altar to represent the trench of water, some toothpicks make great bundles of firewood, and some paper or clay flames can then be glued on top of the altar. Here's what ours turned out like:





## December 9: Esther

Esther 1: 5-22, 2:1-11,17-20, 3:1-17, 4:1-14, 5:1-14, 6: 1-10

5 When these days were completed, the king gave a banquet lasting seven days for all the people who were present at the citadel in Susa, from the greatest to the least, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

6 There were hangings of fine white and violet linen held by cords of fine purple linen on silver rings and marble columns, and couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones.

7 Drinks were served in golden vessels of various kinds, and the royal wine was plentiful according to the king's bounty.

8 The drinking was done according to the law, there was no compulsion, for so the king had given orders to each official of his household that he should do according to the desires of each person.

9 Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus.

10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus,

11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown in order to display her beauty to the people and the princes, for she was beautiful.

12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. Then the king became very angry and his wrath burned within him.

13 Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times--for it was the custom of the king so to speak before all who knew law and justice

14 and were close to him: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who had access to the king's presence and sat in the first place in the kingdom--

15 "According to law, what is to be done with Queen Vashti, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?"

16 In the presence of the king and the princes, Memucan said, "Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also all the princes and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.

17 "For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women causing them to look with contempt on their husbands by saying, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in to his presence, but she did not come.'

18 "This day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's conduct will speak in the same way to all the king's princes, and there will be plenty of contempt and anger.

19 "If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti may no longer come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she.

20 "When the king's edict which he will make is heard throughout all his kingdom, great as it is, then all women will give honor to their husbands, great and small."

21 This word pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed.

22 So he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province according to its script and to every people according to their language, that every man should be the master in his own house and the one who speaks in the language of his own people.

1 After these things when the anger of King Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.

2 Then the king's attendants, who served him, said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king.

3 "Let the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of his kingdom that they may gather every beautiful young virgin to the citadel of Susa, to the harem, into the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let their cosmetics be given them.

4 "Then let the young lady who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti." And the matter pleased the king, and he did accordingly.

5 Now there was at the citadel in Susa a Jew whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite,

6 who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had exiled.

7 He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had no father or mother. Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

8 So it came about when the command and decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to the citadel of Susa into the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken to the king's palace into the custody of Hegai, who was in charge of the women.

9 Now the young lady pleased him and found favor with him. So he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and food, gave her seven choice maids from the king's palace and transferred her and her maids to the best place in the harem.

10 Esther did not make known her people or her kindred, for Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make them known.

11 Every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared.

17 The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

18 Then the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his princes and his servants; he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts according to the king's bounty.

19 When the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate.

20 Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her; for Esther did what Mordecai told her as she had done when under his care.

1 After these events King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and established his authority over all the princes who were with him.

2 All the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman; for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage.

3 Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why are you transgressing the king's command?"

4 Now it was when they had spoken daily to him and he would not listen to them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's reason would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew.

5 When Haman saw that Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, Haman was filled with rage.

6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him who the people of Mordecai were; therefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

7 In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, Pur, that is the lot, was cast before Haman from day to day and from month to month, until the twelfth month, that is the month Adar.

8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of all other people and they do not observe the king's laws, so it is not in the king's interest to let them remain.

9 "If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who carry on the king's business, to put into the king's treasuries."

10 Then the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.

11 The king said to Haman, "The silver is yours, and the people also, to do with them as you please."

12 Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and it was written just as Haman commanded to the king's satraps, to the governors who were over each province and to the princes of each people, each province according to its script, each people according to its language, being written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring.

13 Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to seize their possessions as plunder.

14 A copy of the edict to be issued as law in every province was published to all the peoples so that they should be ready for this day.

15 The couriers went out impelled by the king's command while the decree was issued at the citadel in Susa; and while the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was in confusion.

1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and wailed loudly and bitterly.

2 He went as far as the king's gate, for no one was to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth.

3 In each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes.

4 Then Esther's maidens and her eunuchs came and told her, and the queen writhed in great anguish. And she sent garments to clothe Mordecai that he might remove his sackcloth from him, but he did not accept them.

5 Then Esther summoned Hathach from the king's eunuchs, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was.

6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai to the city square in front of the king's gate.

7 Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact amount of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews.

8 He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict which had been issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show Esther and inform her, and to order her to go in to the king to implore his favor and to plead with him for her people.

9 Hathach came back and related Mordecai's words to Esther.

10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and ordered him to reply to Mordecai:

11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days."

12 They related Esther's words to Mordecai.

13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews.

14 "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"

15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai,

16 "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."

17 So Mordecai went away and did just as Esther had commanded him.

1 Now it came about on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room, opposite the entrance to the palace.

2 When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight; and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which was in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter.

3 Then the king said to her, "What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you."

4 Esther said, "If it pleases the king, may the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him."

5 Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly that we may do as Esther desires." So the king and Haman came to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

6 As they drank their wine at the banquet, the king said to Esther, "What is your petition, for it shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done."

7 So Esther replied, "My petition and my request is:

8 if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and do what I request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king says."

9 Then Haman went out that day glad and pleased of heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate and that he did not stand up or tremble before him, Haman was filled with anger against Mordecai.

10 Haman controlled himself, however, went to his house and sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh.

11 Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches, and the number of his sons, and every instance where the king had magnified him and how he had promoted him above the princes and servants of the king.

12 Haman also said, "Even Esther the queen let no one but me come with the king to the banquet which she had prepared; and tomorrow also I am invited by her with the king.

13 "Yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

14 Then Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, " Have a gallows fifty cubits high made and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it; then go joyfully with the king to the banquet." And the advice pleased Haman, so he had the gallows made.

1 During that night the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king.

2 It was found written what Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, that they had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

3 The king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

4 So the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace in order to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him.

5 The king's servants said to him, "Behold, Haman is standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in."

6 So Haman came in and the king said to him, "What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?"

7 Then Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king desires to honor,

8 let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed;

9 and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, 'Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.'"

10 Then the king said to Haman, "Take quickly the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king's gate; do not fall short in anything of all that you have said."

11 So Haman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor."

12 Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried home, mourning, with his head covered.

13 Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him."

14 While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hastily brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

1 Now the king and Haman came to drink wine with Esther the queen.

2 And the king said to Esther on the second day also as they drank their wine at the banquet, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done."

3 Then Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request;

4 for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king."



5 Then King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?"

6 Esther said, "A foe and an enemy is this wicked Haman!" Then Haman became terrified before the king and queen.

7 The king arose in his anger from drinking wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm had been determined against him by the king.

8 Now when the king returned from the palace garden into the place where they were drinking wine, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he even assault the queen with me in the house?" As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

9 Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs who were before the king said, "Behold indeed, the gallows standing at Haman's house fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai who spoke good on behalf of the king!" And the king said, "Hang him on it."

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, and the king's anger subsided.

Does Queen Esther remind us of anyone? She was born a Jew, yet was given in marriage to the King after the first queen was found to be disobedient and was sent out of the kingdom. Esther won his favor by being respectful of his authority and obedient to his will. She then interceded for her people so that they may be saved from a law that would result in their deaths. Who has done all these things on our behalf? That's right! Our Blessed Mother, Mary, Queen of Heaven! She was born a human being, like us. She did not sin against God as did our first mother, Eve. Mary was given in spiritual marriage to the Holy Spirit to produce Christ our Savior and won the Eternal Father's favor by saying "yes" to his will, thereby making her a wonderful advocate for us before His heavenly throne. As Esther adorned herself with jewelery and perfumes in order to make herself beautiful for her husband, the King, Our Lady adorns herself with good deeds and acquired graces and virtues, making her soul absolutely adorable before the Lord! Whatever she asks, she obtains! Remember to pray to her for intercession whenever you desire something from God the Father, and to make her our model of obedience and virtue!

### **Symbol: Esther's jewelery**

We have used many things to make jewelery for Esther, but mostly we like aluminum foil. It can be shaped into bracelets, necklaces and tiaras very easily by even the littlest of hands. Sometimes beads are fun to string and hang like bracelets too!



## December 10: Isaiah

Isaiah 1: 1, 10-20, 6: 1-13, 8:11-9:7

1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

10 Hear the word of the LORD,

You rulers of Sodom;  
Give ear to the instruction of our God,  
You people of Gomorrah.

11 "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?"  
Says the LORD.

"I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams  
And the fat of fed cattle;  
And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls,

lambs or goats.

12 "When you come to appear before Me,  
Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?

13 "Bring your worthless offerings no longer,  
Incense is an abomination to Me  
New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies--  
I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.

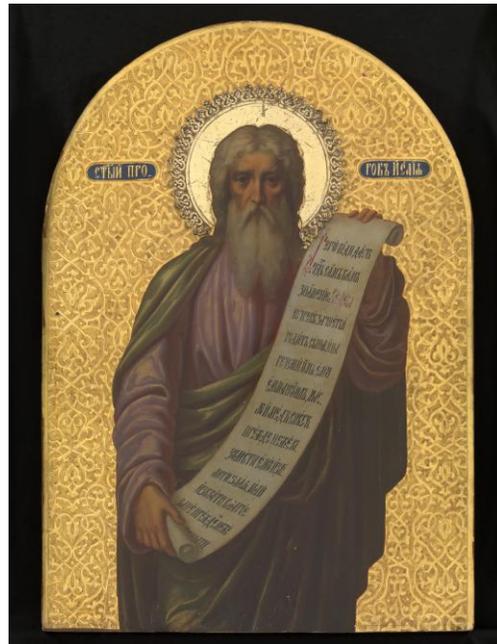
14 "I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts,  
They have become a burden to Me;  
I am weary of bearing them.

15 "So when you spread out your hands in prayer,  
I will hide My eyes from you;  
Yes, even though you multiply prayers,  
I will not listen  
Your hands are covered with blood.

16 "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;  
Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight  
Cease to do evil,

17 Learn to do good;  
Seek justice,  
Reprove the ruthless,  
Defend the orphan,  
Plead for the widow.

18 "Come now, and let us reason together,"  
Says the LORD,  
"Though your sins are as scarlet,  
They will be as white as snow;



Though they are red like crimson,  
They will be like wool.  
19" If you consent and obey,  
You will eat the best of the land;  
20" But if you refuse and rebel,  
You will be devoured by the sword "  
Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken

1 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.

2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

3 And one called out to another and said,  
"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts,  
The whole earth is full of His glory."

4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

5 Then I said,  
"Woe is me, for I am ruined!  
Because I am a man of unclean lips,  
And I live among a people of unclean lips;  
For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.

7 He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

9 He said, "Go, and tell this people:  
'Keep on listening, but do not perceive;  
Keep on looking, but do not understand.'  
10 "Render the hearts of this people insensitive,  
Their ears dull,  
And their eyes dim,  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
Hear with their ears,

Understand with their hearts,  
And return and be healed."

- 11 Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered,  
"Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant,  
Houses are without people  
And the land is utterly desolate,  
12 "The LORD has removed men far away,  
And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.  
13 "Yet there will be a tenth portion in it,  
And it will again be subject to burning,  
Like a terebinth or an oak  
Whose stump remains when it is felled  
The holy seed is its stump."

11 For thus the LORD spoke to me with mighty power and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying,

- 12 "You are not to say, 'It is a conspiracy!'  
In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy,  
And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it.  
13 "It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy.  
And He shall be your fear,  
And He shall be your dread.  
14 "Then He shall become a sanctuary;  
But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over,  
And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.  
15 "Many will stumble over them,  
Then they will fall and be broken;  
They will even be snared and caught."

16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

17 And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.

18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

19 When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

21 They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward.

22 Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness.

1 But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

2 The people who walk in darkness

Will see a great light;

Those who live in a dark land,

The light will shine on them.

3 You shall multiply the nation,

You shall increase their gladness;

They will be glad in Your presence

As with the gladness of harvest,

As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

4 For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,

The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.

5 For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult,

And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;

And the government will rest on His shoulders;

And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,

On the throne of David and over his kingdom,

To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness

From then on and forevermore

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

### **Symbol: Fire tongs with hot coal**

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us. And the government will be upon his shoulders...the Prince of Peace! Who is Isaiah talking about? Why, it's our Jesus! The Messiah was coming! During Isaiah's time, the world was changing and people were becoming frightened by the things they saw happening around them. People claimed to belong to God, but were not obeying Him. Because they weren't obeying, God withdrew Himself from them and allowed the evils of their time to overcome them. The few people who remained faithful to God were waiting for the Messiah to come, and they were growing impatient. They were weary, and scared that the changes they saw in the world were getting to become too impossible to bear. These changes were the signal that a great event was happening. The savior would soon be among them. Isaiah reminded them not to act like those who did not

know God. These people behaved as if the coming of the Messiah was something frightening. They were consulting spirits and mediums to ask for a reason for the changes they saw in the world order, instead of going to God in prayer! We know that God forbids us to do things like that. Isaiah reminded them that God is in control. We need to remember Isaiah's advice in our own time as well! When our world, our government, and those we encounter in our daily lives act as if there is no God, we must be lights to them, for we know Jesus is coming someday. When others are frightened by the scary things in the world, we must remain at peace and because we know Who is in charge! When people begin turn to things of darkness, we must go to the Author of all things, Our God, to explain everything to us because we are His. Come Lord Jesus! We are waiting to welcome You!



Isaiah had to be purified in order to stand before Almighty God. He was afraid because he knew how pure and perfect God was, and how far from pure and perfect he was. Only after his lips were touched by the coal, and purified, could he answer the Lord and volunteer to do His work. Let's make a set of tongs and a "hot" coal to remember to keep ourselves "on fire" with love for Jesus in the Eucharist, so that we may be able to do His work like Isaiah!

First, we took a chenille pipe cleaner and wrapped it in a piece of heavy duty foil, folding it over and over itself, about an inch wide. We then folded it in half to form a set of tongs. To make the coal, we kneaded some black, red and yellow clay, loosely to form a "glowing hot coal", shaping it into a square to look like a charcoal brickette. We used hot glue to hold the coal in place before placing our tongs on our tree.

## December 11: Jeremiah

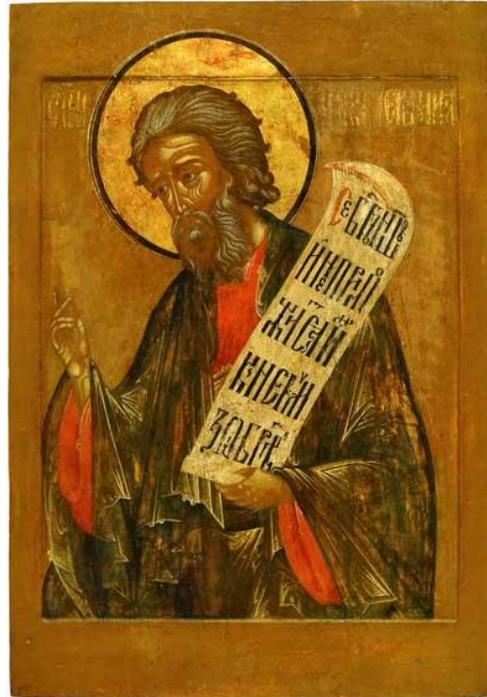
Jeremiah 1: 4-41, 2:4-13, 7:1-15, 8:22-9:7

4 Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,  
5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
And before you were born I consecrated you;  
I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."  
6 Then I said, "Alas, Lord GOD!  
Behold, I do not know how to speak,  
Because I am a youth."  
7 But the LORD said to me,  
"Do not say, 'I am a youth,'  
Because everywhere I send you, you shall go,  
And all that I command you, you shall speak."  
8 "Do not be afraid of them,  
For I am with you to deliver you," declares the  
LORD.

9 Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched  
my mouth, and the LORD said to me,  
"Behold, I have put My words in your mouth."  
10 "See, I have appointed you this day over the  
nations and over the kingdoms,  
To pluck up and to break down,  
To destroy and to overthrow,  
To build and to plant."

4 Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel.

5 Thus says the LORD,  
"What injustice did your fathers find in Me,  
That they went far from Me  
And walked after emptiness and became empty?  
6 "They did not say, 'Where is the LORD  
Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt,  
Who led us through the wilderness,  
Through a land of deserts and of pits,  
Through a land of drought and of deep darkness,  
Through a land that no one crossed  
And where no man dwelt?'  
7 "I brought you into the fruitful land  
To eat its fruit and its good things  
But you came and defiled My land,  
And My inheritance you made an abomination.  
8 "The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?'  
And those who handle the law did not know Me;  
The rulers also transgressed against Me,



And the prophets prophesied by Baal  
And walked after things that did not profit.  
9 "Therefore I will yet contend with you," declares the LORD,  
"And with your sons' sons I will contend.  
10 "For cross to the coastlands of Kittim and see,  
And send to Kedar and observe closely  
And see if there has been such a thing as this!  
11 "Has a nation changed gods  
When they were not gods?  
But My people have changed their glory  
For that which does not profit.  
12 "Be appalled, O heavens, at this,  
And shudder, be very desolate," declares the LORD.  
13 "For My people have committed two evils:  
They have forsaken Me,  
The fountain of living waters,  
To hew for themselves cisterns,  
Broken cisterns  
That can hold no water.

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

2 "Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house and proclaim there this word and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah, who enter by these gates to worship the LORD!'"

3 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place.

4 "Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'

5 "For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor,

6 if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin,

7 then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

8 "Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail.

9 "Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known,

10 then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered!--that you may do all these abominations?'

11 "Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," declares the LORD.

12 "But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.

13 "And now, because you have done all these things," declares the LORD, "and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer,

14 therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, as I did to Shiloh.

15 "I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, all the offspring of Ephraim.

22 Is there no balm in Gilead?

Is there no physician there?

Why then has not the health of the daughter of my people been restored?

1 Oh that my head were waters

And my eyes a fountain of tears,

That I might weep day and night

For the slain of the daughter of my people!

2 Oh that I had in the desert

A wayfarers' lodging place;

That I might leave my people

And go from them!

For all of them are adulterers,

An assembly of treacherous men.

3 "They bend their tongue like their bow;

Lies and not truth prevail in the land;

For they proceed from evil to evil,

And they do not know Me," declares the LORD.

4 "Let everyone be on guard against his neighbor,

And do not trust any brother;

Because every brother deals craftily,

And every neighbor goes about as a slanderer.

5 "Everyone deceives his neighbor

And does not speak the truth,

They have taught their tongue to speak lies;

They weary themselves committing iniquity.

6 "Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit;

Through deceit they refuse to know Me," declares the LORD.

7 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts,

"Behold, I will refine them and assay them;

For what else can I do, because of the daughter of My people?

8 "Their tongue is a deadly arrow;

It speaks deceit;

With his mouth one speaks peace to his neighbor,

But inwardly he sets an ambush for him.  
9 "Shall I not punish them for these things?" declares the LORD.  
"On a nation such as this  
Shall I not avenge Myself?  
10 "For the mountains I will take up a weeping and wailing,  
And for the pastures of the wilderness a dirge,  
Because they are laid waste so that no one passes through,  
And the lowing of the cattle is not heard;  
Both the birds of the sky and the beasts have fled; they are gone.  
11 "I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins,  
A haunt of jackals;  
And I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant."

**Symbol: tears**



Oh how sad our Lord was when His people strayed from Him! His people, the Israelites, had chosen to follow false gods, abandon the teachings of the one true God, and they still had the nerve to call themselves His followers and worship in His presence as if they had not sinned! So God called his faithful servant, Jeremiah to go to them and correct them. At first, Jeremiah was afraid to do it, because he was not important, and he was only a young man with no authority. Because he was afraid, God told him something wonderful! He told Jeremiah that before God had made Jeremiah and placed him in his mother's womb, God knew him! God had made him to be just as he was, just for that particular mission. For this reason, he should not be afraid. God would go there with him and direct his every move. How loving and good our God is! He knows us even before we are born! Every baby in every mother's womb is just as purposefully and lovingly created as Jeremiah, and each has a mission of his very own for which God made him. When people forget this, God is sad.

My little disciples like to cut God's teardrops from sturdy blue plastic or sparkly craft foam, and hang them from some fishing line, or other clear filament, like a mobile. They can string many together to form a "flowing" cascade of tears, or just hang them singly on the tree.

## December 12: Micah

Micah 4: 2-9, 5: 1-7, 7:7-20

<sup>2</sup> Many nations will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways,

so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.

They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

<sup>4</sup> Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.

<sup>5</sup> All the nations may walk in the name of their gods, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.

<sup>6</sup> “In that day,” declares the LORD, “I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief.

<sup>7</sup> I will make the lame my remnant, those driven away a strong nation.

The LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever.

<sup>8</sup> As for you, watchtower of the flock, stronghold of Daughter Zion, the former dominion will be restored to you; kingship will come to Daughter Jerusalem.”

<sup>9</sup> Why do you now cry aloud—have you no king?

<sup>1</sup> Marshal your troops now, city of troops, for a siege is laid against us.

They will strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod.

<sup>2</sup> “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

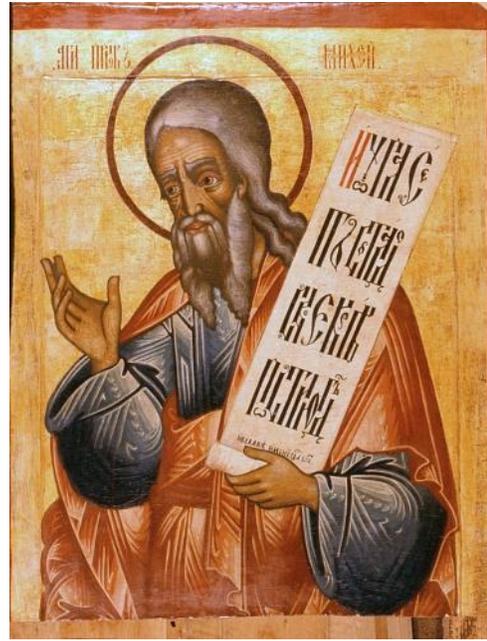
<sup>3</sup> Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

<sup>4</sup> He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

<sup>5</sup> And he will be our peace when the Assyrians invade our land and march through our fortresses. We will raise against them seven shepherds, even eight commanders,

<sup>6</sup> who will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod with drawn sword.

He will deliver us from the Assyrians when they invade our land and march across our borders.



<sup>7</sup> But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.

<sup>8</sup> Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise.

Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light.

<sup>9</sup> Because I have sinned against him, I will bear the LORD's wrath, until he pleads my case and upholds my cause. He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness.

<sup>10</sup> Then my enemy will see it and will be covered with shame, she who said to me,

"Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will see her downfall; even now she will be trampled underfoot like mire in the streets.

<sup>11</sup> The day for building your walls will come, the day for extending your boundaries.

<sup>12</sup> In that day people will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, even from Egypt to the Euphrates and from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.

<sup>13</sup> The earth will become desolate because of its inhabitants, as the result of their deeds.

<sup>14</sup> Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance, which lives by itself in a forest, in fertile pasturelands. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in days long ago.

<sup>15</sup> "As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show them my wonders."

<sup>16</sup> Nations will see and be ashamed, deprived of all their power.

They will put their hands over their mouths and their ears will become deaf.

<sup>17</sup> They will lick dust like a snake, like creatures that crawl on the ground.

They will come trembling out of their dens;

they will turn in fear to the LORD our God and will be afraid of you.

<sup>18</sup> Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.

<sup>19</sup> You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

<sup>20</sup> You will be faithful to Jacob, and show love to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago.

### **Symbol: a loaf of bread**

The prophet Micah tells the Israelites very plainly that God plans to send them a savior Who would be born in the town of Bethlehem. Where is Bethlehem, anyway? Has anyone ever heard of this little town before? Probably not. Bethlehem wasn't very big or very well known and it was not often that anything noteworthy happened there. But it is a town which is very small and very ordinary and hardly the place one would expect to find a king. Why would God choose such a place to introduce the Messiah to the world? We must remember that God usually does such things. We remember that when He chose the King of Israel from among the sons of Jesse, he rejected the oldest, the wisest and the fittest son in favor of the smallest and weakest one. Eventually, little David would become a great king and the ancestor of the Lord. Now, God had chosen the weakest and smallest place once again, to be the birthplace of the Savior of the world. Why? Well, we must understand that when we see monumental things happening, we must always attribute them to God. He wants us to understand the power of His will, and know beyond all doubt that He is mighty. No man could orchestrate the wonders that He does; He even uses the weakest tools to do the mightiest deeds so that we KNOW beyond all doubt, it was His work and not ours!

The name Bethlehem means "house of bread" ...very interesting. Jesus would someday be born there and become the Bread of Life. Let's make a loaf of bread to hang upon our Jesse tree today.

We can use a simple salt dough by mixing:

½ c salt,  
1 c. water and  
2 c flour and kneading it well.



Shape the ornaments into round flat loaf shapes. If you want, your loaf of bread can be shaped



to resemble the communion "lamb" that Father uses to consecrate into the Body of Jesus during the Divine Liturgy. You can mark it with the sign of the cross, and the Greek letters **IC XC** which stand for "Jesus Christ", just like the real communion "lambs" so that when you see it, you can remember that Jesus called Himself "the Bread of Life"! In the gospel of St. John, we read that Jesus said, *"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."* (John 6:51)

You can brush your ornaments with egg yolk to make them golden and pretty before you bake them. Be sure to make a hole in each one with a toothpick or a drinking straw before baking, so that you can hang it on the

tree! Bake for one hour at 325 degrees until they are hardened.

## December 13: Habakkuk

Habakkuk 1:1- 2:1, 3:16-19

1 The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

2 How long, O LORD, will I call for help,  
And You will not hear?  
I cry out to You, "Violence!"  
Yet You do not save.

3 Why do You make me see iniquity,  
And cause me to look on wickedness?  
Yes, destruction and violence are  
before me;

Strife exists and contention arises.

4 Therefore the law is ignored  
And justice is never upheld  
For the wicked surround the righteous;  
Therefore justice comes out perverted.

5 "Look among the nations! Observe!  
Be astonished! Wonder!  
Because I am doing something in your  
days--

You would not believe if you were told.

6 "For behold, I am raising up the  
Chaldeans,

That fierce and impetuous people  
Who march throughout the earth  
To seize dwelling places which are not theirs.

7 "They are dreaded and feared;  
Their justice and authority originate with themselves.

8 "Their horses are swifter than leopards  
And keener than wolves in the evening  
Their horsemen come galloping,  
Their horsemen come from afar;  
They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.

9 "All of them come for violence.  
Their horde of faces moves forward.  
They collect captives like sand.

10 "They mock at kings  
And rulers are a laughing matter to them  
They laugh at every fortress  
And heap up rubble to capture it.

11 "Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on  
But they will be held guilty,  
They whose strength is their god."



- 12 Are You not from everlasting,  
O LORD, my God, my Holy One?  
We will not die  
You, O LORD, have appointed them to judge;  
And You, O Rock, have established them to correct.
- 13 Your eyes are too pure to approve evil,  
And You can not look on wickedness with favor  
Why do You look with favor  
On those who deal treacherously?  
Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up  
Those more righteous than they?
- 14 Why have You made men like the fish of the sea,  
Like creeping things without a ruler over them?
- 15 The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook,  
Drag them away with their net,  
And gather them together in their fishing net.  
Therefore they rejoice and are glad.
- 16 Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net  
And burn incense to their fishing net;  
Because through these things their catch is large,  
And their food is plentiful.
- 17 Will they therefore empty their net  
And continually slay nations without sparing?
- 1 I will stand on my guard post  
And station myself on the rampart;  
And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me,  
And how I may reply when I am reprov'd.
- 16 I heard and my inward parts trembled,  
At the sound my lips quivered  
Decay enters my bones,  
And in my place I tremble  
Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress,  
For the people to arise who will invade us.
- 17 Though the fig tree should not blossom  
And there be no fruit on the vines,  
Though the yield of the olive should fail  
And the fields produce no food,  
Though the flock should be cut off from the fold  
And there be no cattle in the stalls,
- 18 Yet I will exult in the LORD,  
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
- 19 The Lord GOD is my strength,  
And He has made my feet like hinds' feet,

And makes me walk on my high places.  
For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.

**Symbol: stone watchtower**

How scary it must have been for Habbakuk to hear the Lord tell him of His plan. He was preparing the enemy to rise up against Habbakuk's people and overcome them. When he heard the word of



God, he said that his "inward parts trembled"; yet this prophet did not abandon his trust in God. He waited upon his watchtower for the enemy to approach. He expected it because God foretold it, and He does not lie. But Habbakuk also knew that our God loves us, and that he must have a reason for doing something so dreadful, even if he didn't understand what that reason was. He needed to accept God's will even if it would be difficult, and trust that it would be even worse if he did not. We must imitate his faithful trust. Our symbol today is the stone watchtower from which Habbakuk looked for the enemy to advance. When we see it, we should remember to be as vigilant as he was and be prepared to confront our enemies if God so wills it.

The watchtower can be made from clay, cardboard, foamboard, or any other medium. We made ours from foam coffee cups that we covered with paper bricks. You can even place Habbakuk on top, looking for the Chaldeans!

## December 14: Nehemiah



Nehemiah 1:1- 2;8, 6:15-16, 13:10-22

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capitol,

2 that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem.

3 They said to me, "The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and

the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire."

4 When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

5 I said, "I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

6 let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned.

7 "We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.

8 "Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples;

9 but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.'

10 "They are Your servants and Your people whom You redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand.

11 "O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name, and make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man " Now I was the cupbearer to the king.

1 And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.

2 So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart." Then I was very much afraid.

3 I said to the king, "Let the king live forever Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?"

4 Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.

5 I said to the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

6 Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, "How long will your journey be, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time.

7 And I said to the king, "If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah,

8 and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go " And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.

15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days.

16 When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

10 I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given them, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field.

11 So I reprimanded the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Then I gathered them together and restored them to their posts.

12 All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine and oil into the storehouses.

13 In charge of the storehouses I appointed Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and in addition to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered reliable, and it was their task to distribute to their kinsmen.

14 Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its services.

15 In those days I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading them on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs and all kinds of loads, and they brought them into Jerusalem on the sabbath day So I admonished them on the day they sold food.

16 Also men of Tyre were living there who imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold them to the sons of Judah on the sabbath, even in Jerusalem.

17 Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing you are doing, by profaning the sabbath day?"

18 "Did not your fathers do the same, so that our God brought on us and on this city all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath."

19 It came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates so that no load would enter on the sabbath day.

20 Once or twice the traders and merchants of every kind of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem.

21 Then I warned them and said to them, "Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will use force against you." From that time on they did not come on the sabbath.

22 And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the sabbath day For this also remember me, O my God, and have compassion on me according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness.

**Symbol: city gate**

When Nehemiah heard that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and that the God's holy city was in ruins, he was so distressed. He began to pray and fast and beg God for help for his beloved city. His heartfelt prayer was soon answered. God put him in a position to go to Jerusalem and rebuild it, and rebuild it he did! Not only did he fix it physically, but he began to repair the behavior of the people whose bad habits and practices were the cause of its fall in the first place. Notice how the things he restored had to do with proper behavior on the Sabbath! How important this must be to God. Nehemiah tells us that when the sons of Israel profaned the Sabbath by buying and selling goods on that day, they brought the wrath of God upon the city.

Buying and selling things on Sunday must be very displeasing to God. We need to strive to keep Sunday a holy day, not like any other, but set apart for rest and growing closer to Our God.



Let us build a city gate as our ornament today. Remember that it must be CLOSED on Sunday! (see our sign!) We can use blocks such as lego's or other brick-shaped things, or we can cut it out of a piece of cardboard. We can decorate our gate with a pretty wreath or ribbon if we like.

## December 15: The Three Brave Youths

Daniel 3:1 -30

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

3 Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language,

5 that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.

6 "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."

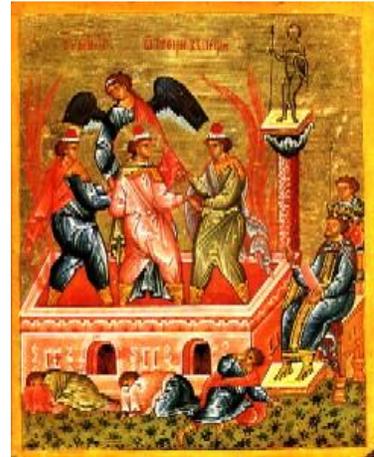
7 Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

8 For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.

9 They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever!

10 "You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image.

11 "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.



12 "There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?"

15 "Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.

17 "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

18 "But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

20 He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire.

21 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.

22 For this reason, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

23 But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king."

25 He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire.

27 The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.

28 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God.

29 "Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way."

30 Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

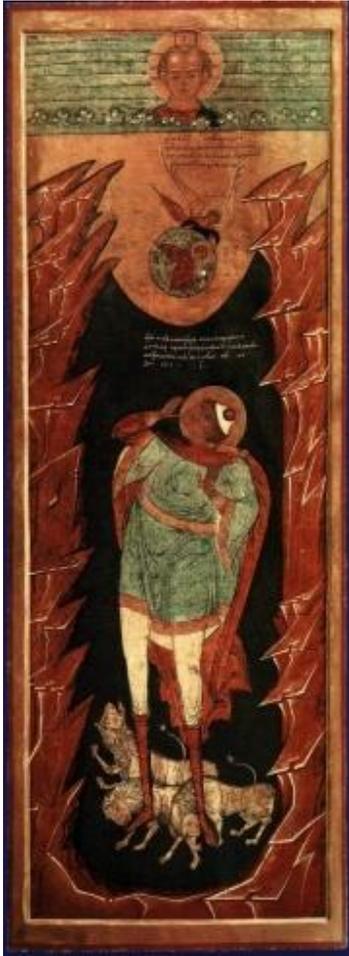
### **Symbol: Flame**

Hooray for our three friends! Look how Our God protects those who love Him! Did you know that God intended to teach us another lesson by telling us this story? Did you notice how, although the three young men were inside the white-hot furnace, they were not consumed by its flames? This is an analogy that God is making about Our Blessed Mother who encountered God so closely when she became the mother of His Son, Jesus! Remember that they say that no one can see God the Father and yet live, but she encountered God at an even deeper level, and she lived! She encountered the white-hot furnace of His presence, but was not consumed by it! (Remember Moses and the burning bush which was not consumed? This too represents the Theotokos!) Not only did she survive, she brought God to others by introducing them to her Son. She made God encounterable!

Let's make an image of the flames of that white-hot furnace. We use the same flame design that we use to decorate the children's Pentecost hats, that is, three concentric flame shapes, the largest being orange, the middle one yellow and the innermost flame is white. We like to make two flames, back to back, so that it is decorated on both sides. We can use either construction paper or craft foam. Older children can even use felt that can be stitched together and appliquéd for a more lasting ornament. (By the way, we decorate a green paper crown with these flames at Pentecost, and our kids wear them at dinner, which is concluded with a green "Holy Spirit Cake" adorned with marzipan fruits and gifts!...yum!)



## December 16: Daniel in the Lion's Den



### Daniel 6: 1-28

1 It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom,

2 and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss.

3 Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

4 Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.

5 Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God."

6 Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever!

7 "All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the

king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den.

8 "Now, O king establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked."

9 Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

10 Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.

12 Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king's injunction, "Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is

to be cast into the lions' den?" The king replied, "The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked."

13 Then they answered and spoke before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day."

14 Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him.

15 Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

16 Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you."

17A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.

18 Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.

19 Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den.

20 When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

21 Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever!

22 "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."

23Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

24 The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

25 Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound!

26 "I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel;

For He is the living God and enduring forever,

And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed,  
And His dominion will be forever.

27 "He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders  
In heaven and on earth,  
Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

28 So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

**Symbol: Lion**



Once again we see how well God protects His beloved servants who do not forsake Him! Even a powerful beast like the lion can be tamed by God when we call upon Him for help. We all have times in our lives when we must spend a night alone with a scary "lion", locked in the den like Daniel. The lion can take on many different

forms; it can be anything that scares us and threatens us. The enemy is often described as a hungry lion, who waits to devour

us. If we trust in God, like Daniel, He will surely send His angel to hold the mouth of our lion shut, take away his ability to hurt us, and then deliver us unharmed.

We need to trust.

Small paper cake plates are used for this, traced on three sheets of construction paper. The circles are then cut out and "fringed" to make the ruffled mane, and stapled onto the plate. We cut out two round ears, a triangle nose, two round black eyes and two half-circle eyelids (same color as the ears) and glued them onto the lion's face. Last, we drew the mouth and whiskers and hung him on our tree!



# December 17: Jonah and the Whale

Jonah 1:1-3:10

1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying,

2 "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me."

3 But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

4 The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.

5 Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep.

6 So the captain approached him and said, "How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish."

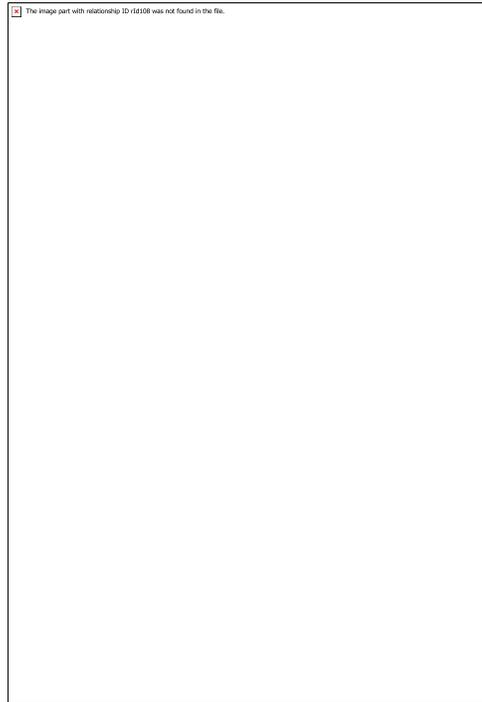
7 Each man said to his mate, "Come! Let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us ". So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

8 Then they said to him, "Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"

9He said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land."

10 Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, "How could you do this?" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

11 So they said to him, "What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?"--for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy.



12 He said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you."

13 However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them.

14 Then they called on the LORD and said, "We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased."

15 So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging.

16 Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

17 And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

1 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish,

2 and he said,

"I called out of my distress to the LORD,  
And He answered me  
I cried for help from the depth of Sheol;  
You heard my voice.

3 "For You had cast me into the deep,  
Into the heart of the seas,  
And the current engulfed me  
All Your breakers and billows passed over me.

4 "So I said, 'I have been expelled from Your sight  
Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.'

5 "Water encompassed me to the point of death  
The great deep engulfed me,  
Weeds were wrapped around my head.

6 "I descended to the roots of the mountains  
The earth with its bars was around me forever,  
But You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.

7 "While I was fainting away,  
I remembered the LORD,  
And my prayer came to You,  
Into Your holy temple.

8 "Those who regard vain idols  
Forsake their faithfulness,

9 But I will sacrifice to You

With the voice of thanksgiving  
That which I have vowed I will pay  
Salvation is from the LORD."

10 Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,

2 "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you."

3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk.

4 Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

5 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

6 When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes.

7 He issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water.

8 "But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands.

9 "Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish."

10 When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.

**Symbol: whale**

Jonah had a job to do. God sent him to Nineveh to tell those living there that they would endure a great calamity if they did not amend their ways and begin to live holy lives. Jonah tried to run away from God and from his duty to Him by sailing away on that boat, but you cannot hide from God. When Jonah was swallowed by the whale, he remained there for three days, just as Christ stayed in the tomb of the earth after his death for three days. When the whale spit him out, he was "resurrected" like Christ and walked among the Ninevites,

accomplishing the will of God by talking with them for 40 days. When they heard Jonah, the people repented and were saved.

We've made our whale out of an old unmatched sock. Just stuff the toe with cotton batting, then use some thread or string to tie the opening shut. We then used a pipe cleaner to divide the "fins" of the tail in half. Google eyes are almost a must for our friend, as well as a big red smile and a blue chenille "spout" on top!



## December 18: The Annunciation to Mary by the Archangel Gabriel

**Luke 1:26-38**

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,

27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

29 But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

32 "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;

33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

36 "And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.

37 "For nothing will be impossible with God."

38 And Mary said, "Behold, the handmaiden of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

**Symbol: white lily**



A lily is a symbol for purity. Purity is virtue by which a soul maintains a state of grace, the perfect image that God intended for him at his baptism. When God created Our Lady, He knew that she would be the mother of Jesus, so he made her different from every other person who was ever created because she had perfect purity. She didn't even inherit original sin from our first parents, Adam and Eve, so she was free of the influence that it usually has upon human souls like us, such as our tendency toward sin. When it came time for God to implement His plan of salvation for us, He desired that His bride be treated with the utmost respect. He went about the courtship of Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin, as any upright human man would do, respecting the feelings and wishes of His prospective bride. He sent His messenger to ask for her hand in an everlasting union and for her permission so that He may bring about the purpose for that union, the conception of the baby Jesus. Because she was so pure, she desired the will of God with her whole heart, and was able to



answer God with a most perfect YES!!! Our Blessed Mother said "yes" to God! She would be the bride of the Holy Spirit and bring forth His Child, the Lord Jesus. In turn, she said yes to God when she accepted us as her children as well.

Here's a great way to make a lily, the symbol of the purity of the Blessed Mother. On a piece of white paper, craft foam or felt, trace your child's hand. They can then cut it out. To make the stem, wrap a green chenille pipe cleaner around half of a yellow one so that the yellow can be made into the stamen of the flower, while the green becomes the stem. Yellow pony beads can be used to embellish the stamen, or to make it yellow if you happen not to have yellow ones! Then wrap the white hand print around that end of the stem, place a leaf (cut out of green paper, foam, felt etc.) on either side and staple it all to the chenille to make the lily! Then the beautiful flower can then be hung on our tree!



## December 19: Elizabeth & Zacharias

### Luke 1:5-25

5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

6 They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

8 Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division,

9 according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.



10 And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.

11 And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

12 Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him.

13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

14 "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

15 "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the

Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.

16 "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

17 "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18 Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years."

19 The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

20 "And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

21 The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple.

22 But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute.

23 When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.

24 After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying,

25 "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men."



**Symbol: feather pen and paper**

**Isaiah 40:3** *A voice of one calling:  
"In the wilderness prepare  
the way for the LORD;  
make straight in the desert  
a highway for our God.*

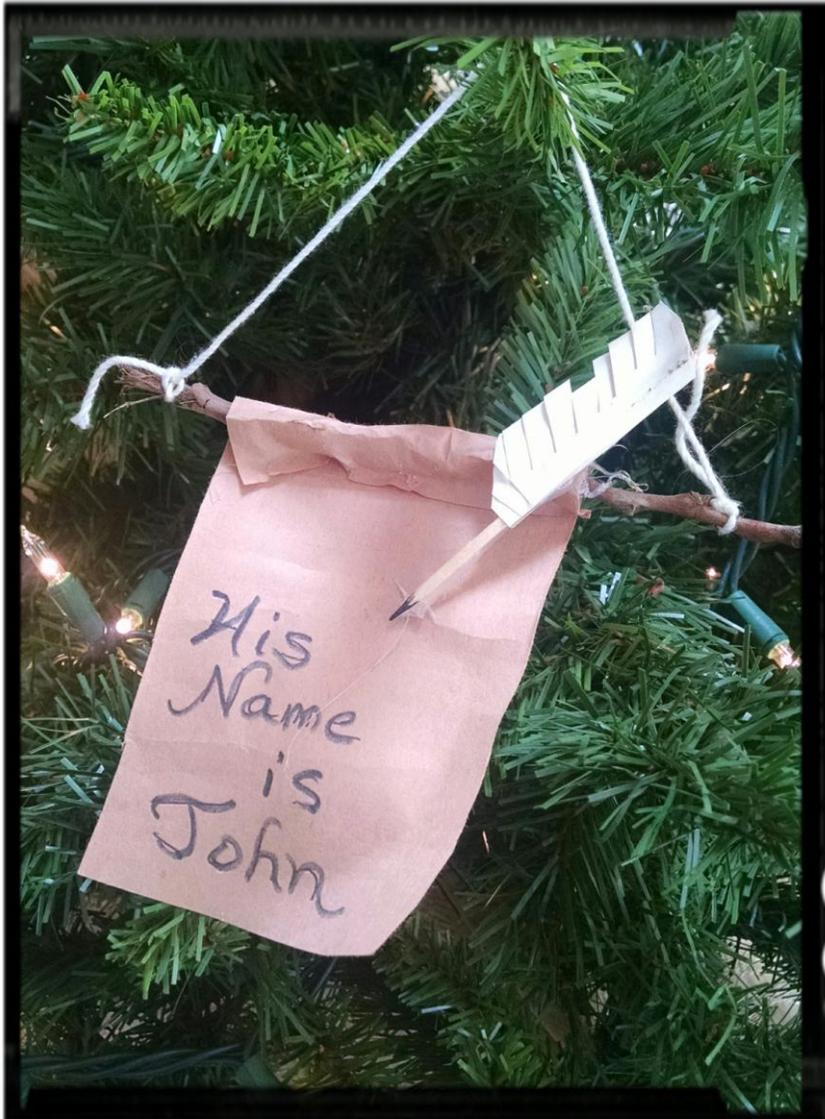
When Isaiah prophesied these words he was referring to John the Baptist, the baby spoken of in this passage. Isaiah was telling us what John's job would be: to prepare people to recognize and accept John's cousin, Jesus, as the Messiah. John would be threatened by King Herod as Jesus was when he fled to Egypt, but John and his mother, Elizabeth would flee to Egypt where he would fast and pray and build paths and roadways that would later be traveled by Jesus. John would later come to baptize Christ



in the river Jordan at the beginning of His public ministry and recommend that his own followers would stop following him and follow Jesus instead. He once stated that he would decrease so that Christ would increase. John also said something very telling for us in our own time. When someone asked Jesus about John, the Lord said that he was the "holiest man ever born of a woman". Later, at Jesus baptism, John would tell Jesus that he was hesitant to baptize Him because he felt he was not worthy to stoop down and loose His sandal strap. Jesus told him that this was indeed true, but that he

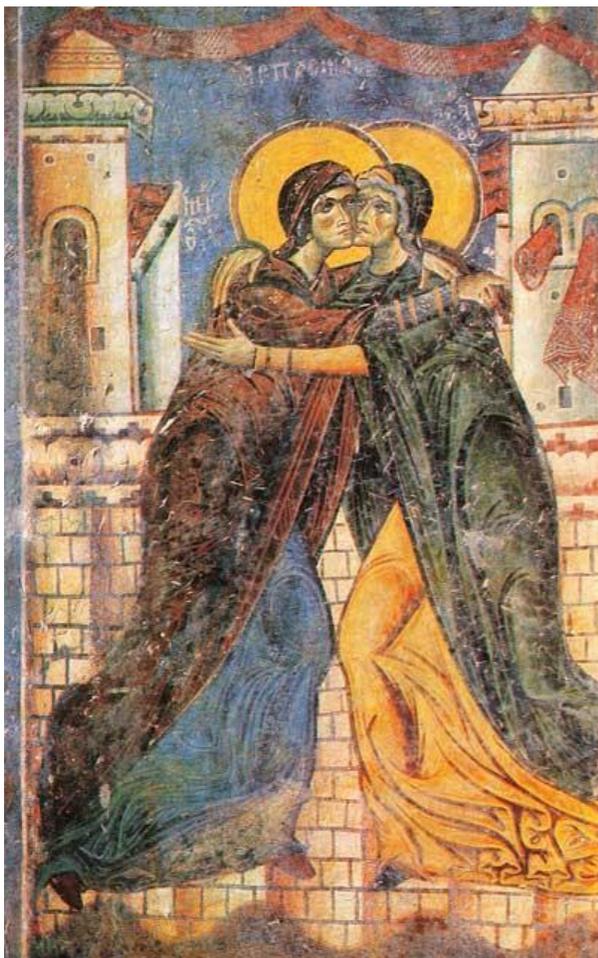
must oblige for God's will to be done perfectly. Now, if the holiest man who ever was born was truly, according to Christ Himself, unworthy to touch His shoe, how much less worthy are we to touch the

body of Our Lord in the Eucharist. We can learn so very much from John the Baptist!



Zacharias probably used a paper scroll and a feather pen on which to write the name of his newborn son, John! We can make a parchment scroll out of some old brown paper. First we need to go outside and get a small stick, the diameter of a pencil, and about 4 inches long. Next, cut the scroll from some construction paper or a paper bag. Write on the paper, about half way down, the words "His Name is John", and glue the stick to the top of the scroll. Next, we can make the feather pen! Take a toothpick and, with a black permanent marker, color the tip to look like it's been dipped in ink. Then, take a strip of construction paper and glue it to the toothpick and fringe one edge to make the feather. You can glue the feather pen to the scroll before you tie a piece of string to either side of the stick, and hang it on the tree.

## December 20: The Visitation



### Luke 1: 38-56

39 Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah,

40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

42 And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

43 "And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?

44 "For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.

45 "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

### The Magnificat

46 And Mary said:

"My soul exalts the Lord,

47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

48 "For He has had regard for the humble state of His handmaiden;

For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.

49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me;

And holy is His name.

50 "AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION  
TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.

51 " He has done mighty deeds with His arm;

He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.

52 "He has brought down rulers from their thrones,

And has exalted those who were humble.

53 "HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS;

And sent away the rich empty-handed.  
54 "He has given help to Israel His servant,  
In remembrance of His mercy,  
55 As He spoke to our fathers,  
To Abraham and his descendants forever."

56 And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.

How big do you think that the baby Jesus was inside the womb of the Blessed Virgin when she came to help her cousin Elizabeth? When Gabriel visited Mary he told her that Elizabeth was in her sixth month of her pregnancy. This means that she had only three months to go until she would deliver her son, John. Our Lady must have only been about three months into her pregnancy when John was born, so the baby Jesus must have been very tiny indeed when his mother first saw Elizabeth. Yet the baby John recognized Him and leapt for joy at encountering Him! Even in Mary's womb, Jesus was God. Even in our own mother's wombs, even as the tiniest of human beings, we are who we are too. Life before birth is precious. Elizabeth was an older mom and needed help to get her things in order for the arrival of her baby. Mary was a young mom and had the ability to lend help to her cousin. Do we help those we know who are in need? We are young and strong and can help people who aren't as lively and able as we are. Let's look for ways to be like Our Lady and help our family members today.

**Symbol: mother and child**

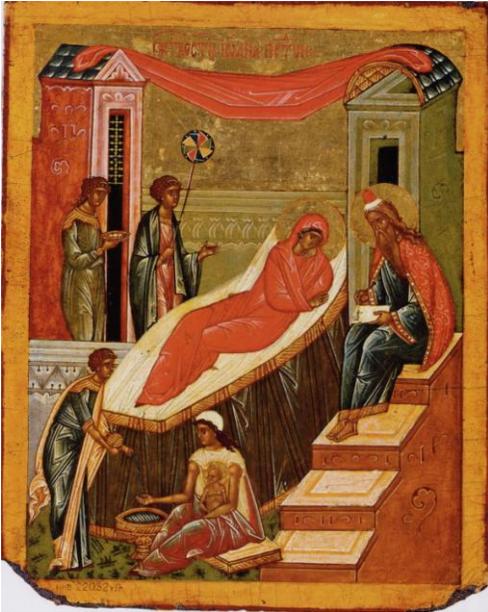
This ornament was made using old unmatched baby socks from our overflowing laundry basket. We used two, one slightly larger than the other, preferably white, but pale pink or peach would do. We stuffed them with old nylon stockings and then flipped the ends of the socks into one of the large cuffs, as if folding a pair. This appears to envelope them as a mother would wrap herself up with her child. You can either stitch or hot glue the ends shut and you can also opt to draw on some faces.



## December 21: John the Baptist

**Luke 1: 57-80**

57 Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son.



58 Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.

59 And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father.

60 But his mother answered and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John."

61 And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name."

62 And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called.

63 And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all astonished.

64 And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God.

65 Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea.

66 All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, "What then will this child turn out to be?" For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him.

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,

For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,

69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us

In the house of David His servant--

70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old--

71 Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES,

And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;

72 To show mercy toward our fathers,

And to remember His holy covenant,

73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

74 To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies,  
Might serve Him without fear,  
75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.  
76 "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS;  
77 To give to His people the knowledge of salvation  
By the forgiveness of their sins,  
78 Because of the tender mercy of our God,  
With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,  
79 TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH,  
To guide our feet into the way of peace."

80 And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

John would grow and become strong in spirit and would begin to preach to anyone who would listen about the coming of the Savior. He began encouraging people to repent of their sins, to give them up for good, and to change their ways to those of God. When people would decide to abandon sin for good, John would encourage them to make a public proclamation of their



new "rebirth" in God by performing a baptism with water. John would prepare their souls to meet the savior of the world by preparing their minds and hearts to accept the things that Jesus would teach them so that they could begin a whole new life with Him.

**Symbol: scallop shell**

John used a shell to pour the water of baptism upon the heads of those who came to him. Perhaps you've collected some shells on a vacation that you could use today. Perhaps you can find some shells at a local craft supply store. If not, you can always make a shell out of paper and hang it on your tree! When we made our shell ornaments, we asked Dad to drill a small hole in it so that we could run our thread thru to hang it up. Hot glue also works to attach the string.



## December 22: Joseph

### Matthew 1:19-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.

20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife,

25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

### **Symbol: carpenter's tools, nails**

Remember when we studied the creation of Adam and Eve? We discussed the fact that God made man in His image and likeness in that He created man as a family (three in one...man, woman and child) in imitation of Himself (three in one...Father, Son and Spirit). The Father wanted His Son to be brought up in a proper family as well, but being the Father, and a pure Spirit, He could not be physically present to raise the Baby Jesus or help His mother, Mary. Who could He entrust His family to who would not try to take His place? In comes Joseph! Tradition tells us that St. Joseph was a prayerful man who desired to devote his life to prayer and for this reason, he did not want to marry. When Our Lady came of age, her classmates at

the Temple were preparing to be married and so her teachers and family expected that she would as well. Privately, though, Our Blessed Mother desired to preserve her purity for God and devote her life to Him as Joseph did. The priest at the Temple knew how special Mary was and wanted to be sure of 'God's will in the choosing of her husband so he prayed and then told every eligible man in Nazareth to bring a rod to him which would be placed upon the altar and the one which blossomed would win the hand of the Blessed Virgin. When no one's rod blossomed, the priest called for more suitors to be interviewed. Reluctantly, Joseph was made to visit the priest and submit his cutting for the test. To everyone's amazement it was his that bloomed! When they were introduced and got to know each other, how relieved each was to learn of the other's vow! Now they could fulfill God's will, be married, and still reserve themselves for God! Joseph married Mary and helped her raise her Divine Son as if he was His own father, even though he knew that Jesus was God's son, not his. During their marriage, Joseph respected Mary and her very special relationship with the Father and never tried to come between them or take Mary away from her vow.



A hammer can be made out of a stick and some clay, or a stone can be tied to the stick to make a primitive tool for our tree. Carpenter's nails can also be our symbol, as Joseph worked with wood and nails, and he would have probably used them every day. We can position the nails into a cross to remind

ourselves that they would someday be used to fasten Joseph's step-son, Jesus to the cross to save us from our sins. We used red thread to wind round and round the two nails to form them into the shape of the cross, then added a bit more to make a loop for hanging on the tree.



## December 23: The Magi

### Matthew 2: 1-12

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

2 "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.



4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

6 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH,  
ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH;  
FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER  
WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'"

7 Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him."

9 After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

11 After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

## Symbol: star

In the beginning, our God made the heavens and the earth and then made man. In His infinite wisdom, God knew what would happen in the history of man, from Adam's creation and subsequent fall to his redemption through Christ. God knew of Jesus birth, death, resurrection, ascension and the establishment of the Church all before the creation of the stars. He knew of the rise and fall of every empire, the birth and death of every soul, the beginning and end of the earth itself, all before the creation of the heavens. Amazing as this is, scripture also tells us that not only did God know these things, but he recorded them in the stars as well.

*Psalm 19: <sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*

*<sup>2</sup>Day to day pours out speech,  
and night to night reveals knowledge.*

*<sup>3</sup>There is no speech, nor are there words,  
whose voice is not heard.*

*<sup>4</sup>Their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.*

It is interesting to consider that in today's modern age there exists computer software which can simulate the patterns of the stars and planets in the sky on any given night in the present, past, or future. Using this technology, it is possible to discover that on the night of December 25, in the year 1BC, there appeared over Bethlehem the first and only conjoining of the planet Jupiter, otherwise known as the king planet, and the planet Venus, known as the mother planet. This formed a star that was the brightest that ever was, or ever will be seen. This is the star of Bethlehem! What symbolism! It is amazing to consider that the Eternal Father so orchestrated the whirling of the stars in our galaxy from the moment of their creation that they would on this particular date at this particular time, come together to

herald the birth of His Son, Jesus, our Savior. In the sky on the night that the kings found Jesus, the planets that represent The King and His Mother are joined in a bright and wonderful way, just as in Mary's holy pregnancy.



You can either opt to make a star-shaped cut-out, with a Nativity icon pasted onto it as shown, or thread some glow-in-the-dark beads onto a wire, then shape it into a star and tie on a ribbon tail.



You may also decide to make a tree-topper! What we've done is to cut out two large stars, of the same size and shape from some sturdy cardboard. Then we hot-glued them to the sides of an empty cone-shaped yarn spool or a paper roll tube, and then glued various shapes of pasta in an interesting design onto the stars. When totally dry, we spray painted it gold and placed in on the top of our tree. You can vary the shapes and spray paint color to suit your décor or desire!

# December 24: Jesus, the Birth of the Messiah

Luke 2: 1-20



1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.

2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.

4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,

5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.

6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.

7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.

10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;

11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

12 "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us."

16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.

17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.

18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.

20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

#### Symbol: Nativity Set



This is the day we get to put the kids toy Nativity set under our Jesse Tree!!! One year, at our church's annual Nativity party, the children made an entire Nativity set from wooden balls and spools. We glued on strips of felt or wide ribbon for the clothing. Sheer gold ribbon was tied in the middle and glued to the back of a spool to form angel wings. Thinner ribbon or yarn could be tied as belts, wire made Joseph's staff and silver and gold chenille fashioned such things as halos...the possibilities are as endless as your child's imagination! We made the Baby Jesus from a tiny spool and wooden "head" all covered in white cloth, and placed him in a matchbox manger filled with shredded paper hay. Remember to hide Baby Jesus away for now. He's not there yet, after all. When we all go to sleep tonight, Mom and Dad can place Him in His manger so we can find Him there in the morning!

Off to Grandma & Grandpa's house for a wonderful Holy Supper, then to Liturgy to celebrate the birth of our Lord!

## December 25: Christ is Born!

### John 1:1-18

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

6 There came a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him.

8 He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

### Craft Supply List

**November 15:** A Christmas tree, real or artificial, upon which to hang your ornaments.

Access to a computer and printer to research and print icons of the family's patron saints.

**November 16:** a pinecone, two milkweed pods, an acorn, a chenille pipe cleaner, and a golf tee. hot glue and gun, spray paint, preferably gold or silver, and string for hanging the ornaments. String will be assumed each day from here onward.

(option: white paper and scissors for making snowflakes)

**November 17:** air-dry clay or ingredients to make your own: (2 cups salt and 1 cup cornstarch).

**November 18:** more air-dry clay or ingredients to make spice play-dough: (1c shortening, 1 c. dark brown sugar, 6 c flour, 2 c dark molasses, 1 Tbsp baking soda, 1 c. white glue, 3 T. ground cinnamon, ginger or pumpkin pie spice).

**November 19:** craft foam or felt in green and yellow, and a bit of red, glue or needle and thread, permanent marker, scissors.

(optional: raw, whole apples sliced horizontally about ½" thick, whole cloves for studding)

**November 20:** lightweight brown cardboard (oak-tag), green construction paper or felt for leaves, black permanent marker, scissors, white pon-pons, multicolored pon-pons (natural fruit and veg. colored ones!), glue, one googlie-eye for the lamb.

**November 21:** half-pint milk carton, empty, washed and thoroughly dried, white paper for drawing Mr & Mrs Noah and animals to fit inside. Masking tape to cover the "ark" and brown permanent markers to accent the gopher wood, construction paper for rainbow and dove.

**November 22:** small plastic lid to use for a base, clay. (optional: packing peanuts, cereal or popcorn and lots of white glue)

**November 23:** blue craft foam (the glittery kind is especially nice), scissors, craft glue and lots of silver sequins and stars.

**November 24:** access to a photocopier (to photocopy of Rublev's Trinity Icon on p. 39) craft foam, scissors and glue.

**November 25:** brown or gray craft fur, one piece of coordinating color chenille pipe-cleaner, small piece of brown felt or construction paper, 2 googlie-eyes, scissors, glue

**November 26:** 2 flat, wooden craft sticks, 8-10 wooden toothpicks, white construction paper and glue.

**November 27:** one wooden clothespin, multicolored (striped) ribbon (1" wide), permanent marker, felt (for his garment) and glue.

**November 28:** brown/tan paper, (craft foam or felt will do too), stapler, white paper, pink paper for baby' Moses's face, green chenille, brown chenille for reeds if desired.

**November 29:** three flat, wooden craft sticks, red marker, glue

**November 30:** 12 inch piece of brown plastic-covered wire or brown chenille, just double and twist!

**December 1:** gray craft foam or felt, black permanent marker

**December 2:** paper or craft foam (any color), markers for decorating, (optional: sequins or Jewels for embellishment of Joshua's horn...and glue)

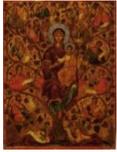
**December 3:** air-dry clay, any color

- December 4:** wheat stalks (from the craft store), scissors, string or ribbon for binding.
- December 5:** yellow/gold craft foam, plastic jewels and sequins for embellishment and glue, stapler
- December 6:** “Y” shaped branch, rubber band
- December 7:** craft foam (any color), white paper, markers, ribbon (for page marker)
- December 8:** small plastic lid for base, blue construction paper for water, black or brown air-dry clay, toothpicks, red marker
- December 9:** pony beads, string. (optional: aluminum foil)
- December 10:** chenille pipe-cleaner (any color), aluminum foil, air dry clay in black, red and yellow, hot glue and gun
- December 11:** blue craft foam, 4-6 inch piece of floral wire, glue
- December 12:** ½ c salt, 2 c flour, access to oven to bake.
- December 13:** disposable foam or paper coffee cup, masking tape and markers, or strips of brown construction paper to cover, construction paper and glue.
- December 14:** craft foam and paint markers, or poster board and markers, scissors
- December 15:** construction paper, craft foam or felt in white, yellow and orange, craft glue and scissors
- December 16:** small paper cake plate, construction paper in brown, orange and yellow. Markers, scissors and glue
- December 17:** old sock, needle and coordinating thread, batting or other stuffing material, white chenille pipe-cleaners, felt, glue,
- December 18:** construction paper, craft foam or felt (in white and green), yellow chenille pipe-cleaner (optional yellow pony beads), stapler or hot glue and gun
- December 19:** wooden stick or dowel (4” long, diameter of a pencil), brown paper (bag?), white construction paper, toothpick, black permanent marker, scissors, glue
- December 20:** 2 old baby socks (matching or un-matching), old nylon stockings or other stuffing material, permanent markers, either needle and thread or hot glue
- December 21:** scallop shell, hot glue or drill for making a hole.
- December 22:** 2 large nails, string
- December 23:** copy of nativity scene, gold felt, cardboard or craft foam, scissors, glue  
(optional: floral or other craft wire, glow in the dark pony beads, silver or gold pony beads, 10-12” long piece of silver or gold ribbon)
- December 24:** Nativity set

## **Jesse Tree Photo Credits**

### **Cover Page, November 15:**

In Praise of Our Lady. Around 1600, Crete. Wood, tempera, gilding, Pushkin Museum, Moscow



By Иоанн Апакасс (круг) (File source Official museum page) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

### **November 16:**

The Fall of the Rebel Angels; right hand panel of [Hieronymus Bosch's The Haywain Triptych](#), c. 1500



Hieronymus Bosch (circa 1450–1516) or workshop [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

### **November 17:**



God is resting after creation. Byzantine mosaic in Monreale Cathedral, Sicily  
Artist Unknown [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

### **November 18:**



Byzantine mosaic of the Creation of [Adam](#) ([Monreale](#) Cathedral, Sicily, XII c.)  
Artist Unknown [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

### **November 19:**



The Lord Confronts the Disobedience of Adam & Eve; The Expulsion from Paradise Nave Mosaics from Palatine Chapel, Palermo, Sicily. Mid 12th Century.  
By Anonymous [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

### **November 20:**



Abel and Cain offer their sacrifice to God. Byzantine mosaic in the Cathedral of Monreale  
By Sibeaster (Own work) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

### **November 21:**



Construction of Noah's Ark. Mosaic in Monreale cathedral, Sicilia. 14<sup>th</sup> century  
By Anonymous master [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

### **November 22:**



[The Tower of Babel](#) by [Pieter Bruegel the Elder](#) (1563)

Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1526/1530–1569) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**November 23:**

Icon of the Patriarch Abraham. From the patriarch row of the main iconostasis of St. John Chrysostom Church in Korovinki, Yaroslavl, Russia  
By Anonymous [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



**November 24:**



*The Hospitality of Abraham*; Icon c. 1375-1400AD, from the collection of the Benaki Museum, Athens  
By unknown artist [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



[Russian icon of the Old Testament Trinity](#) by [Andrey Rublev](#), between 1408-25  
Andrei Rublev [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**November 25:**



*Abraham Sacrificing Isaac*, Russian Icon written in 1778 AD  
By anonimus ([1]) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



**November 26:**  
*Jacob's Dream*, oil on panel by Giorgio Vasari, 1557-1558AD, in Florence, Italy  
Walters Art Museum [Public domain, CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>) or GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>)], via Wikimedia Commons

**November 27:**



Illustration by Owen Jones from “The History of Joseph and His Brethren” (Day & Son, 1869). Scanned and archived at [www.OldBookArt.com](http://www.OldBookArt.com) where it was marked as Public Domain.



From the [Hortus deliciarum](#) (Latin for Garden of Delights) is a medieval manuscript compiled by Herrad of Landsberg at the Hohenburg Abbey in Alsace, better known today as Mont Sainte-Odile.  
c. 1180 AD  
By Herrad von Landsberg (Hortus Deliciarum) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**November 28:**



Finding of the Baby Moses, West wall, Synagogue of Dura Europos, Syria, tempera on plaster, 244-245 AD



Moses and the burning bush. Loca sancta icon from the 12th (13th?) century  
Author unknown, [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**November 29:**

Illustrators of the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster



By Illustrators of the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us* by Charles Foster [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

*The Mystical Supper*; icon from the hand of Simon Ushakov; late 17<sup>th</sup> century Russia  
Simon Ushakov [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



**November 30:**



*The Parting of the Red Sea*; Fifth century mosaic from the nave of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome

**December 1:**



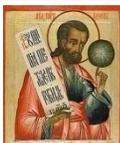
Fifth century mosaic from the Apse of the Church of the Monastery of St Catherine, Sinai.  
By anonymous [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**December 2:**



*Judge St. Joshua*; from the Monastery of Hosios Loukas, Mount Helikon, Greece: 12<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> century  
Author unknown; [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**December 3:**



*Judge Gideon*, Russian Orthodox icon from first quarter or 18<sup>th</sup> century; from the Iconostasis of Kizhi monastery, Karelia, Russia  
By 18<sup>th</sup> century icon painter (Iconostasis of Kizhi monastery, Karelia, Russia) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**December 4:**



*Ruth and Naomi*: stained glass, from the nave of St. Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh, Scotland

**December 5:**



[Gerbrand van den Eeckhout](#) - Hannah presenting her son [Samuel](#) to the priest [Eli](#), ca. 1665  
[Gerbrand van den Eeckhout](#) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

*Icon of the Prophet Samuel*, from the collection of the Donetsk Regional Art Museum, Ukraine; 17<sup>th</sup> century Russian, tempera on wood.  
Author unknown; [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



**December 6:**



David and Goliath by [Michelangelo](#), on the [Sistine Chapel ceiling](#)  
Michelangelo [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**December 7:**



Mosaic from the floor of the ancient synagogue at Gaza, Byzantine period, 6th century AD

**December 8:**



*Prophet Elias*; Greek icon; Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons -  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prophet-Elias-Grk-ikon.png#/media/File:Prophet-Elias-Grk-ikon.png>

**December 9:**



*Queen Esther*; oil on canvas, 1878, by Edwin Long  
Edwin Long [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



"Esther IMG 28102" by Radbod Commandeur (1890 - 1955); photo by Deror avi. edit:רוליג - File:Esther IMG 28101.JPG. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons -  
[tps://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Esther\\_IMG\\_28102.png#/media/File:Esther\\_IMG\\_28102.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Esther_IMG_28102.png#/media/File:Esther_IMG_28102.png)

**December 10:**



By Anonymous Russian icon painter (before 1917) Public domain image (according to PD-RusEmpire) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**December 11:**

The Prophet Jeremiah. From the main iconostasis of St. John Chrysostom Church in Korovniki, Yaroslavl, Russia. Written in the year 1654.



By Anonymous Russian icon painter (before 1917) Public domain image (according to PD-RusEmpire) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**December 12:**

"Micah prophet" by 18 century icon painter - Iconostasis of Transfiguration church, Kizhi monastery, Karelia, north Russia.



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[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Micah\\_prophet.jpg#/media/File:Micah\\_prophet.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Micah_prophet.jpg#/media/File:Micah_prophet.jpg)

**December 13:**



The prophet Habakkuk; written toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, from the row of prophets of the iconostasis of the church of the village Selezeniha Tver province.

By 18th century icon painter [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**December 14:**



Greek Orthodox Icon of Nehemiah, mounted on solid wood.

By Russian Icon Painter (Greek and Russian Orthodox Icon) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**December 15:**



Russian icon of Three Youths, Novgorod School, 15th century

**December 16:**



Russian icon of Daniel with lions. The prophet Daniel in the lion's den with the image of Christ Emmanuel in heaven. Side door of the iconostasis. XVII century. Volga

By Anonymous (<http://www.bibliotekar.ru/rusIcon/22.htm>) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**December 17:**



From the [Hortus deliciarum](#) (Latin for Garden of Delights) is a medieval manuscript compiled by Herrad of Landsberg at the Hohenburg Abbey in Alsace, better known today as Mont Sainte-Odile. c. 1180 AD

By Herrad von Landsberg (Hortus Deliciarum) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**December 18:**



Icon of the Annunciation, from the collection of the Dodekaorton (12 major feast days) written in 1035 by Theophanes the Cretan [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**December 19:**



Icon of the Conception of St. John the Baptist, written in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century in Russia  
By anonymous (own photo by user:bgds) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



Annunciation to Zechariah. Fragment of Russian icon "Execution of St. John Baptist". From the Danilov Monastery collection, likely from the Cathedral of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker in Lefortovo.

By Нехлебаев Семен Сергеевич. Nekhlebaev, Semion [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

#### December 20:



The Embrace of Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary. St. George Church, Kurbinovo, Macedonia

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#### December 21:



"Stjohn-nativity" by Original uploader was Jackturner3 at en.wikipedia - Transferred from en.wikipedia; transferred to Commons by User:Off2riorob using Commons Helper.. Licensed under Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons - <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stjohn-nativity.jpg#/media/File:Stjohn-nativity.jpg>

#### December 22:



Early 8<sup>th</sup> century Roman mosaic of St. Joseph, located at the Pushkin Art Museum, Moscow

By Roman, early VIII century Early VIII century (Details of artist on Google Art Project) [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

#### December 23:



Icon of the Adoration of the Magi, written 985 AD, a miniature from the Menologion of Basil II, Vatican Library, Rome

By Anonymous [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

#### December 24:



Russian icon of the Nativity of Christ and the Adoration of the Magi, written in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, tempera on wood

By anonimus ([1]) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons