

CELEBRATING THE 12 Days OF Christmas!

1ST DAY OF CHRISTMAS: DECEMBER 25

Wait for It: hold off on some (or all) of your red and green decorations until Christmas Day - the expression on your family's face, when they wake up to the beautifully decorated home, is priceless! Conversely, start a new tradition of decorating the house together on Christmas Eve in preparation for the upcoming Christmas season.

Cover That Baby: beautiful nativity sets are lovely to have up during Advent, as it reminds us what we're preparing our hearts for. My mom used to throw a bit of hay over baby Jesus in the nativity, though, and we would uncover Him on Christmas morning! It was a beautiful tradition that she started, and one we do with our family today. So, whether you have an ultra kid friendly or one that will span the generations, keep that beautiful baby covered until His birthday.

Build a Countdown: grab some left-over wood, and create a fun 12 Days countdown...or is that count-up? Start on the 1st Day of Christmas, and - each night - change the blocks until you get to Day 12. Building this block set is a way to get the whole family involved (yeah for power tools!).

Grow in Faith: did you know the song, the 12 Days of Christmas, may have been written to catechize during times of persecution? Learn the secret meaning behind each of the 12 Days, and share a bit of faith with your family along the way.

5TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: DECEMBER 29

Write a Letter: December 29th is the feast day of St. Thomas Becket. Killed for taking a stand for justice, this is a chance for your family to find a support a cause. Whether it's writing a letter to your local congressman for or against a current political initiative, writing to someone in prison, or writing to a child, find a cause that is important to your family and write.

2ND DAY OF CHRISTMAS: DECEMBER 26

Help the Poor: December 26th is St. Stephen's Day, and - he being the first martyr and caretaker of the poor - gives us a chance to give to others. Each year, we do a bit of "spring cleaning" as we sort through those items we can donate; doing this each year after Christmas not only gives us a chance to remember and help others less fortunate, but also make room for our new gifts, do something together as a family, and start the New Year nice and organized!

3RD DAY OF CHRISTMAS: DECEMBER 27

Create Quiet Family Time: December 27th is the feast day of the Holy Family, and - after a very busy time leading up to and including Christmas Day - we are always ready for a retreat. We enjoy a nice quiet day at home, just the three of us, spending the day in our jammies, making yummy pancakes, and just relaxing in each others' company.

4TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: DECEMBER 28

Bake Nativity Cookies: sugar cookies are always fun to make, and using nativity cookie cutters will give you an opportunity to retell the Christmas story in an ultra yummy way. Set a few aside for your New Year's Eve celebration, and count yourself ahead!

6TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: DECEMBER 30

Cozy Up for Storytime: There are so many wonderful books to read that share the Christmas story! Some of our favorites are Humphrey's First Christmas (from the perspective of the camel, which the kids love), God Gave Us Christmas (written by the talented Lisa Bergren, who wrote so many of our other favorite books), Santa's Favorite Story (where Santa himself tells the story of Christmas), and our favorite, Who is Coming to Our House (where the animals in the stable share their story of baby Jesus coming to their home).

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7TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: DECEMBER 31

Be Part of Your Community: New Year's Eve is one of the most dangerous days to be on the roads, so leave the car parked and invite your neighbors over for a New Year's Eve celebration. Regardless of how late (or early) you celebrate, the bonds you build with your neighbors and local community will last long after the ball drops.

8TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: JANUARY 1

Say Hello to Your Mother: ...Mother Mary, that is. January 1st is the solemnity of Mary, and a rosary is traditionally prayed after dinner on this day. Whether you say just one Hail Mary or make it through the entire rosary, it's a lovely way to create some special time with your heavenly mother.

9TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: JANUARY 2

Hang Out with Friends: the holidays are all about family *and* friends, and on the feast day of Sts. Basil and Gregory, two great friends who grew together in faith and friendship, spend some time with *your* friends. Grab a cup of coffee, have a play date, or go for a walk. Celebrate the gift of friendship!

12TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: JANUARY 5

Graffiti Your Home: on the eve of Epiphany, break out the chalk and enjoy an old tradition! Epiphany is the feast day commemorating the arrival of the three wise men: Casper, Melchior, and Balthasar. Just as these three wise men entered the home of Jesus, we can invoke a blessing on our homes and all who enter. With a piece of chalk, inscribe "20 + C + M + B +" over the top of the door in chalk (example: for 2017, write 20 C+M+B 17) and have someone read the blessing: "Let us bless our home and pray that all will be welcome here. Let this door be an entry for the blessings of God. Let this door be a gateway of God's blessings to the world."

10TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: JANUARY 3

Learn About Your Name: January 3rd is the feast day of the Holy Name of Jesus. Names have such meaning behind them...Jesus Christ, George Washington, Betty Crocker (mmm...pancakes!). Learn a bit about your name. How did your parents pick your name? What saints share your name? What is their story, and does it have any ties in with your life story?

11TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS: JANUARY 4

Share those Cards: As you prepare to pack away your Christmas decorations, set the Christmas cards aside. Many schools and organizations would love to have the front of cards for future art projects! Tear the front of the cards off, and bring them to your child's or local school for future Christmas works of art.

