

Liturgical Year Supplemental Lessons

Advent and Christmas

Correlated Materials

Student Text: Chapter 11, pp. 50–54; Chapter 12, pp. 55–58; Chapter 13, pp. 59–61; Appendix, Supplement, Celebrating the Church Year, pp. 131–33

LESSON FOCUS

Through our personal participation in the liturgical year, we share in the life of Christ and become more like Christ. The liturgical year is a celebration of salvation history and it begins with Advent as we prepare for the birth of Christ.

AIMS

- Students will know that through our participation in the liturgical year we are experiencing the story of salvation history.
- Students will know that through each liturgical season we come to know Christ more deeply.
- Students will become more familiar with the liturgical calendar and Church feast days and Holy Days of Obligation.

Note: See p. xvi for overall supplemental lesson aims, CCC, and Scripture.

Begin the Lesson

Preparation (5–10 minutes)

Use one or more of the following resources for prayer and student preparation for the lesson.

SCRIPTURE: Student Text, p. 51

“For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth”
(Ephesians 1:9–10).

God has revealed his will to mankind, that each of us is called to heaven and that all things are united in Christ.

SACRED ART: Student Text, p. 50

The Annunciation, Fra Angelico

It was God’s will that Mary would say yes to be the Mother of God.

PRAYER WITH CHILDREN: The Angelus, Student Text, p. 138

Proclamation (1 minute)

(Proclaim slowly, then repeat.)

Everything in the story of salvation history points to Jesus Christ. Through our personal participation in the Church year (liturgical year), we share in the life of Christ and become more like Christ.

Lesson Explanation (30–45 minutes)

Explain focus points in your own words or use the discussion points and questions.

MATERIALS

- Bible
- White board and markers
- Parish church calendars (see Lesson Explanation)
- Copies of liturgical year calendar (see Grade 6 Appendix B-55 at www.faithandliveseries.com)
- Paper for letter to Jesus (see Application)

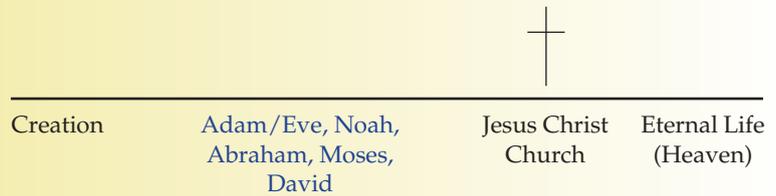
WORDS TO KNOW

liturgical year (or Church year): the observance of feasts and seasons throughout the year that celebrate the life of Christ and lives of Mary and the saints

Focus 1: The Church year is a celebration of salvation history.

Christ is at the center of God's saving plan.

- **Have you ever stopped and looked back at your whole life?** (*Answers will vary.*)
 - As we look back, we can see where we have failed or succeeded and why. We should also look forward.
 - Today, we are going to take a look at the big picture of God's plan for mankind. This can help us to understand where we fit into God's plan.
 - Using the salvation history timeline, let's review the events of God's plan.



- **When did God first promise to send a Savior?** (*After the Fall of Adam and Eve [see Genesis 3:15].*)
 - **With whom did God specifically make covenants (promises)?** (*Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David.*)
 - (Point to Jesus Christ on the timeline.) We celebrate the life of Christ during Church seasons such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time.
 - **What events of Christ's life do we celebrate during these seasons?** (*Advent: waiting for the birth of Christ; Christmas: the birth of Christ; Lent: the Passion and death of Jesus Christ; Easter: the Resurrection; Ordinary Time: the life of Christ—miracles, parables, etc.*)
- As we walk with Christ in his daily life, his sufferings and his joys, we come to know and love him; we come to know ourselves through Christ, and so we also are able to understand our own sufferings and the peace that only Christ can give.
 - **What can we learn through each season?** (*Answers will vary; examples include the following.*)
 - *Advent: We wait for the birth of Christ in our lives; we are also waiting for Christ to return; as we are patient we will receive joy and peace.*
 - *Christmas: God keeps his promises to us by sending Jesus. Jesus is born in humble surroundings, and we too should be humble. The birth of Christ gives us hope.*
 - *Lent: Jesus suffered for us because of his love for us. We too will suffer, and we too will receive new life.*
 - *Easter: Jesus rose so that we too can have new life, in heaven and on earth. Easter joy gives us a glimpse of heaven.*

Conclusion: The Church year is a celebration of salvation history. Christ is at the center of God's saving plan.

Advent: Preparing for the Coming of Jesus

Advent is a time for us to prepare for Jesus' coming at Christmas and at the end of time. We may prepare for the Savior in many ways:

- During Advent having a Jesse tree or Advent wreath in the home can remind us of the expectation that the people of the Old Testament had for the Messiah.
- Setting up a manger with straw and figurines can help us to think and pray about the nativity.
- We can also prepare by a good confession and penances, such as almsgiving, works of charity, fasting and abstinence, and mortifications.

Focus 2: The Church year or liturgical year is a miniature of all of salvation history.

- Each calendar year we celebrate the major feasts of God's saving plan. (If possible, get enough copies of the parish Church year calendar (with feast days, etc.) for each student; otherwise just use one sample calendar.)
 - *When does the "year" begin for each type of calendar: calendar year; school year; Church year?* (Calendar year: January 1; school year: August or September; liturgical year or Church year: Advent, four Sundays before Christmas.)
 - **Hand out copies of the liturgical year calendar.** (See Appendix, page B-55.)
 - The Church seasons celebrate the saving events of salvation history with a focus on the life of Christ. Our participation in the Church year allows us to participate in the story of salvation history. In this way the story becomes our story as we walk with Jesus during each Church season.
 - *What are some examples of how we participate in the story of salvation history during Advent and Christmas?*
 - Advent:*
 - *We wait just as the Israelites waited for the coming of the Savior. Traditions such as Advent wreath, Jesse tree, Christmas tree, etc., remind us of waiting for the joy of Christmas. During this penitential season, we also offer sacrifices as well as acts of love and obedience just as Abraham and others in the Old Testament did.*
 - *During Advent we also anticipate the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time.*
 - Christmas:*
 - *We celebrate the joy of Christ's birth and the peace that Christ brought to mankind. We attend Mass to celebrate the joy of the birth of Christ.*

Conclusion: Our participation in the Church year allows us to participate in the story of salvation history; the story becomes our story as we walk with Jesus during each Church season.

Focus 3: Advent is the beginning of the Church year.

- Let's look at the Advent and Christmas sections of the calendar.
 - The season of Advent is the beginning of the Church year.
 - Advent is a penitential season—a time of sorrow where we offer prayers and sacrifices for our sins.
 - (Have students color in Advent in purple and leave Christmas white.)
 - *What are the two seasons in the Church year when the priest wears purple?* (Advent and Lent.)
 - *What does the color purple reminds us to do?* (Pray and do penance to prepare for either Christmas or Easter.)

“The Twelve Days of Christmas”

The song “The Twelve Days of Christmas” can be a fun and musical way to help Catholics recall some of the basic tenets of the Faith.

- A partridge in a pear tree—Jesus on the Cross
- Two turtledoves—Old and New Testaments, and the divine and human natures of Christ
- Three French hens—the Holy Trinity, gifts of the Magi, and the three theological virtues
- Four calling birds—the Gospels
- Five golden rings—Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament
- Six geese a laying—the six days of Creation, and the six precepts of the Church
- Seven swans a swimming—the seven Sacraments
- Eight maids a milking—the eight Beatitudes
- Nine ladies dancing—the nine choirs of angels, and the nine fruits of the Spirit
- Ten lords a leaping—the Ten Commandments
- Eleven pipers piping—the eleven faithful disciples
- Twelve drummers drumming—the twelve points of belief in the Apostles’ Creed

- *When does Advent begin? (Four Sundays before Christmas.)*
- *For what are we waiting during Advent? (For the birth of our Savior; for the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of time.)*

- Feast days: Show students all of the feast days on the Church or parish calendar.
 - Each of the feast days are listed on Student Text, pages 131–33. Feast days are usually posted on parish calendars.
 - Advent and Christmas feasts begin with the first Sunday of Advent and end with Epiphany Sunday.
 - Three of these feast days are Holy Days of Obligation (Immaculate Conception; Christmas; Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God).
 - If time allows, read through at least the major feast days of the Church on Student Text, pages 131–33.
- **Read the sidebars** about Advent, the song “The Twelve Days of Christmas,” the nativity scene, and the Incarnation.

Conclusion: There are many feasts and seasons of the Church year that we celebrate in the Catholic Church. These feasts and seasons celebrate the life of Christ and the lives of Mary and the saints.

Review Supplemental Lesson—Liturgical Year: Advent and Christmas (3 minutes)

- The Church year is a celebration of salvation history. Christ is at the center of God’s saving plan.
- The Church year or liturgical year is a miniature of all of salvation history. Each calendar year we celebrate the major feasts of God’s saving plan.
- Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year.

Application (15–25 minutes)

- Through our participation in the Church year, we become like Christ.
 - Advent is a penitential season. During penitential seasons, we fast, pray, and make offerings to God. *What is the purpose of the liturgical calendar/Advent? (The purpose of the liturgical calendar is to walk with Christ during his life; in doing so we will come to know, love, and serve Christ. During Advent, we wait with patience; therefore we will appreciate his birth and his love.)*
 - **Play Christmas music** and allow for students to reflect on specific fasting, prayers, and sacrifices they can do in order to walk with Christ this Advent. Have students jot down their answers to these questions:
 - *What can I do to increase my faith in Christ so that I believe all that the Church teaches?*
 - *What can I do to show that I trust Jesus completely?*

The Nativity Scene

From the earliest days of the Church, Christians recalled the nativity in artistic forms. The first believers painted scenes of Jesus' birth on the walls of the catacombs. Saint Francis put together a live reenactment in a cave in Italy in the thirteenth century. Scenes of Christ's birth are beautifully depicted in churches, ancient and new, throughout the world. Many families also remember this special event by setting up small nativity set in their homes.

Incarnation

The word "incarnation" comes from the Latin word *incarnatio*. This word comes from the prefix "in-," which means "in," and the word *caro*, which means "flesh." Hence, "incarnation" means "the act of being made flesh."

- *What can I do to love others as Christ loves me?*
- *Do I have hope for eternal life?*
- Have students put these ideas in the form of a letter to Jesus, committing to walk closer with him.

Celebration (10 minutes)

Choose one or more of the following.

- Pray Acts of Faith, Hope, and Love on Student Text, pp. 137–38.
- Quiet students and listen to the refrain of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" in the *Adoremus Hymnal*, #301. Go to www.ignatius.com/promotions/adoremus-hymnal/downloadable-mp3s.htm for downloadable MP3s.
- Remind students that December 8 is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (celebrating that the Blessed Mother was free from Original Sin), a Holy Day of Obligation.

CHAPTER 11

In the Fullness of Time

"For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

Ephesians 1:9-10

As we have seen, God kept his people waiting for the Savior for many centuries. In every generation he sent prophets and leaders to remind them of his promise and call them to reform their lives. Why did God allow so many people to live and die without seeing the Savior for whom they longed? We do not know. All we know is that in the fullness of time the Savior came.

During the days when Herod was king, a priest named Zechariah lived with his wife Elizabeth in the countryside of Judea. Like typical Jewish married couples, they wanted to have any. Now they were so old they could no longer even hope for such a thing.

One day it was Zechariah's turn to offer incense to God in the Holy of Holies, the holiest part of the temple of Jerusalem. As he entered, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to him, saying: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John" (Lk 1:13). The angel explained that John would be no ordinary child but would grow up to be a great prophet and turn the hearts of many back to God.

All this was too much for Zechariah. All he could think of was how impossible this seemed. "How shall I know this?" he demanded. "For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years" (Lk 1:18). Since Zechariah answered without faith, the angel gave him a greater proof of God's power than he had bargained for: Zechariah would be unable to speak until the child was born! When Zechariah staggered out from the temple, he had to use signs and handwriting to tell people what had happened.

The Annunciation

Six months passed by. As Elizabeth waited for the birth of her baby, the Archangel Gabriel visited the earth again. This time he came to see Mary, the daughter of Anne and Joachim. Mary lived with her parents in the small town of Nazareth. "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women!" Mary did not know what to make of the angel's words. The angel assured Mary that she had found great favor with God. "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and



will be called the Son of the Most High" (Lk 1:31-32). This is called the **Annunciation**.

Mary was ready to do what God wanted, but she was not sure how. At the time she was not married, although she was engaged to a man named Joseph. Then the angel explained. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk 1:35).

Mary answered, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word." Before the angel left, he told her about the baby that would soon be born to Elizabeth, her cousin. "For with God nothing will be impossible," he said (Lk 1:37).

The Visitation

After the angel left, Mary immediately went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. This is called the **Visitation**. The moment Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting the unborn child within her gave a tremendous leap. He seemed to be dancing with happiness! Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to Mary, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk 1:42-43).

Mary was filled with joy at God's goodness. She burst into the song we now call the **Magnificat**:

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity for ever."

Lk 1:46-55

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months. When the baby was born, the relatives of Elizabeth and Zechariah came. They talked about a name for the baby. Elizabeth, knowing the message of the angel, insisted that the name John be given. Her relatives could not understand why. "We would name him Zechariah, after his father," they said. Finally they asked Zechariah for his decision. Taking a tablet, he wrote, "His name is John." At that very moment, Zechariah had the power to speak again. He began to praise God and prophesy about little John's future:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people..." (Lk 1:68).

The son of Elizabeth and Zechariah grew up to be Saint John the Baptist, last of the Old Testament prophets and herald of Jesus Christ.

Immaculate Conception

From the day the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she knew her life would never be the same again. One day she was an unknown girl in the country village; the next day she was the Mother of the Savior her people had awaited for ages! And what is more, she was the Mother of God's own Son!

The average girl might have been unable to handle so great a role. But Mary was no ordinary girl. God had prepared her to be the Mother of the Savior even before she was born. He had given her a great gift which we call Mary's **Immaculate Conception**.

As you have learned, we have all inherited Original Sin from our first parents. When Adam and Eve sinned they lost for themselves and for us the gift of sanctifying grace, God's life within the soul. Because of Original Sin we are weak and are easily tempted to sin. But God preserved Mary from Original Sin. Her soul was filled with sanctifying grace from the moment of her conception. Mary had the ability to do

always what God wanted and never offend him by sin. Because God created Mary free from sin, she was worthy to become the Mother of Jesus.

The belief in the Immaculate Conception was held by the Church from its earliest days, but it was not proclaimed an official doctrine of the Church until December 8, 1854. Now we have a special Holy Day every year on December 8 to celebrate the gift of Mary's Immaculate Conception.

Words to Know:

Annunciation Visitation Magnificat
Immaculate Conception



O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son, grant, we pray, that, as you preserved her from every stain by virtue of the Death of your Son, which you foresaw, so, through her intercession, we, too, may be cleansed and admitted to your presence. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

—Collect, The Immaculate Conception

CHAPTER 12

Born in the City of David

"Has not the Scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

John 7:42

After Mary returned to Nazareth, Saint Joseph had a decision to make. Joseph learned that Mary was going to have a baby. So Joseph decided to break his engagement with Mary quietly. One night an angel came to him in a dream and said to him:

"Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:20-21).

Joseph was overjoyed that he would not have to break his engagement with Mary. He was even happier that the long-awaited Messiah, God's own Son, would be born into his family. The two were married and settled down in Nazareth.

The quiet life of the couple was disrupted by news that the Roman emperor wished to take a census of the entire empire. This meant that Joseph and Mary would have to journey to Bethlehem, the town from which Joseph's family came. There Jesus was born, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:1-4).

You have heard the story of the **nativity**, or the birth of Jesus, enough times that there is no need to retell it here. But knowing a story too well can cause us to take it for granted. We are so used to the fact that God became one of us that we forget what a startling thing it is. Just think! The same God who created the blazing sun, who shaped the towering mountains, who looks upon the ocean as we might look upon a fish tank: this God came down from heaven to share his life with us. This God of infinite beauty and power was born in a dark, smelly stable. Only his infinite love for us can explain God's desire to do this.

To see what it was like for God to become man, let us use our imaginations a bit. Imagine that you had to become a little snail, for example, while keeping your human intelligence. Then suppose you had to teach the other snails about the world of humans: all the things we can do and the way we live. The catch is, you cannot speak "people talk" but only "snail talk," which does not have words for all the wonderful things people know about.

In a way this is how it was for Jesus. He left behind his divine beauty and strength to take on a human body and soul with all its

Q. 56 *Who was the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets?*

Saint John the Baptist was the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets. He prepared the way of the Lord, Jesus (CCC 523).

Q. 57 *What was the Annunciation?*

The Annunciation was the Archangel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she had been chosen to be the Mother of the Messiah, Jesus, the Son of God (CCC 494).

Q. 58 *What was the Visitation?*

The Visitation refers to Mary's visit after the Annunciation to her cousin Elizabeth in the hill country. During this holy event, the baby Saint John the Baptist leapt for joy in his mother's womb, and Elizabeth recognized Mary as the Mother of God (CCC 523).

Q. 59 *What is the Magnificat?*

The Magnificat is the song of praise said by Mary at the Visitation. The Magnificat praises God for fulfilling his promises in the sending of his Son Jesus, the Savior of the world (CCC 2619).

Q. 60 *Was anyone among the descendants of Adam ever preserved from Original Sin?*

Besides Jesus, Mary, his Mother, has been preserved from Original Sin. Because she was chosen to be the Mother of God, she was "full of grace" (Lk 1:28), and hence free of sin from the moment of her conception in her mother's womb. For this reason the Church celebrates Mary as the Immaculate Conception (CCC 490-91).

limitations. He had to teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven, in a way we could understand.

Think about those snails again. They have never seen an airplane or tasted a chocolate chip cookie. Chances are they would not believe what you told them about these things. They think the snail world is the only world. Besides, you are a snail just like them. Who do you think you are, claiming to be a human coming from this world of man?

You can see that you would have to care about those snails a great deal if you were to stay and keep trying to teach them. God loved us a great deal. That is why he came to live with us in the Person of Jesus Christ. This taking on of a human nature by the Son of God is called the **Incarnation**.

There is more. Because God has honored the human race by becoming one of us, we now have a greatness we did not have before. Our eyes, ears, hands, feet, and souls are greater gifts of God than ever before, now that he has had them too. Our sorrows and our joys have more dignity because Jesus experienced human joys and sorrows as well. Everyday things, such as the cry of a baby, a game of tag, or a family dinner, have special meaning because the Son of God has shared them. Because God has become closer to us, we are now closer to God.

The Presentation

In obedience to the Jewish law that all first-born sons were to be taken up to the temple to be presented to the Lord, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem. This is called the **Presentation** of the Lord. At the temple, an

old man named Simeon was filled with joy. God had once promised that he would see the Savior before he died. The Holy Spirit let Simeon know that the baby carried by Mary and Joseph was that Savior. He took the child in his arms and praised God. Simeon predicted that Jesus would bring God's grace to all men, not only the Jews, when he called Jesus "a light to reveal you to the Gentiles"—he also warned Mary that one day, she would suffer with Jesus: "Your own heart shall be pierced by a sword."

Jesus was to have enemies very early in his earthly life. When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem asking directions to the house of the "newborn king of the Jews," King Herod was enraged. *Nobody* was to take his place as king of the Jews, whatever the prophecies said! His only thought was to destroy this new king. Herod tried to trick the Magi into helping him, but an angel warned the Magi not to trust Herod. Then this evil ruler ordered that all baby boys in Bethlehem were to be killed.

By the time the order was carried out the Holy Family was well on its way to safety in Egypt because an angel had warned Joseph in a dream. They stayed there until Herod died, and God told them they could return to Nazareth. Jesus grew up like any other boy of his time. Everyone thought Joseph was Jesus' real father; they did not know that he was just his foster father. No one but Mary and Joseph knew that God-made-man walked among them.

Words to Know:

nativity Incarnation Presentation

The Word of God, Jesus Christ, on account of his great love for mankind, became what we are in order to make us what he is himself.

—Saint Irenaeus



"I believe . . . in Jesus Christ . . . who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary . . ."



- Q. 61** *From whom was Jesus Christ born?*
Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. Because of this, the Church recognizes Mary as the Mother of God (CCC 495).
- Q. 62** *Was Saint Joseph the father of Jesus?*
Saint Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus, but was his foster father. As the husband of Mary and the guardian of Jesus, he was believed to be Jesus' true father, although actually he was not (CCC 497).
- Q. 63** *Where was Jesus Christ born?*
Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem in a stable and was placed in a manger (CCC 525).

CHAPTER 13

The Holy Family

"And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him."

Luke 2:39-40

The time between the Holy Family's return from Egypt and the baptism of Jesus we call the "hidden years" or the "private life" of our Lord. Except for the time the Holy Family traveled to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve, the Gospels tell us nothing about these years (Lk 2:41-51).

Jesus did not perform any miracles or preach any sermons during this time of his life, or, at least, none are recorded in the Bible. Because of this, we can guess that Jesus lived a very ordinary life with his parents. The time had not yet come for him to begin his public ministry. To the people of Nazareth Jesus was just another boy. The Scriptures say that Christ was like us in all things but sin.

Much of the same can be said for our Lady and Saint Joseph. Both of them led lives of extraordinary holiness and goodness. Yet there was nothing unusual about their daily routines. Joseph earned a living as a carpenter, making tables and benches in his workshop, and perhaps helping people to build their homes. Without the drills and power saws of today, carpentry was hard work. Joseph must have been tired at the day's end.

As for Mary, she did not need to look for an outside job to keep busy. She tenderly cared for

and educated Jesus. She probably had to go to the market each day for food. She very likely made all the clothes and perhaps even wove the cloth. Since homes had no running water in those days, Mary must have had to carry jars of water from the town well. In addition, Mary must have done what she could to help others. She would have done works of **charity**, such as visiting the sick or giving to those who were poor and hungry.

You can be sure that Jesus helped Joseph and Mary with their many tasks. We know that the Holy Family's life was not one of unending work. They set aside time to relax and enjoy one another. They spent time in family prayer. The Sabbath was a special day of rest and worship of God.

As mentioned earlier, Jesus went to Jerusalem with his parents when he was twelve years old. It was the time of Passover, the holiest feast for the Jews. When Mary and Joseph started back for Nazareth, they did not know that Jesus stayed behind. They thought he was with some of their many friends and relatives who were also making the trip. A day had passed before Mary and Joseph discovered that Jesus was missing. After three days of worried searching, they

found Jesus in the temple, talking about God with the priests and teachers. "All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Lk 2:47).

Mary and Joseph did not understand why Jesus had caused them such sorrow. But perhaps Mary thought of Simeon's prophecy: "a sword will pierce through your own soul also" (Lk 2:35). Being Mother of the Messiah took great faith, courage, and a readiness to accept suffering without always understanding why.

Jesus went back to Nazareth and was obedient to his parents. As God, he didn't have to obey anyone, but because he wanted to share our human life in every way, Jesus chose to respect the command God has given to children everywhere: "Honor your father and mother."

The Holy Family and You

The Holy Family teaches us some important lessons about ourselves and our role in our own families.

1. *Accept God's will for you.* Mary and Joseph did not expect God to "pay them back" for being good with riches and an easy life. Instead, they trusted God to do what was best for them. At God's command, Joseph "dropped everything" and moved his family to Egypt,

then back again. We should all be ready to do what God wants, without question.

2. *Do the job you are meant to do in your family.* Parents and children are happiest when they work together for the good of the family. Think of a baseball game. If all the players crowded onto the pitcher's mound, or if the pitcher tried to play second base the team would never win. Your job in your "family team" is to obey your parents and do your share. This was the job Jesus had. Obedience is not easy. Believe it or not, obedience prepares us for the days when we will no longer need to obey our parents as we do while we are children. By obediently listening to our parents, we will learn to do the things that we will need to do when we are living on our own.

3. *Make God a member of your family.* The family whose lives are centered on God is a happy family. Is there a crucifix, statue, or picture of Jesus (and one of Mary) in the part of the house where you spend the most time together? Does your family pray before meals? If you already do this, your family may wish to try more family prayers, such as the Rosary or a daily Bible reading. Tell your parents what you learn in your religion lessons.

Talk with your parents about how your family can make Sunday a special day for God. Perhaps you can all attend Mass together,

- Q. 64** *Why did Jesus Christ wish to be poor?*
Jesus Christ wished to be poor in order to teach us to be humble and not to place our happiness in the riches, the honors, and the pleasures of this world (CCC 526).
- Q. 65** *How did Jesus Christ spend his hidden years?*
Jesus spent his hidden years in humility, doing manual labor, living in his local community, and submitting himself in obedience to the Jewish law and to Mary and Joseph (CCC 531-32).



have a special Sunday breakfast, and spend Sunday afternoon doing something you all enjoy.

4. *Do good for others as a family.* Many families find a way to help someone in need. Some put aside extra money each month for the missions. Others collect clothing for the poor in their community. Your family may have

a special talent to share with others. For example, your family may be good at singing and decide to use this gift by singing in the parish choir.

Word to Know:
charity

Celebrating The Church Year

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1

The Church has divided the calendar into holy seasons which celebrate the history of our salvation. With each season, there are changes in the prayers and readings of the liturgy and the colors of the priest's vestments. Faithful Christians also have special customs as the holy seasons change. For instance, there is the Advent wreath and its prayers in preparation for Christmas, sacrifices during Lent in memory of our Lord's sufferings, and praying the Rosary during the months of October and May in honor of our Blessed Mother.

Within each season, there are days set aside to honor events in salvation history and events in the life of our Blessed Mother. There are also many days in the Church year set aside in memory of the saints. That is because the Church wishes to take notice of certain men, women, boys, and girls who were ordinary people like us, yet who learned to love God in an extraordinary way. And since everyone in heaven is a saint, even those who have not been canonized by the Church, there is a special feast day for all of them, too. It is All Saints' Day, on November 1.

The feasts of the Church vary in importance. Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas are among the greatest solemnities in the Church year. Each country's bishops decide which days are Holy Days of Obligation: that is, days on which all Catholics must attend Mass.

It is a good idea to look at a Catholic calendar to keep track of the many feasts and saints' days. The word *holiday* means “holy day,” and we can celebrate many Church holidays all year round. There may be some saints that you especially like or wish to learn more about, such as a saint whose name you bear. When that saint's feast comes around, attend Mass, visit the Blessed Sacrament, or say a special prayer to that saint. Read a book on that saint's life. Some families have parties for their children on the feast days of their patron saints.

Here are some of the important days of the Church year:

First Sunday of Advent: (*Sunday after Christ the King.*) This is the first Sunday of the Church's liturgical year.

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Immaculate Conception (*December 8*): We rejoice that, from the moment she began life within the womb of her mother, Mary's soul was kept free from Original Sin.

Christmas (*December 25*): The birth of Jesus. Holy Family (*first Sunday after Christmas*): On this day we recall the perfect family life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. We ask them to help our family members to love one another and grow in holiness.

Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God (*January 1*): We honor Mary because of her special privilege in being the Mother of Jesus, true God and true man.

Epiphany (*January 6*): We celebrate the visit of the three wise men to the infant Jesus.

Baptism of the Lord (*Sunday after Epiphany*): This marks the beginning of Jesus' public life.

Presentation (*February 2*): When the infant Jesus was brought to the temple of Jerusalem.

Chair of Peter (*February 22*): This ancient feast reminds us of the unity our Church finds in the Pope.

Saint Joseph (*March 19*): We remember Joseph, the foster father of Jesus and guardian of the universal Church.

The Annunciation (*March 25*): When Gabriel came to Mary to tell her she would be the Mother of Jesus. Mary agreed to God's plan, and on this day Jesus began his life on earth, as a tiny unborn child inside his Mother.

Holy Week (*date varies*): We commemorate the Passion and death of Jesus.

Easter (*date varies*): We celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus.

Ascension (*forty days after Easter*): We commemorate the day Jesus returned to his Father in heaven.

Visitation (*May 31*): Mary visited Elizabeth, who was pregnant with Saint John the Baptist. Saint Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and knew that Mary was the Mother of the Savior.

Pentecost (*fifty days after Easter*): We celebrate the birthday of the Church when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles.

Holy Trinity (*Sunday after Pentecost*): We celebrate the mystery of the three Persons in One God.

Corpus Christi (*Thursday or Sunday after Holy Trinity Sunday*): These words are Latin for “the Body of Christ.” This feast honors Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Sacred Heart (*Friday after second Sunday after Pentecost*): Jesus revealed to Saint Margaret Mary his Sacred Heart, wounded by sin, yet burning with love for men. He asked that men remember that he is a God of love, longing to forgive sinners. This feast day reminds us of the loving Heart of Jesus.

Birth of John the Baptist (*June 24*): Usually a saint's feast is celebrated around the date of his death. For Saint John the Baptist we also celebrate his birth because of his special role as the herald of Jesus.

The Transfiguration (*August 6*): We commemorate the day Jesus appeared in glory on Mount Tabor.

The Assumption (*August 15*): The day Mary was taken body and soul into heaven.

The Queenship of Mary (*August 22*): We honor our Lady as Queen of Heaven and Earth.

Beheading of Saint John the Baptist (*August 29*): We commemorate the death of John the Baptist.

Birth of Mary (*September 8*): Our Lady's birthday is celebrated because of her importance as the Mother of Jesus.

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The Triumph of the Cross (*September 14*): On this day we recall that the holy Cross is the sign of our salvation.

Saints Michael, Raphael, Gabriel (*September 29*): These three archangels all are mentioned in the Sacred Scripture as powerful servants of God.

Guardian Angels (*October 2*): We honor the heavenly protector God has given to each one of us.

All Saints (*November 1*): On this day we praise God for all the saints, both those who are known to the Church, and those who are unknown.

All Souls (*November 2*): We pray for the souls in purgatory, especially those of our family and friends who have died.

Christ the King (*last Sunday of the Church year*): We honor Jesus as King of Heaven and earth. We ask him to rule in our hearts, our homes, and our country.

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