

Growing in FAITH™

Discovering **hope and joy** in the Catholic faith.

December 2018

St. Raphael Catholic Church

Rev. John M. Connell, Pastor

One Minute Meditations

St. Dominic of Silos

St. Dominic was a Benedictine monk, born around 1000AD

in Navarre, Spain.

Recognized for his leadership abilities, he was made abbot, but was exiled for refusing to sell monastery lands to the local ruler. He was welcomed by King Ferdinand I of Castile and appointed abbot of St. Sebastian's monastery at Silos. Joan of Aza prayed for a child and saw a vision of St. Dominic. Her son, whom she named Dominic, founded the Dominican Order.

Anticipate Advent

A rich Advent makes a joyous Christmas. Use the four weeks before Christmas to prepare for Christ's coming. Offer extra prayers, perform penance, and receive the sacrament of Reconciliation.

"Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel"

(Luke 2:29-32).



Celebrate Christmas with child-like wonder

There is no greater miracle than the gift of love Christmas represents. We didn't earn it and we can't deserve it. Yet, we get so harried with the holiday rush that we miss the wonder of it. Ever notice how children never do? This year, slow down and celebrate Christmas like a child.

Tie gifts with heartstrings.

Instead of boosting credit card balances or draining your checking account, keep what you give simple, meaningful, and from the heart. For example, give a coupon for babysitting to friends with children. Prepare a meal for someone who needs a break from cooking.

Offer your hearth. The holidays can be lonely for people separated from

their loved ones by distance, death, or circumstance. Watch for anyone who needs a "home" and invite them to yours.

Choose peace. Instead of enduring the Christmas commercials and bad holiday specials, record the good

shows and watch while you relax. Or rent your favorite spiritual movies.

Better still, turn off the television, computer, and cell phone, and enjoy the silence.

Greet the Babe with joy. Seek reconciliation

in Confession so you can receive the Eucharist at Christmas.

Sing like an angel. Check your local listings for Christmas concerts, Messiah sing-a-longs, or other spiritual songfests. Host a caroling party in your home and sing loud with Christmas joy.



Why Do Catholics Do That?

Why do Catholics celebrate Christ's birth?

Every Christmas, we celebrate that Jesus, the Son of God, became man—while retaining his divinity—and died for our sins and rose again. We believe this because God, who is Truth, revealed it.

"For to us a child is born, to us



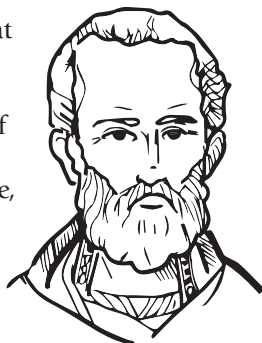
a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'"

(Isaiah 9:6). God came to Earth and lived among us.

Honor the spirit of St. Nicholas

St. Nicholas is one icon of the holiday season that has meaning in both the secular and spiritual celebrations of Christmas.

We know that St. Nicholas was born at the end of the third century in Asia Minor. His parents died when he was young and left him well off. His uncle, the archbishop of Myra (southeast of Turkey), ordained him and upon his uncle's death, Nicholas served as bishop until his own death. Throughout he suffered imprisonment and persecution.



One legend involving St. Nicholas concerns a desperate man on the verge of selling his daughters into slavery to pay his debts. Nicholas secretly threw a bag of gold into an open window (some say down the chimney) in the man's house to stop him.

Our present-day Santa Claus stems from the legends of St. Nicholas, but in the Church he is a saint, a confessor of the faith, and a holy bishop. We can learn from his generosity to the poor, and imitate his acts of kindness to others.

from Scripture

Luke 2:41-52, Living in the world

In this reading, the Holy Family went to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old. This was an important time in Jesus' life. Back then, a Hebrew boy became a man around that age, and was recognized in a ceremony called a Bar Mitzvah. On this occasion, Jesus decided to stay behind, causing anxiety to his parents.



heavenly Father but he understood the time to fulfill them would come later. Meanwhile, he returned obediently with his earthly parents to Nazareth and fulfilled his duties to them.

Jesus respected his family, yet he continued to pursue his place in God's plan. The lesson is that we can grow in holiness in wherever

God has placed us. Christians can be found in neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. In all these places, we have to find ways to live a holy life in the world.

Q & A What, exactly, is meant by "fear of the Lord"?

"Fear of the Lord" is more about awe—recognizing God's power and might – than about fear of the merciful creator who loves us most. Fear of the



Lord is also known as "reverence," and is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in Isaiah: *"The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of*

understanding...counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2). These gifts, when used, make us open to God's love.

Fear of the Lord helps us have a healthy respect for God's majesty. We fear offending God for the same reason we fear offending someone we love. If we really love someone, we wouldn't do anything (on purpose) to hurt them or damage the friendship. This is what happens when we sin. "The [Christian] no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1828).

Feasts & Celebrations

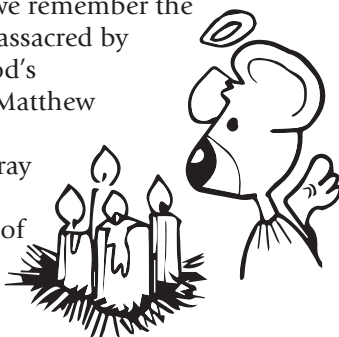
Dec. 4 – St. John Damascene (749). A Doctor of the Church and the last of the Greek Fathers, St. John was born in Syria when it was under Muslim rule and was counselor to the caliph. He is known for his writings in favor of the use of sacred images for devotion. These writings brought him into serious conflict with the heretical Christian emperor. He later became a monk under the direction of St. Sabas.

Dec. 12 – Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531). The Blessed Mother appeared as a Native American maiden to St.

Juan Diego, also Native American. She asked that the bishop of Mexico build a chapel for her, and had him carry roses to the bishop as a sign. When the roses were emptied from his tilma (cape), it retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

Dec. 28-The Holy Innocents. On this day, we remember the infants massacred by King Herod's soldiers (Matthew 2:16-18).

We also pray for the safety of unborn children.



Our Mission

To provide practical ideas that promote faithful Catholic living.

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(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible)