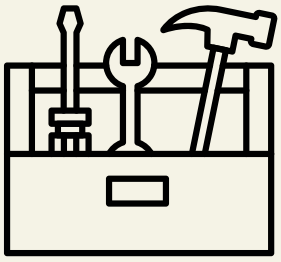
Faith Formation Family Tool Box

December 3rd - 16th Salvation

www.st-patricks.org

About the Tool Box



St Patrick's Faith Formation provides these resources to support your family, and to make living your Catholic faith together as a family simple and effective.

We know that fitting everything into an already busy schedule is complicated. So, we aren't asking you to do it all. Instead we invite your family to take on these resources as a challenge. Ask yourselves "What can we do?"

We have intentionally planned and crafted a variety of options to choose from with all families in mind. Look through the options provided and pick a few that work well for your family. Choose an afternoon to do several activities, or sprinkle them throughout your week.

This is your toolbox! Use the tools that are most helpful in building your family's faith together.

What You'll Find in This Tool Box

- **Practical Faith Tools** — Simple prayer practice, Bible readings, saint stories, conversation starters, fun videos, and Sunday Mass support
- **Lived Faith Ideas** — Crafts, recipes, games, pop culture, service projects, faith and science, and more
- **Deeper Learning** — Optional resources for parents wanting to learn more about that session's topic.

A Faith-Filled Afternoon/Evening

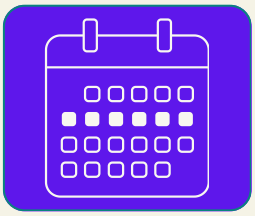
Some families might find it easiest to choose three or four ideas in this packet and make them into an afternoon or evening of faith-focused fun.

- Start your time in prayer or conversation by using one or two of the options in the "Practical Faith Tools." For example:
  - Begin with one of the suggested Prayer Habits
  - Use the suggested Conversation starters
  - Watch one of the recommended video resources.
- Then spend some time together working on one or two of the "Lived Faith Ideas"
  - Choose a craft or recipe to do together
  - Play a game or watch a pop-culture option
  - Complete a faith and science or service project
- Conclude using one of the prayer ideas provided.
  - Read the Gospel for the upcoming Sunday together
  - Learn about this session's Saint and ask for their prayers.

An Intentional Lord's Day

Perhaps it will work well for your family to integrate these resources into the rest of your Sunday before and after Mass.

- Read the Mass Readings as a family before Mass, or have a passenger read them on the drive to Church.
- Utilize the Conversation starters on the drive home from Mass, and practice a recommended prayer habit or Lord's Day idea.
- Integrate a recipe idea into lunch or dinner.
- Utilize a game, pop-culture, faith and science, or service project idea as part of your family time in the afternoon.
- Utilize the saint or art resources to conclude your day as a family in prayer.



Sprinkled Throughout the Week

For some, it might just be most practical to identify your favorite ideas from these materials and plug them in to different opportunities throughout the week, whenever time allows.

- Choose a day to add a recipe idea to dinner.
- Use conversation ideas when driving together in the car.
- Start your weekend with a service or faith and science project
- Read the Mass readings together Saturday evening in preparation for Mass the next day.
- The options are limitless!

Table of Contents

Practical Faith Tools

Conversation Starters 07
Memory Verse 08
Lord's Day Ideas 09
Mass Readings 10
Prayer Habits 12
Hymn 13
Witness of the Saints 14
Praying with Art 16
Video Resources 17

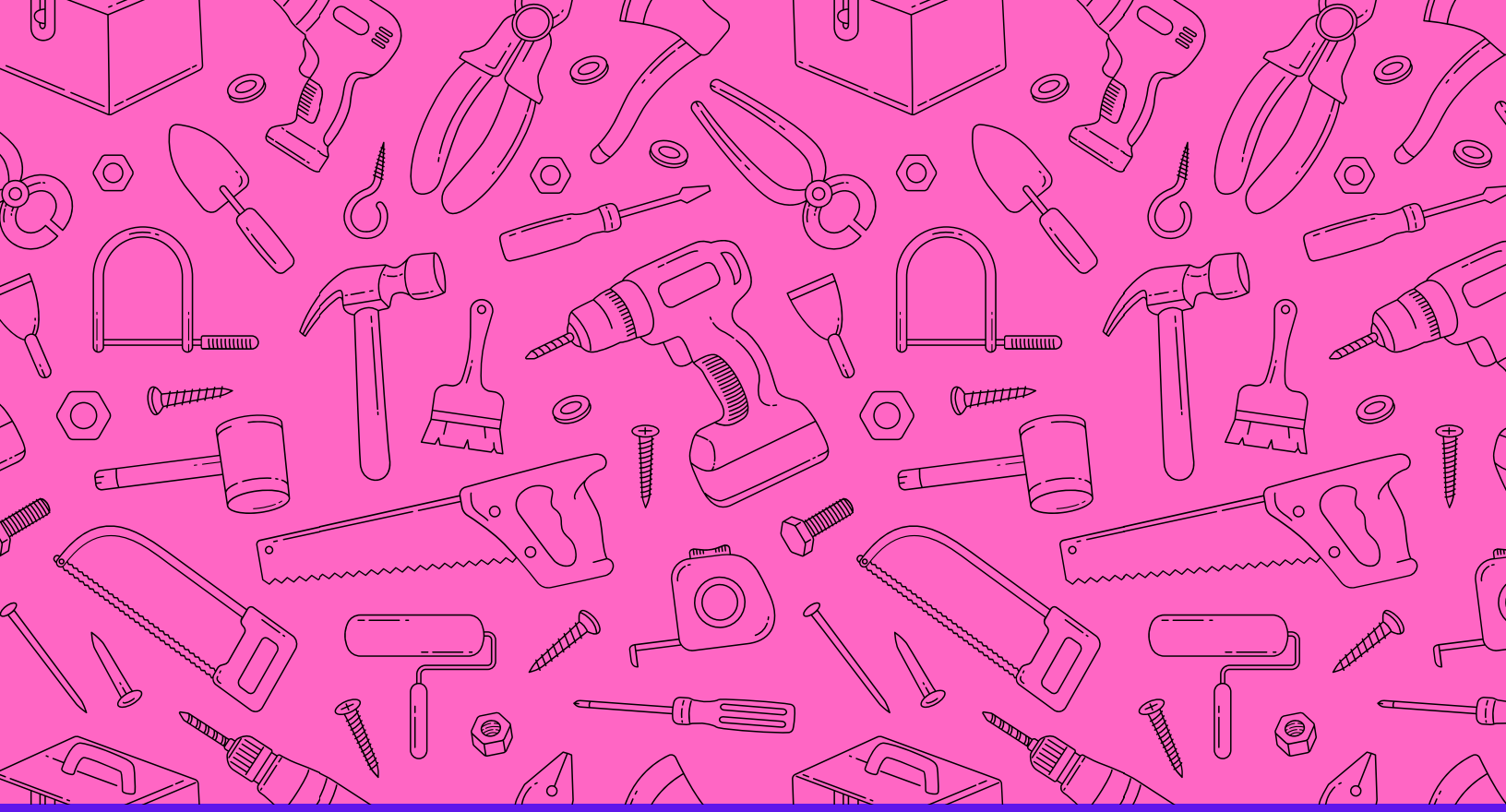
Lived Faith Ideas

Crafts 19
Food and Recipes 20
Faith and Science 21
Pop Culture 22
Service Projects 23

Deeper Learning

Parent Videos 25
Scripture and the Catechism 26
Reading Options 27

Find easy to use links to all resources on the St Patrick's Family Formation webpage



Practical Faith Tools

Student Workbooks

Your Child's work that they use during Wednesday Sessions with their catechist provides quality resources on the session's topic. We encourage parents to utilize these as a way to debrief the Wednesday session as well as carry the Wednesday session into the rest of the week. Below we have outlined the most helpful parts of each chapter as well as the specific chapter your child worked on with their catechist during our most recent Wednesday session.

- The last page in every chapter is an at home "with my family" page with scripture, activity, and discussion options.
- Each chapter introduces the example of a saint that demonstrates the topic through their lived faith.
- Throughout each chapter, there are a variety of simple Prayer options that you can integrate into other prayer times throughout your week.

November 19th, 2025 – Following Jesus	
K: Unit 2, Session 8	1: Unit 2, Session 9
3: Unit 2, Session 9	4: Unit 2, Session 8
5: Unit 2, Session 8	Notes:

Conversation Starters

One of the most consistent indicators of a child who will continue to live their faith into adulthood is growing up in a family that simply talks openly and actively about their faith. Consider using some of the provided conversation starters to discuss your faith as a family this week.

Traditions are important. Families create traditions and find they are building a shared sense of belonging, creating stability, connecting to their past, and forming stronger family bonds. Consider using these questions to discuss traditions in your family.

- What is a favorite family tradition?
- What is your favorite holiday memory?
- If you could change one thing about the holiday season, what would it be?
- Is there a family tradition you think would be good to have?

As Christians, we try to focus on the Incarnation more than all the secular traditions and events during this time. It can be difficult! Have a few discussions about how to counter that worldly tidal wave.

- If your family decided to not spend money on gifts for each other and to donate that money instead, what are some gift ideas that don't cost money? Where would you want the money donated?
- How can we be quieter and more prayerful during the Advent season? Can we reduce some of the obligations or say no to some of the invitations? Can we simplify something to give us more margin in time and energy elsewhere?

Memory Verse

The Word of God is important in our faith journey, and memorizing short, simple scripture verses can prove to be beneficial to us at all ages to allow God to more consistently speak to us throughout our daily life.

Matthew 10:22 “But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

OR

Acts 4:12 “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.”

Lord’s Day Ideas

Saturday or Sunday evenings, **ask everyone in the family to offer prayer intentions.** You can fashion these just as we do during Mass: “For …, we pray to the Lord.” These can be broad intentions, such as for those suffering due to war, or specific ones, such as for a friend who is having surgery. Each person can state what intention they have and the whole family can then respond with “we pray to the Lord.” Alternatively, everyone can state their intentions and then the family can end with a rote prayer or a simple, “In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

Share passionate projects in which you create – or embark on a new creative endeavor together. Bonus if this leads to you making gifts for others! Think knitting, woodworking, baking, sewing, paracord, painting, or even whittling or soap carving! Consider how you are embracing the Lord making you in His image, as a co-creator of beauty! Enjoy the time together – put some Advent music on while cleaning up or enjoy a treat when you have finished while talking about the creative process. If making gifts, remember to pray for the recipient while making it or upon completing the project.

Mass Readings

Reading scripture together as a family before you hear the Word of God proclaimed at Mass is a great way to improve comprehension and impact among people young and old. Spend just a few minutes together reading the assigned readings for Mass from your Bible or by using the link provided. You can even do this together in the car, or as a time of prayer on Saturday evening before bed. You can also listen to the readings using the links provided. If needing to shorten this option, try just reading the Gospel.

Daily Readings
bible.USCCB.org

Sunday, December 7th
Second Sunday of Advent
First Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-3, 17
Second Reading: Romans 15:4-9
Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

Monday, December 8th
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
Holy Day of Obligation - 9 AM and 7 PM Mass Times
First Reading: Genesis 3:9-15, 20
Psalm 98:1-4
Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12
Gospel: Luke 1:26-38
The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is a feast of grace, purity, and divine love. Mary's sinless nature was a gift from God, preparing her to be the Mother of our Savior. As we celebrate this solemnity, we seek to imitate her holiness and trust in God's plan for our lives.

Sunday, December 14th
Third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday
First Reading: Isaiah 35:1-6, 10
Psalm 146:6-10
Second Reading: James 5:7-10
Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

For the first two weeks of Advent, the focus can be summed up in the phrase, "The Lord is coming." But beginning with Gaudete Sunday, the summary might be, "The Lord is near." This shift is marked by a lighter mood and a heightened sense of joyous anticipation.

Prayer Habits

Option 1:
As we learn about salvation, the Fatima Prayer is an excellent one to include in your daily routine.

O my Jesus,
forgive us our sins,
save us from the fires of Hell.
Lead all souls to Heaven,
especially those
in most need of thy mercy.
Amen.

Option 2:
Another good prayer habit, if you haven't already developed it, is to offer up a Hail Mary after every Mass for the next person in the parish who passes away.

Hymn

Hymns are sung to lift the soul and draw our hearts closer to God. Many are based on Scripture, giving us another avenue to understanding and reflecting on the Sacred Word. Some hymns teach doctrine and express beliefs, reinforcing Catholic teachings and traditions. Below is a hymn related to our session topic - salvation - that your family can listen to, learn, or sing during the next few weeks.

To Jesus Christ, Our Sovereign King

To Jesus Christ, our Sov'reign King,
Who is the world's salvation,
All praise and homage do we bring,
And thanks and adoration.

Refrain:
Christ Jesus Victor, Christ Jesus Ruler!
Christ Jesus, Lord and Redeemer!

Thy reign extend, O King benign,
To ev'ry land and nation,
For in Thy kingdom, Lord divine,
Alone we find salvation.
(Refrain)

To Thee and to Thy Church, great King,
We pledge our hearts' oblation,
Until before Thy throne we sing,
In endless jubilation.
(Refrain)

The Witness of the Saints

St. Nicholas by Tintoretto

This session's saint is St. Nicholas.
Feast day: December 6th
Born March 15th, 270 AD, Turkey
Died December 6th, 343 AD
Patron saint of children, sailors, unmarried women, grooms, brides

St. Patrick's has a St. Nicholas Breakfast this Sunday after both Masses! All are welcome. Good will offering. French toast sticks, scrambled eggs, sausage links, and fruit. Also an opportunity for making Christmas craft decorations.

"The giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic God's giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves."

Nicholas was born in Asia Minor in the Roman Empire as an only child to Christian parents. He was exceedingly well brought up by his parents and trod piously in their footsteps. Both of his parents tragically died during an epidemic when he was young, leaving him well off, but to be raised by his uncle – the Bishop of Patara. Nicholas was determined to devote his inheritance to works of charity, and his uncle mentored him as a reader and later ordained him as a presbyter (priest).

An opportunity soon arose for St. Nicholas and his inheritance. A citizen of Patara had lost all his money and needed to support his three daughters who could not find husbands because of their poverty. Nicholas became informed of this, took a bag of gold, and threw it into an open window of the man's house in the night. Here was a dowry for the eldest girl and she was soon married. At intervals Nicholas did the same for the second and the third. The last time the father was on the watch, recognized his benefactor, and overwhelmed Nicholas with his gratitude.

The Witness of the Saints

Coming to the city of Myra when the clergy and people of the province were in session to elect a new bishop, St. Nicholas was indicated by God as the man they should choose. This was during the time of persecutions in the beginning of the fourth century. As he was the chief priest of the Christians of this town and preached the truths of faith with a holy liberty, the divine Nicholas was seized by the magistrates, tortured, then chained and thrown into prison with many other Christians. But when the great and religious Constatine, chosen by God, assumed the imperial diadem of the Romans, the prisoners were released from their bonds. Nicholas then returned to Myra.

St. Nicholas was tireless in his efforts against both Arianism and paganism. He destroyed temples. He reproached corrupt politicians. He worked to prevent injustices, particularly when innocent people were condemned to death.

Once, three innocent men were arrested on false charges, because the prefect was jealous of them. The men remembered Nicholas intervening in another case of the innocent being condemned and prayed to God that through Nicholas' merits and by his instrumentality they might yet be saved. That night St. Nicholas appeared in a dream to Constatine and told him with threats to release the three innocent men, and the prefect experienced the same thing. In the morning the Emperor and the prefect compared notes, and the condemned men were sent for and questioned. Constatine set them free and sent them to the bishop with a letter asking him not to threaten him anymore, but to pray for the peace of the world.

Today, many families remember St. Nicholas by placing oranges and chocolate coins in children's footwear. Other gifts, such as books, ornaments, or new pajamas might also be added. Others exchange small gifts that symbolize appreciation. German children leave out their shoes filled with hay or carrots for Nicolaus's horse or donkey.

Praying with Art

The Light of the World
William Holman Hunt

Each session, your family will receive a print out of a work of sacred art related to that session's topic. Over the Church's history, it was known — long before anyone had heard of multiple intelligences — that some people learned better through visuals and images can also be helpful for prayer experiences.

For this reason, the Church has a tradition known as visio divina ("divine seeing" or prayer in which we invite God to speak to our hearts as we look at an image).

Experience visio divina or lead others by following these steps:

1. Choose a comfortable, quiet place where you will not be distracted. Quiet yourself and relax by focusing on your breathing.
2. Begin by paying attention to the details, including shapes, colors, lighting, and facial expressions/body language of characters in the image. Identify the parts of the image that stand out to you and share them with your family.
3. Take a moment to prayerfully consider how God is speaking to your heart and why you think God has drawn your attention to this specific part of the image. Pay attention to your feelings, and allow God to speak to you through the image.
4. Respond to God, expressing your thoughts, feelings, desires, or yearnings. This can be done silently or together as a family.
5. Conclude by taking a few moments of silence to rest and savor the beauty of the image.

Video Resources

For younger children:

Watch these video resources on Formed.org. All St Patrick's families have free access to Formed as part of being parishioners.

1. What is the Immaculate Conception | Formed: a very short video explaining to younger children what it means and why it was necessary.
2. The Story of St. Nicholas with Brother Francis | Formed: Brother Francis tells the true story of Saint Nicholas, a compassionate bishop known for his generosity, who inspired the tradition of gift-giving. Discover how his legacy evolved into the beloved holiday figure now known as Santa Claus.

How Do I Use Formed?

- Go to formed.org/signup
- Select your parish by entering name, city and/or zip code
- Enter your name and email address
- Check that email account for a link to begin using FORMED.

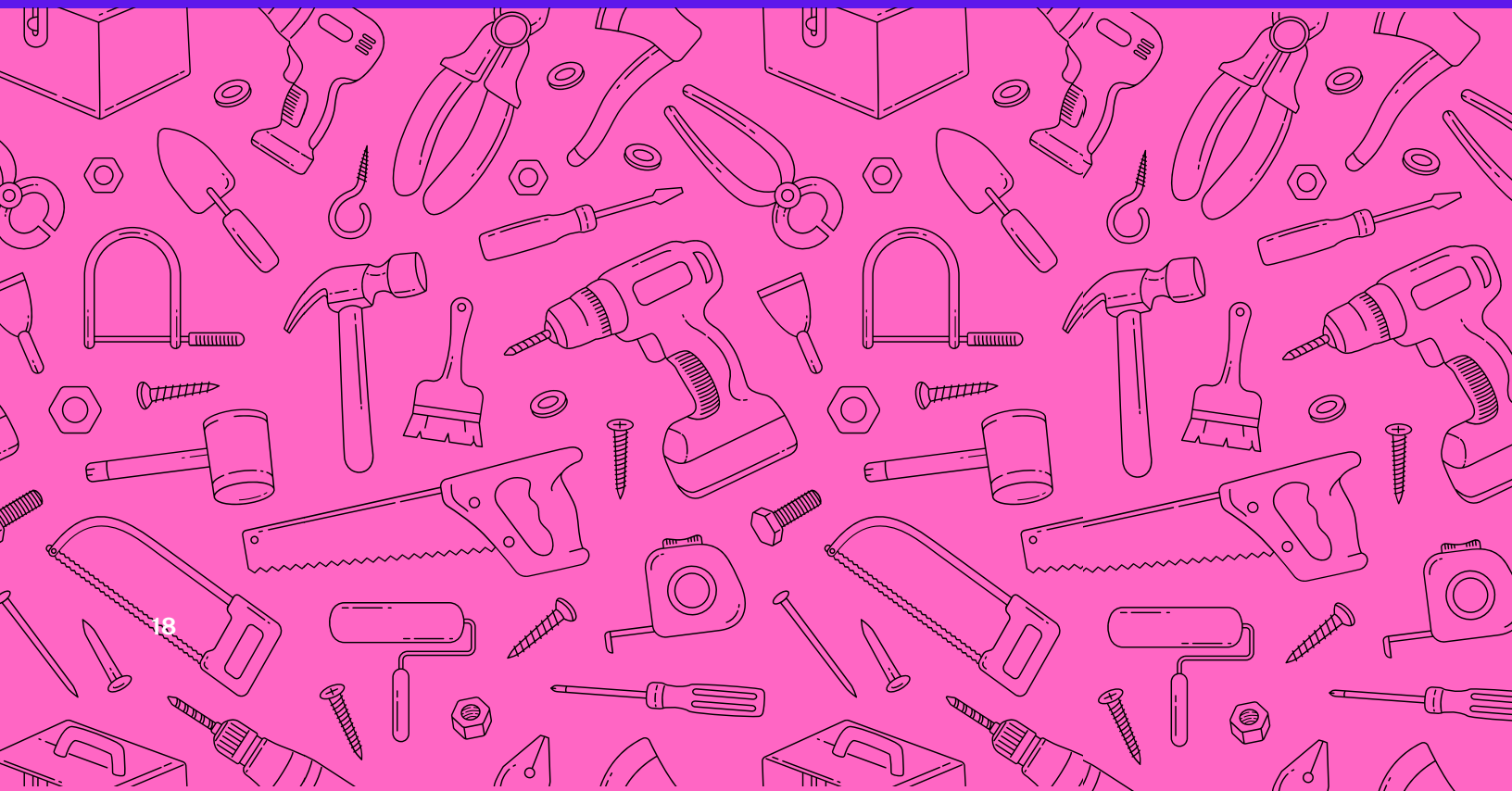
For older youth:

1. What is God's Plan for Salvation?| Formed: God has a plan of loving goodness for our salvation. God has revealed the law to us by writing it on our hearts and clarifying it through the Ten Commandments. God also gives us grace to respond in love, following Jesus' example.
2. Salvation and Redemption: We hear it all the time. "Are you saved?" "Have you been saved?" "Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?" How do we approach this question and the idea of salvation in general? Join Gabby and Nick as they walk us through the Catholic perspective of what it means to be saved.

Find easy to use links to these video resources on the St Patrick's Family Formation webpage

www.st-patricks.org/formation/youth/family-formation

Lived Faith Ideas



Crafts

Pipe Cleaner Candy Cane Ornaments
This is an easy craft that adds some wonderful sparkle to Christmas trees or other greenery that you might hang ornaments on. All you need are sparkly pipe cleaners!

Instructions:

1. Select two different colored sparkly pipe cleaners.
2. Line them up together.
3. Holding the tops, start twisting them together to make a candy cane pattern.
4. Once the two pipe cleaners are intertwined, form into the hook shape of a candy cane.

There are a few different versions of the story and symbolism of the candy cane. Below is a poem that captures the essence of the symbolism.

Turned upside down, the cane makes a “J”
For Jesus who was born on Christmas Day.
Turn it upright like the Good Shepherd’s staff
Who pleads to the Father on your behalf.
At the top you’ll see the saving crook,
used on the lost sheep He never forsook.
The stripes whisper softly, “By His stripes we are healed,”
And the red represents the blood that was shed.
The white gives us hope to become pure as He,
By forsaking our sins, white as snow they will be.
The peppermint oil that flavors this treat,
Is known for its strong healing properties.
Now each time you see the striped candy cane,
Remember, dear child, He knows your name.
~ Alana Lee

Recipes

Baklava Satchels

This adaptation of baklava, a traditional dessert from Turkey, symbolically depicts St. Nicholas' money bags.

Ingredients:

1 ½ cups mixed nuts, lightly toasted and chopped
1 Tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
½ cup honey
¼ orange, zested
Tsp ground cinnamon
Pinch of salt
1 package (9×13 inch) Phyllo Pastry Sheets, thawed
¼ cup unsalted butter, melted

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. In a medium bowl, stir together chopped nuts, melted butter, honey, orange zest, cinnamon, and salt until evenly combined.
3. Stack the thawed phyllo sheets on top of each other.
4. Using a sharp knife, cut the sheets lengthwise in half and cut each length crosswise into thirds, to make 6 sections per sheet of phyllo. If needed, cover phyllo with a barely damp kitchen towel to prevent from drying.
5. Brush one square lightly with the melted butter. Top with a second square, off-setting the corners. Brush lightly with butter. Top with a third square, off-setting the corners again to form a star shape. Brush with butter.
6. Place one tablespoon of filling in the center of the phyllo.
7. Enclose by bringing together two opposite sides. Continue to gather the edges while twisting and pleating them slightly to form a pouch.
8. Brush the top and sides lightly with melted butter.
9. Place on a baking sheet (leave an inch or two of space around each one) and bake at 375°F until tops are golden brown, approximately 15-18 minutes.
10. Remove from oven and place baking sheet on rack to cool for 5-10 minutes. Serve warm. (Leftovers at room temperature are good, too. 😊)

Faith and Science

Illustrating Me, Sin, and Jesus

Supplies:

- 3 Clear plastic cups
- Iodine
- Bleach
- Water
- Stickers / Tape or some other way to label the jars

Note: Wear old clothes, in case you get bleach on them.

Demonstration:

1. Label one cup “Me” or “Us”. Fill it half full of water. Label a second cup “Sin”. Mix a ratio of 90% water and 10% iodine. Label the third cup “Jesus”. In this cup mix a ratio of 90% water and 10% bleach.
2. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross has freed us from our sins. Pour a little bit of the mixture from the Sin cup into the Me/Us cup. Sin pulls us away from God and tarnishes us. This is symbolized by the brownish color that the water in our “Me” cup now has.
3. But, for those who believe in Jesus as our Savior, hope is not lost. When we ask for forgiveness, our sins can be washed clean. Watch this happen as you carefully pour the “Jesus” cup into the “Me” cup until the liquid is clear again.

(Science: When mixed with water the iodine water mixture turns the water slightly reddish brown. When the bleach/water mixture is added a chemical reaction occurs between the chlorine molecules in the bleach and the iodine molecules, turning the mixture clear.)

Pop-Culture

Many movies demonstrate the transformational power of salvation, even if they are not overtly religious about it. Highlighted below are a few movies that do this against the backdrop of the Christmas season.

Watch one (or more!) of these movies together as a family. Afterward discuss why the main character needed saving. Are there other movies you can think of that have a similar demonstration of salvation?

Consider the movie through the lens of faith:

- How might faith have affected the characters differently?
- How did other characters act as the Lord's hands and feet?
- How did the story help you better understand the gift of salvation?

It's a Wonderful Life: During a crisis, George Bailey believes it would have been better to not have been born and sees just what impact that would have on many others.

A Christmas Carol: Scrooge, the main character, is a miserly, self-isolated, wealthy old man. He is blessed with three ghosts visiting him, all of whom help him see the need to change. Multiple versions exist – including the Muppets! – and tend to adapt the Dickens' classic well.

How the Grinch Stole Christmas: The Grinch absolutely hates Christmas and decides to ruin it for the neighboring village. His discovery of why they celebrate Christmas completely changes him. A few different versions exist of this classic Seuss children's book. (The animated one follows the original book most closely.)

Service Projects

As we remember the birth of Jesus this time of year, **it's particularly fitting to serve babies!** There are different ways you can do this.

- Pray for babies in danger of medical conditions, illness, abortion, abuse, neglect, or extreme poverty.
- Spend time caring for a baby you know – playing peek-a-boo, reading board books, singing your favorite Christmas songs, or even just rocking the baby are all great but simple ways to serve a baby.
- Donate time, materials, or money to a local pregnancy resource center. Nearby are Bundles of Love in New Brighton, LEX Specialty Clinic in both East Bethel and Cambridge, and Birthright of Coon Rapids.

Deeper Learning

Parent Videos

What You Need to Be Saved (Faith vs. Works)
Father Mike explains why you need both faith and works, where this teaching is in the Scripture, and what to do with this knowledge.

Adventus: A Spiritual Pilgrimage | Formed
Enjoy a documentary of the Holy Land and other places associated with the birth of Jesus.

Mary: Immaculate Conception
Dr. Edward Sri explains what the Immaculate Conception is and why this teaching doesn't take away from Christ's saving power. Instead, it shows how Mary received God's salvation at the point of her conception and that God gave Mary this special grace so she could be the holy vessel who held his son.

Scripture and Catechism

Read and reflect on James 2:14-26.
Spend some time reading and reflecting on the Prodigal Son and His Brother. Consider how you might be similarly treating your heavenly Father. Optionally, listen to Father Mike Schmitz Bible in a Year Podcast to learn more about this scripture reading.

The Bible in a Year
with Fr. Mike Schmitz
Day 350: Faith and Works

Consider Reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church
The Catechism of the Catholic Church is an outstanding explanation of all the teachings of the Catholic Church. You can read about this sessions topic online for free, or you can pick up a copy of the Catechism from the St Patrick's bookstore.

Read paragraphs 613-23

Day 88: "Christ's Definitive Sacrifice" w/Fr. Mike

Additional Reading Options

Advent Is the Perfect Time to Prepare Our Hearts as a Gift| National Catholic Register

What can we give to Jesus on his birthday? What about your heart? This young author explains arriving at what this means one Advent, after admitting, “If you are anything like me, your heart is not ready to be given as a gift. It is broken and wounded.”

“I Thirst” General Audience 3 Sept 2025

Pope Leo XIV explores a side of salvation we don’t usually consider: learning to ask, receive, and trust, learning to accept our neediness. This short explanation, although focused on the Lord’s Passion, is nevertheless a timely message for Advent as well.

Why did God become man?

An invitation to think is how this article begins. An invitation to consider why the Incarnation and what else might have been Jesus’s purpose than to die for us and thus to save us.

We are Here to Help!

We want your feedback!

These resources are designed for your family, and we want to continue to improve them to better meet your needs.
Share with us your favorite activities, standout options that work well, as well as the resources that might have missed the mark.

Send us photos from your family working on these activities at home! We want to see your family's faith in action!

Contact Us

Melissa Holmberg, Family Formation Coordinator
mholmberg@st-patricks.org
763-326-2740

Rob Masloski, Formation Director
rmasloski@st-patricks.org
763-326-2734