



## Operation Christmas Child

All Parishioners are  
welcome to join us

Each year the Religious Education Program offers families the opportunity to participate in Operation Christmas Child.

If you decide to participate, you, as a family, purchase items to fill a shoebox. You decide what age child to pack the shoebox for and if you want it to go to a boy or a girl. Once filled, the boxes are brought to the Religious Education office and we deliver them to a local collection area. The boxes are then shipped overseas to children in many different counties.

If you want to participate, stop by the Religious Education Office or parish office to pick up a box (or you can use a shoebox you have at home)

Filled boxes are due back to the  
St. Patrick's  
Religious Education Office by  
November 19th.

Please note:

1. Enclose \$9 cash or check made out to Samaritan's Purse or you can register and pay online and then you will be able to track your box to its destination
2. Do NOT wrap the box and do NOT tape the box shut - use a rubber band to hold it shut
3. Tape tag to box indicating Boy/Girl and age.

For more information on this effort please go to the Samaritan's Purse web site.

<https://www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/>

## HOW TO PACK YOUR SHOEBOX GIFT



1 Get a standard size shoebox to pack for a boy or girl. Preprinted boxes are available online.

4 Most importantly, **pray** for the child who will receive your gift. Include a personal note and photo.



2 Select a quality "wow" toy such as a doll, soccer ball with pump, or stuffed animal.



3 Fill with other fun toys, hygiene items, and school supplies.



5 A donation of **\$9** is critical to cover shipping and other project costs. Give online through **Follow Your Box** and discover the destination of your shoebox.\*



6 Take your shoebox gift to a local drop-off location during **National Collection Week, the third week in November**. Visit our website to find one near you.



## SHOEBOX GIFT SUGGESTIONS



### "WOW" ITEM

- outfit
- shoes
- musical instrument
- soccer ball with pump
- stuffed animal
- doll

### TOYS

- toy cars
- jump ropes
- yo-yos
- toys that light up and make noise (with extra batteries)

### ACCESSORIES

- socks
- hats
- sunglasses
- hair clips
- jewelry and watches
- flashlights (with extra batteries)

### NON-LIQUID HYGIENE ITEMS

- toothbrushes
- bar soap
- washcloths
- combs

### SCHOOL SUPPLIES

- pens, pencils, and sharpeners
- crayons and markers
- notebooks and paper
- coloring and picture books
- solar calculators

### A PERSONAL NOTE

- a message to the child
  - a photo of yourself, your family, or group
- If you include your name and an address, the child may be able to write back.*

### QUALITY CRAFTS

- hair bows
- finger puppets
- friendship bracelets

*Check out the Operation Christmas Child boards on Pinterest for specific suggestions.*



**Do Not Include:** Candy, toothpaste, used or damaged items, war-related items such as toy guns, knives, or military figures; chocolate or food; fruit rolls or other fruit snacks; drink mixes (powdered or liquid); liquids or lotions; medications or vitamins; breakable items such as snow globes or glass containers; aerosol cans.



For more gift suggestions organized by gender and age, visit [samaritanaspurse.org/occ](http://samaritanaspurse.org/occ)

## HOW TO PACK YOUR SHOEBOX GIFT



For more gift suggestions, visit [samaritanaspurse.org/occ](http://samaritanaspurse.org/occ)

**Samaritan's Purse** *Helping in Jesus' Name*

\* See additional guidelines information for Samaritan's Purse's Operation Christmas Child boxes.

# Catholic **UPDATE**

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NOVEMBER 2019

## FIRST WEEK *of* ADVENT

### **SUNDAY** \* Alert for God's Love (LUKE 2:10-11)

The Advent Gospels in all cycles have an ominous tone, admonishing us, "Be alert! Stay awake...." We're challenged to be vigilant lest a thief break in.

Fear seems an incongruent response to the beauty of the Lord's coming. An alternative would be a challenge to awaken not for danger but for joy—for kindness, for God's humor in unexpected turns of events. Consider the call to be: wake up for an invasion of grace. Christmas is about God coming in an amazing moment of love. Be on the lookout for love.

### **MONDAY** \* Find the Beauty in *This* Life

Let's reflect on the differences between the Nativity stories in the two Gospels. Luke's version is bright, with singing angels, kneeling shepherds, the donkey, and the ox—the children's pageant scene. In contrast, the account in Matthew's Gospel is the adult Christmas story, fraught with difficulty and danger, vulnerability and flight. Here we find relief about the state of our own lives, which can be filled with painful challenges as well as brightness. Remember, Jesus joined us in this life, a place, however imperfect, where we can be at home.

### **TUESDAY** \* Embrace the Disruptions

Interruptions in the expected pattern don't block God's grace. On the contrary, through them, God creates the amazing story of salvation. So much in the world and in our private lives doesn't fit the ideal pattern. Advent is a time to reconcile with the dynamics of disruption. Remember, salvation unfolds in discontinuity: A virgin conceives a child. God becomes human. Death becomes life.



# The Joy of Advent

## GRACE THROUGH WAITING

PATRICIA LIVINGSTON

**Advent: A strong wind is blowing.** An adventure is in the air. Someone is coming. The curious energy of Advent is that we are looking for something we know is already here. It is both right now and not yet. We sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," yet *Emmanuel* means "God is with us."

The days of Advent are like the intriguing little doors on an Advent calendar. Each one opens to reveal some aspect of Christmas. The reflections that follow are some of the doorways I find in the Emmanuel reality—beauty, kindness, prayer, humor, insight, memory, encounter, music, and Scripture. What doors will you open this season?

### **WEDNESDAY** \* Rest in Stillness

Life presents many interludes of waiting. Waiting at a red light, waiting in a grocery line, waiting for the computer to reboot. These involuntary pauses offer an opportunity for us to simply be present. Being put on hold, left in a dentist's chair, or waiting to fall asleep at night can all be God's way of saying: "Just be still now, take a breath, know that I am here. Rest in my love."

### **THURSDAY** \* Gain Trust in Goodness

It may be difficult to trust God in the abstract or just because we're told God is trustworthy. We learn to trust God because of our own ongoing experiences of God's goodness. We need to pay attention to goodness, to receive it, let it in, and to savor it. Focusing on goodness can be a powerful Advent practice. Adopt the image that every day is a door in the Advent calendar of our lives—move into the day waiting to see what goodness will come from God.

### **FRIDAY** \* Hold Fast and Share Often

Negativity can dominate our awareness. Psychologists say it takes twenty pieces of positive feedback to offset one comment that hurts our feelings. To counterbalance our propensity for being pulled into the dark, we must hold carefully to experiences of goodness. Make an agreement with family and friends to pay attention to goodness and share those experiences regularly. We see what we look for. In Advent, we try to wait in trust. Noticing and receiving goodness builds our trust. Sharing that goodness with others deepens it for us all.

### **SATURDAY** \* Become in Tune with Blessings

When on high alert for goodness, we realize how much we take for granted. In a beautiful tradition, Jewish people recite *brakhot*, prayers of thanksgiving in which they bless God for instilling goodness in every aspect of creation. Once I saw a man holding a beautifully lettered sign at a stoplight. It read, "Can you spare a smile?" I laughed in delight and our eyes held. He smiled back with a face that could have been painted by Raphael—an exchange I can only describe as a blessing.

## **SECOND WEEK of ADVENT**

### **SUNDAY** \* Unveil the Power of Hope (ISAIAH 61:1)

We all need the hope of the powerful Advent and Christmas Scriptures. Every year we are oppressed with new burdens and anxieties, our hearts have been broken in different ways. The good news often comes to us in unexpected forms. Consider this popular Christmas carol:

*God rest you merry, gentlemen,  
let nothing you dismay,  
remember Christ our Savior  
was born on Christmas Day....*

Somehow we will be released from our captivities, and our broken hearts will be healed. Christ was born. God is with us.

### **MONDAY** \* Find Harmony in Life's Discord

Struggle is part of transformation. A priest who was also a gifted pianist illustrated how the same chords in a particular tune could sound beautiful when played in high octaves but ugly and dissonant when played in lower notes. He drove his point home, saying, "The message of the gospel will play well only up there, when the reign of God happens. There everything will fit. The lion and the lamb are at peace. When we play down here in our own lives, it's hard sometimes. The notes aren't sweet; they clash against each other." In the discord, we know we need saving. It's time to open our hearts for Christmas.

### **TUESDAY** \* Let the Light Shine

Apotheosis is from the Greek *apo*, meaning "change," and *theos*, meaning "God." When something is apotheosized, it is changed to reflect God. It is about the million incidentals of humanness, which often become transcendent in the rituals of living. Once in a moment of frustration while shopping, the store's sound system captured my attention. Suddenly I heard the Beatles singing "Here Comes the Sun." I stopped and listened. Apotheosis. I heard an Advent message: "Here comes the Son." I let that music save my joy.

### **WEDNESDAY** \* Rejoice in Gratitude

Unexpected reminders of God's presence can flood our hearts with gratitude. Our response can be like Mary's with Elizabeth: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior" (Luke 1:46–47). We need to proclaim moments of realization of God's presence and prolong the time for our spirit to rejoice in gratitude. We need to renew our hope of being delivered from anger and fear and envision the empty warehouse of our soul being turned into a cathedral.

### **THURSDAY** \* Break Free from Fear

The name *Jesus* means "God saves." We need saving in so many ways: from sin, from despair, fear, and all the forces that attack the life of our spirits. I'm convinced one avenue of God's saving grace is humor. Laughter sometimes breaks the tension and gives us back our trust. I saw this happen to an elderly friend who was placed in hospice care. Someone asked, "Did you hear about the man who passed away while taking a course on death and dying? He got an 'A.'" As she laughed, she let go of fear.

### **FRIDAY** \* Open the Door to Peace

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is celebrated in about mid-Advent. The power of Mary in this manifestation lays the foundation for a story we should treasure during the Christmas season. We again learn that God's idea of power is not our idea of power. God comes to us where we are poor and broken and brings us to life again. We can take solace in Mary's response to Juan Diego's confusion at her apparition: "Do not let your heart be troubled. Am I not here with you?"

## **SATURDAY** \* **Linked by Vulnerability**

Though he was in the form of God (see Philippians 2), Jesus became completely human, even going so far as to arrive through the process of gestation and birth. When my daughter gave birth, one emergency after another erupted on the ward, climaxing in a power failure. I nearly collapsed from stress, but my daughter's voice came through the dark: "Isn't it wonderful, Mom? He's here. He's safe." In Luke's story, Mary didn't even have the comfort of another woman. I wonder if she was able to say to Joseph, "Isn't it wonderful? He's here. He's safe."

### **THIRD WEEK of ADVENT**

## **SUNDAY** \* **Offer Joy (1 THESSALONIANS 5:16–19)**

The third Sunday of Advent takes the name *Gaudete*, Latin for "rejoice." We embrace joy with delighted gratitude and send that energy into our world. There is much joy to offer in the Christmas season—we connect with old friends and gather with people we love. By offering joy we refuse to allow the spirit of God to be quenched. Let us offer it all, rejoicing, so that in the dark nights of our struggling world, the illumination of love shines brightly.

## **MONDAY** \* **Stay Positive During Change**

The secret to moving toward wonder is staying positive throughout change. Shepherds from a hillside outside Bethlehem moved from fear to wonder. Kneeling before the Child, the love they felt changed them. At an airport, I saw a sign of love that moved me to wonder. Right inside the security gate, a uniformed security guard proposed to a woman at a coffee counter. She said yes, and a mariachi band erupted in songs of joy. Everyone began dancing: the couple, security guards, pilots, flight attendants, customers, and ticket agents. Instead of terror, love broke out at the airport. Wonder can be just one step from fear.

## **TUESDAY** \* **Expect the Amazing**

In *The Incredibles*, a movie about a family of superheroes, a little boy riding on his tricycle sees Mr. Incredible use his superpower to pick up his car. Every day thereafter, when Mr. Incredible comes home the boy is loitering by the driveway. Finally, Mr. Incredible demands to know what he is waiting for. The boy answers in a hushed voice, "I don't know, something amazing, I guess." Something amazing happens every Advent: the power of picking up hearts—of giving them hope. In Advent, we await the most amazing event of all: the birth of our Savior.

## **WEDNESDAY** \* **Welcome the Mystery**

God doesn't save us from bad things. The cross we take up may involve a path of tragic turns. But sometimes we have an experience of God's saving power that serves as a metaphor for how God saves our spirits—the ultimate rescue of life from death. Sometimes what appears as the "failing" of our personal plans brings us to the mystery of God's bigger plan, as in Jeremiah 29:11: "plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope."

## **THURSDAY** \* **Meet in Kindness**

We think of Christmas as a season of giving, yet it's also a season of receiving. Something holy happens when we experience even small acts of kindness. Embracing this can help us see our part in God's blessing. Mutuality between individuals must exist for the fruits of goodwill to be fully revealed. This is also true with God. When we receive God's many tender mercies with grateful hearts, we help blessing happen. May the entire world be blessed this Christmas as we meet God in the abundance of his grace.

## **FRIDAY** \* **Find a Still Harbor**

To receive, we must have room inside. Overloaded with pressures and exhausted by the pace of schedules and commitments in these preholiday weeks, we seem to have little room to let goodness in. But we need time in stillness. Finding space for quiet interludes may be the best way to prepare our hearts for the wonder of Christmas. As dawn breaks, find a corner with a candle or walk under the stars.

A harbor from hassle.

Breathing out tension, breathing in love.

*Be still and know that I am God.*

*Be still.*

*I am with you and I love you.*

## **SATURDAY** \* **Commit Fully**

When my granddaughter was four, she wasn't completely over the flu when her preschool Christmas pageant came around. Though no longer contagious, she was still pretty weak. "I have to go," she said. "They need me. I'm the star." I assumed she meant she had the lead role. But later, I discovered she was literally the star that led the Wise Men to Bethlehem. Sick or well, we each have a part to play in the pageant of life. All parts make a difference. We have to go. The world needs us. We shine to light the path to God.

### **FOURTH WEEK of ADVENT**

## **SUNDAY** \* **Celebrate the Light (JOHN 1:5)**

The great symbol of this season is light. From the days of far prehistory, at the winter solstice there have been festivals of light. There's a reason to fear the dark. There's a reason "Let there be light" are the first words of creation in Genesis. Light is our primary symbol for God. It's used interchangeably in the familiar words of the Nicene Creed: "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God..." Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." In December, Christians celebrate the coming of that light.

## **MONDAY** \* **Travel Homeward**

Once, on a flight home from college, my plane was rerouted to an airport a hundred miles inland due to heavy fog. It was chaos. In the line to use a pay phone, a man asked who I was going to call.

"My dad," I said. "I don't want him to worry, and I think he'll come get me."

"In this fog, are you crazy? You better get a bus ticket like the rest of us," he advised.

I paused before answering, “You don’t know my father.”

Four hours later, Dad pulled up, jumped out, and hugged me. The man from the phone line called out, “You’ve got some father!”

Fogs of the spirit can strand us on this human journey. We need to remember the one who traveled all the way to Bethlehem to take us safely home.

## **TUESDAY** ★ Release the Pressure of Perfection

Our longing for Christmas has great power. It keeps stirring us to give and to love. But it can also lead us to disappointment and fill us with a sense of anticlimax when we can’t grasp the perfect moment. We may feel great pressure to decorate, bake, and shop our way to Christmas spirit. No holiday, regardless of the perfection it holds in our memory, is perfect in reality. Things weren’t perfect even when God joined our human family. There was scandal as well as starlight, and there was no room in the inn. Jesus comes to us despite our imperfections.

## **WEDNESDAY** ★ Cherish Life’s Realities

The entrance procession to Christmas Eve Mass hadn’t begun. People were restless, and a baby was wailing. An elderly woman said loudly, “That baby shouldn’t be out this late!” Suddenly the crying stopped and the music began. Mary and Joseph led a group of children costumed as shepherds, angels, and wise men. Mary cradled a real baby, sucking on a bottle, his face scarlet from the exertion of crying. “Why, all that crying was Jesus!” exclaimed the elderly woman. Mary held the baby to her shoulder before placing him in the manger. He let out a loud burp that was greeted by laughter. Jesus experienced firsthand what life is like for us. Jesus is the Word of God who is with us always, in all the human moments.



## **THURSDAY** ★ Unwrap the Gift of Spiritual Hunger

Christmas is the quintessential time for food. Diets are thrown to the far winds and goodies abound. Food is a central Christmas image: Jesus was born and laid in a manger, a feeding trough. The one who is food for the world was born in Bethlehem. In Hebrew, *Beth* means “house of”; *lehem* means “bread.” At the final Passover meal, Jesus identified himself with bread and wine. Savoring the glorious food of Christmas feasts celebrates the truth that our hunger leads us to Love. An important spiritual insight is that hunger is a gift. It leads us, opened and longing, right into the arms of God.

## **FRIDAY** ★ Reflect on Good News for All

One year, I was struggling with great heaviness. My sister was losing ground daily with early-onset dementia. And the headlines of the day were heartbreaking. As it grew dark outside, I sat next to a tree and tried to pray, feeling helpless in the face of human pain. Suddenly, I saw something that made me catch my breath. The strings I had woven in and around the branches formed in the reflection of the window a perfect “S.” *S for Savior*, I thought. “The angel said to [the shepherds], ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord’” (Luke 2:10–11).

## **SATURDAY** ★ Summon the Feeling of Wonder

Each year something stirs in me when I hear the first line from *A Visit from St. Nicholas*: “’Twas the night before Christmas....” My earliest Christmas memory is the Christmas Eve when I was four. I had finally fallen asleep. Then I was awakened by the muffled sound of sleigh bells. Something was moving on the roof! “*He’s here!*” Was I dreaming? Who can tell? Much more than excitement about gifts or stockings, I felt a profound sense of presence, of being held safe in holy mystery—it was a feeling of astonished wonder.

## **DECEMBER 25** ★ Christmas

At Christmas Mass one year, the world and I were in crises. I found a place in front of church determined to pray and regain the season’s joy. The entrance procession began. The altar server carrying the cross was tall and carried himself shyly. He stepped on the hem of his alb going up the stairs and had trouble getting the cross in the holder, making six or seven attempts. As he finally placed the cross, a smile spread across his worried face.

As he turned to recede, I looked closely at his face. He had extremely thick glasses and the open, vulnerable look of someone almost blind. I looked up at the cross, and what I saw will stay with me always. The cross had turned in his hands before it fell into place. Instead of facing the congregation, the figure on the cross looked down squarely on the manger to the side of the altar. *The cross and the crib are not separate*, I thought to myself. *We can come to Christmas Mass with pain as well as wonder. Love is here in all life “to shine on those who sit in darkness and death’s shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace”* (Luke 1:79). I took a deep breath and joined everyone as we sang “Joy to the World.”

*Patricia Livingston is a sought-after speaker, author, retreat director—and a mother and grandmother—who stirs the spirit with her stories of day-to-day experiences of God’s goodness and love. Pat’s inspirational writing style speaks to all readers.*

Source: *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Advent and Christmas*, © 2008 Liguori Publications

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## Becoming Attentive Travelers

Jesus, on the road to Jerusalem, passes through the town of Jericho. His intention was to move right through, yet when he catches sight of Zacchaeus, he stops and changes plans. Jesus was on the move,

Piece: *Village*, 1932  
Artist: Ottone Rosai  
Location: Vatican Museums



PHOTO © GOVERNATORATO S.C.V. - DIRECTORATE OF MUSEUMS

yet not so obsessed with plans and objectives that he didn't notice the needy soul of Zacchaeus peering down upon him from a sycamore tree.

Part of being an apostle of Christ is having a heart that's always attuned to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. We can't be so consumed with our good fortunes that we miss opportunities to offer Christ's salvation to those around us.

Zacchaeus was a public sinner and a publican who, as we know, were the hated tax collectors and collaborators of the Romans. Rather than a person to visit he was, for the Jews, someone to be avoided. Not for Jesus! Our Lord came to seek and save the lost. And Zacchaeus wanted to be found. He was so driven to see Jesus, he made himself look ridiculous by climbing a tree, admitting to his short stature and curiosity.

How many souls along our path are showing their unquenchable thirst to discover Jesus and, even more, to be discovered by him. While amassing worldly riches, they realize that their deep hunger can only be satisfied by something else. Only spiritual things can satiate the Spirit. Let's be willing to go off-road and facilitate these encounters with Jesus—of course, after we ourselves have been encountered by him.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

### *For Reflection*

*What am I doing to find or to be found by Jesus Christ in my daily life?*

*What am I doing each day to help others find or be found by Jesus Christ?*

*[Jesus said to Zacchaeus,] "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."*

*Luke 19:10*

## Calendar

### Monday

NOVEMBER 4

St. Charles Borromeo,  
Bishop

Rom 11:29–36

Lk 14:12–14

### Tuesday

NOVEMBER 5

Weekday

Rom 12:5–16b

Lk 14:15–24

### Wednesday

NOVEMBER 6

Weekday

Rom 13:8–10

Lk 14:25–33

### Thursday

NOVEMBER 7

Weekday

Rom 14:7–12

Lk 15:1–10

### Friday

NOVEMBER 8

Weekday

Rom 15:14–21

Lk 16:1–8

### Saturday

NOVEMBER 9

Dedication of the Lateran  
Basilica in Rome

Ez 47:1–2, 8–9, 12

1 Cor 3:9c–11, 16–17

Jn 2:13–22

### Sunday

NOVEMBER 10

Thirty-second Sunday  
in Ordinary Time

2 Mc 7:1–2, 9–14

2 Thes 2:16–3:5

Lk 20:27–38

or Lk 20:27, 34–38

# Dear Padre,

**What does “turn the other cheek” mean? My son got into a fight with a schoolyard bully. I don’t want my son to fight, yet I felt proud that he didn’t back down. What should I tell him?**

The phrase “turn the other (cheek)” appears in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:39). Here Jesus proposes a superior moral standard to the law taught by the scribes and Pharisees. It isn’t indifference to evil but avoidance of retaliation. We avoid striking back because we are to be perfect, as God is perfect.

During his trial, Jesus tells Pilate that retaliation would be easy: “If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants [would] be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews” (John 18:36). The passion accounts repeatedly tell of Jesus being roughed up. “They spat in his face and struck him, while some slapped him, saying, ‘Prophecy for us, Messiah: who is it that struck you?’” (Matthew 26:67–68).

Jesus refused to lash back. He absorbed abuse without raising a hand! He even admonished Peter to “put your sword back into its sheath,” after Peter had cut off a slave’s ear. Jesus added: “For all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52).

Jesus suffered taunts, scourging, blows, and—finally—death to overcome the very evil he was undergoing. His was redemptive suffering.

Senseless suffering for its own sake should be avoided or stopped at all costs. Jesus isn’t advocating being a doormat for thoughtless bullies. He is, however, promoting peaceful resistance to aggression as a way of ending the spiral of violence and promoting God’s reign.

—Fr. Joseph Morin, CSSR  
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## A Word from Pope Francis

*The politics of nonviolence have to begin in the home and then spread to the entire human family. “Saint Thérèse of Lisieux invites us to practice the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile, or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship.”*

—Fiftieth World Day of Peace, January 1, 2017