

Spiritual Practices for Families Throughout the Year

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Ideal times to pray together can be found throughout the day, but especially at mealtimes and bedtime. There are countless resources for mealtime prayers and bedtime prayers.

A whole series collected from Anglican sources is here:

<http://home.pcisys.net/~tbc/mealpryr.htm>

- and -

<http://home.pcisys.net/~tbc/bedpryr.htm>

Praying *with* your children, inviting your children to lead prayers, and singing easy songs about prayer and faith instill a sense of regularity and importance in a family life of faith that recognizes God at work in our homes. Learn the songs we share on Community Sundays, search for Taizé music online, or ask the parish office for resources.

Prayer and meditation practices for your own daily life or with your spouse are also critical. *The Book of Common Prayer* offers simple, brief orders for daily devotions for individuals and families in the morning, at noontime, in the evening, and at the close of the day on pages 136-140.

Forward Day by Day, copies of which are provided for a small offering in the Narthex, offer short commentary on the daily Bible readings, which will lead you or your family through most of the Bible in the course of two years.

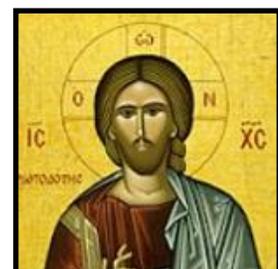
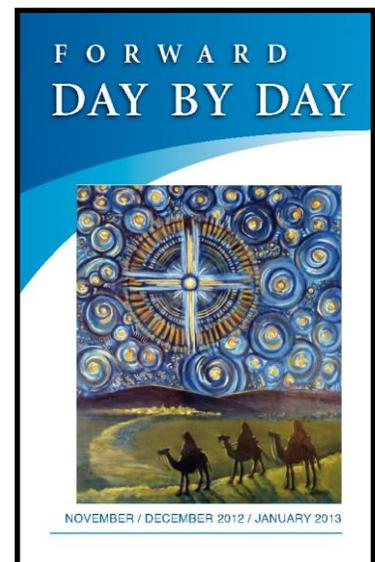
The Daily Office, a more robust cycle of four sets of daily prayers (Morning, Noonday, Evening, and Compline) rooted in the ancient monastic tradition, begin on page 75 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Pre-formatted online versions make this resource much more accessible on the go. Our parish website links to:

http://gregorians.org/publications/daily_office.php

Also, you will find a link in our weekly eblast and on our website to Preparing for Sunday, which offers brief commentary on the Sunday readings each week.

Resources that connect with Godly Play and also point to numerous children-friendly Bibles and scripture-related literature are available online at our Godly Play page:

<http://oursaviourmv.org/families/godlyplay.php>



Seasonal Spiritual Practices for Families

Advent

Make an Advent wreath as a centerpiece for your dining room table. Rings and forms with candle holders are readily available online or at Christmas supply stores. Have your children help decorate the wreath with fresh cut greens!

Candles are normally all purple, all navy blue, or three purple/blue with one pink (for the third Sunday of Advent, *Gaudete* (Rejoice) Sunday). Sometimes a fifth white candle can be added to the center to be lit at Christmas.

Make a practice each evening of lighting the wreath, or having older children light it, right before grace at dinner. Lighting an additional candle each Saturday or Sunday evening helps ritualize the anticipation for Christmas and remind us that this anticipation is sacred.

Advent calendars, also widely available, are a wonderful way for children to anticipate the coming of Christmas. Choose one that depicts figures and places in the Christmas story.

Origins of the Advent wreath: Lutheran practice (poss. late 19th-century) spreading to Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism in the twentieth century. Rooted in ancient pagan custom of welcoming the light around the winter solstice and celebrating the cycle of life. In Christian practice, it reflects on the never-ending cycle of God's grace and the coming of the Light of Christ into the world, as an anticipation of Christmas.

For your children: involve them in helping decorate the home for Christmas. Remind them they are preparing the house for Jesus' coming!



Numerous online resources for Advent are available free, including some online Advent calendars.

Lent

Many of us are acquainted with the practice of giving something up for Lent: frequently food, like dessert, chocolate, sweets, etc. A more robust practice for families can be deliberately setting aside family “sabbath” time — a time each week for the family to gather without electronics, television, or other distractions to play a game, talk, pray, or read a story together.

Fasting in Lent, however we do it, is meant to make more room for God in the midst of our often busy and distracted lives.

For your children: Don't just ask them what they would like to give up for Lent. Ask them what they would like to do for God during Lent. It could be setting aside extra time for prayer, reading a story from the Bible, finding a place where they can help people in need, or all three!

There are numerous online resources offering spiritual disciplines for Lent, some of which are renewed each year. One forty day suggestion is here:

<http://sojo.net/blogs/2012/02/27/40-ideas-keeping-lent-holy>

Holy Week: Join the Triduum or "Great Three Days" (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil.) These moving services, shared together in Christian community, share in Jesus' journey from the Last Supper to the cross to the Resurrection.

Easter

Feast! Teach your children the traditional Easter greeting, "Alleluia! Christ is risen!" and the response, "The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!"