

## Saint Gregory the Great



### Thoughtful Moments

#### St. Lucy

St. Lucy was born into fourth-century pagan Syracuse, Sicily, and is a renowned martyr of the early Church. Her mother suffered from an illness that was miraculously cured while on pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Agatha, who foretold St. Lucy's martyrdom. When St. Lucy was arrested for being a Christian, she was questioned and burnt alive, but the flames wouldn't touch her. Eventually, she was executed. She is the patron of eye problems.



#### Welcoming the Christ Child anew

Welcoming a newborn means shifting routines and focusing each day with greater care—something every parent agrees is worth it.

Each Christmas invites us to welcome the Christ Child anew. This may involve rethinking habits or becoming more aware of His presence in our lives.

The joy of knowing and drawing closer to Jesus makes every effort worth it.

*"And they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us'" (Matthew 1:23).*



## The best gifts aren't wrapped

As parents, we want to give our children the best Christmas experience possible. But the most meaningful gifts we can offer don't come with price tags. This year, give children gifts they'll carry for the rest of their lives:

**Love-filled memories:** Spend time playing together. Take a drive together to see the neighborhood lights. Share favorite Christmas memories over a family meal. These moments become lifelong treasures. The secret? Time, attention—and maybe a few cookies.

**A sense of humor:** Holiday plans sometimes go off track. A sense of humor is essential. As the saying goes, "You'll end up with a good memory or a good story!" Stay calm, solve the

issue, and focus on the good. Model a mindset they can carry into adulthood.

**A spirit of generosity:** Teach children the joy of giving. Whether it's donating toys, sending cards to the homebound, or helping a neighbor, acts of kindness teach youngsters that Christmas is about more than gifts. Generosity

forms compassionate hearts and reminds us that love grows when it's shared.

**A living faith:** Christmas celebrates God's immense love – Love that took on our humanity. When we bring children to Sunday Mass, keep them close to the Sacraments, and raise them with Gospel-rooted values, we give them a lasting gift—one that reaches beyond this life into eternity.



### Why Do Catholics Do That ?

### Why do Catholics celebrate the "Immaculate Conception"?

The Immaculate Conception refers to the conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in St. Anne's womb. In 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed that Mary, by a unique grace from God, was preserved from both original and personal sin from the moment of



her conception.

This singular grace prepared her to become the Mother of God, and its blessings extend to all of us through her role in salvation history. The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is a Holy Day of Obligation (December 8).

## Beloved Catholic Christmas traditions

Many beloved Christmas traditions have Catholic origins, created to share the reality of Christ's birth. Far from just festive customs, they carry spiritual meaning and history.

**Christmas Tree:** This tradition is credited to St. Boniface, an eighth-century missionary to Germany. He prevented a pagan human sacrifice by cutting down the sacred oak tree. In its place, he pointed to a fir tree as a symbol of eternal life in Christ. The people brought it into town, decorated it with candles, and listened to the Nativity story—leading many to convert.



**Nativity displays:** St. Francis of Assisi began this tradition in 1223 to renew devotion to the

Incarnation. He created a "living nativity" with real people and animals. A witness claimed the wax figure of the Christ Child miraculously came to life.

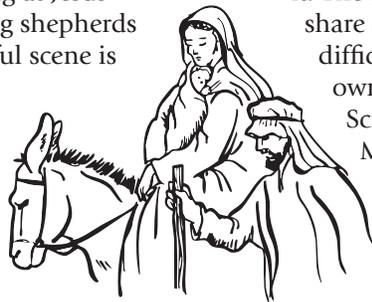
**Candles in windows:** In Ireland during the English persecution, Catholics placed candles in windows to signal that their homes were safe for priests. Irish immigrants brought the tradition to America, where it endures as a sign of faith and welcome.

### Scripture LESSON

### Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23, Trust God and carry on

Nativity scenes usually show Mary and Joseph calmly kneeling at Jesus' crib surrounded by adoring shepherds and wise men. This peaceful scene is probably pretty far from reality. For one thing, Mary and Joseph had to travel in the last stages of Mary's pregnancy from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Once there, there was no place to stay except a stable with animals. After a short time, they had to flee to Egypt with a baby to escape danger and stay there for several years without family or friends.

The truth is following God may be



uncomfortable, but it's always worth it. The Holy Family had its share of pain and difficulties much like our own experience. Yet Scripture tells us that Mary and Joseph found strength from their faith in God and were guided by His Word. We can do the same.

**What can a parent do?** Tell your children that Jesus' birth and the Holy Family's escape to Egypt is further proof that God always keeps His promises. When we lean on Him, God will always lead us to safety.

### Parent TALK

Any time I am asked if Santa Claus is real, I love explaining that not only is he real, he is also a saint!



St. Nicholas of Myra was a fourth-century bishop known for his generosity and strong faith. One well-known story

tells of him secretly dropping bags of gold down a poor man's chimney to help his daughters. Over time, stories of his generosity shaped the legend of Santa Claus.

St. Nicholas was also a defender of the Faith. At the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, he spoke out against the Arian heresy and affirmed the divinity of Christ.

During Advent, we look to St. Nicholas as a model of kindness and faithfulness. On his feast day (December 6), many celebrate by placing candy in shoes and performing good deeds in secret. Most importantly, St. Nicholas points us to the greatest gift of all: Jesus Christ, born for our salvation.

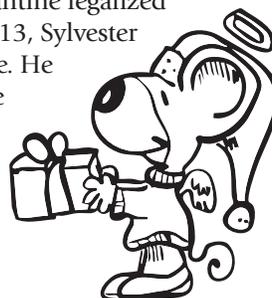
### Feasts & Celebrations

**December 12 – Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531):** The Blessed Mother appeared as a Native American maiden to St. Juan Diego. She had St. Juan carry roses to the bishop as proof. When the roses were emptied from his tilma, it retained the image of the Blessed Mother.

**December 23 – St. John Cantius (1473):** Born in Poland, St. John studied at a university in Krakow and became a theology professor in 1418. He was ordained a priest and sent to Olkusz. He was known for his humility and kindness.

**December 28 – Feast of the Holy Family:** We honor the family life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Their love and support for each other is a model for all Christian families.

**December 31 – St. Sylvester I (335):** St. Sylvester was ordained a priest as a young man during the persecutions of Diocletian. When Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity in 313, Sylvester was elected pope. He helped build the great Roman basilicas, including St. John Lateran and St. Peter's Basilica.



### Our Mission

To help parents raise faithful Catholic children  
Success Publishing & Media, LLC  
Publishers of Growing in Faith™ and Partners in Faith™  
(540)662-7844 (540)662-7847 fax  
<http://www.partnersinfaith.com>  
(Unless noted Bible quotes and references are from the Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible.)