



Consecration in Truth®

## Family Catechesis™

*Educates adults in the truths of the faith and empowers them to lead their families in learning and living the faith. Taught by Roman Curia Cardinal Francis Arinze.*

# Celebrating Seasons, Feasts and Other Devotions

## Advent



Due to our culture, this season can become too busy and stressful. Catholic Christians can choose a different path from the one dictated by the culture of materialism and excess.

Definitely include a crèche in your simple and practical decorating. Reserve the Christ child in a special and sacred place until Christmas Eve, when the youngest can place the baby in the manger. (Do not bring the wise men out until the feast of the Epiphany.) Ask each child to add a straw to the nativity set or manger for every sacrifice or good deed they do for Jesus, until Christmas Eve.

To recall the darkness that existed before the coming of Christ, each evening dim or darken the room at dinner during the praying of grace. Add an Advent wreath (available in Catholic bookstores or online) to your celebration of this season and let the lit candle(s) be the only glimmer of light in your darkened room while grace is prayed. End the grace before the meals with “Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus. Come!” Then turn up the lights to enjoy your family dinner.

During Advent, encourage each of your children to determine which of their toys and clothes they are willing to donate to charity. Ask them to select only those toys and clothes that other children will still be able to enjoy. Put a box by your family room (or any room in the house) where they can put these toys and clothes. Donate all these clothes and toys to the needy. Check with your parish where you can donate these clothes and toys.



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### Christmas

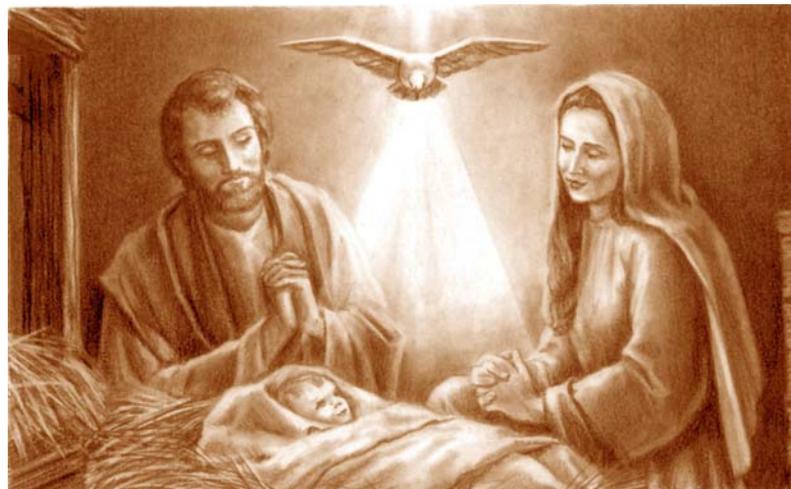
It goes without saying that Christmas Mass is the focal point of this celebration. Special foods and treats, according to your family customs, are always a part of this day as well. Here are some ideas to make gift opening a more edifying and holy time:

Whether your gift opening is on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning, set a time when the whole family is gathered. Dad begins this time with the following or a similar prayer:

Dear Jesus,  
Thank you for  
becoming one of us,  
for coming to earth  
to open the gates of heaven  
and to show us the way to live.  
Thank you for all the gifts under the tree,  
which represent your love  
and the love we have for each other.  
May our ways bless you this day  
and bring you

A Happy Birthday.

Now, or just before praying, have the youngest child place baby Jesus in the manger. Sing a Christmas carol. Then, Mom or Dad distributes the gifts, and everyone opens them.



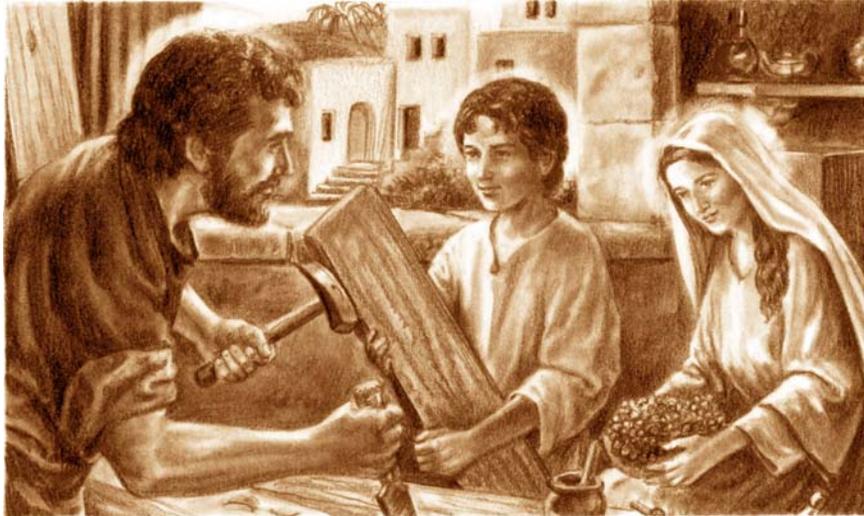


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### Feast of the Holy Family (The Sunday after Christmas)



Prepare for this celebration on the day before the Feast. Joseph taught Jesus the skill of carpentry, no doubt motivating Him with projects that he could present to his mother. Dad and son(s) can fulfill a task or make something that instills habits and develops skill in the children, and which will be a nice gift/surprise for Mom. Mom and daughter(s) can prepare a feast, cooking and decorating for the family celebration that everyone will

enjoy (with little work) on the next day.

On the day of the Feast, before grace at the meal, read aloud Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14 or Colossians 3:12-21 and incorporate in your prayer a response to this reading. Dad could make the reading a topic of conversation during the meal by asking such questions as:

For the reading on Sirach: (a) What promises does the Lord make to those who honor their parents? (b) What does the Lord say about the relationship of the father over his children and the mother over her sons? (c) How well does our family carry out the words of this reading?

For the reading on Colossians: (a) What character traits should we try to have in relating with one another? (b) How should Dad relate to Mom and Mom relate to Dad based on this reading? (c) What is the duty of children to their parents? (d) How well does our family carry out the words of this reading?

Encourage family members to write a short “love letter” to each other. Include in the letter what you appreciate most about them. Give the “love letters” to each other at the end of the day before going to bed.



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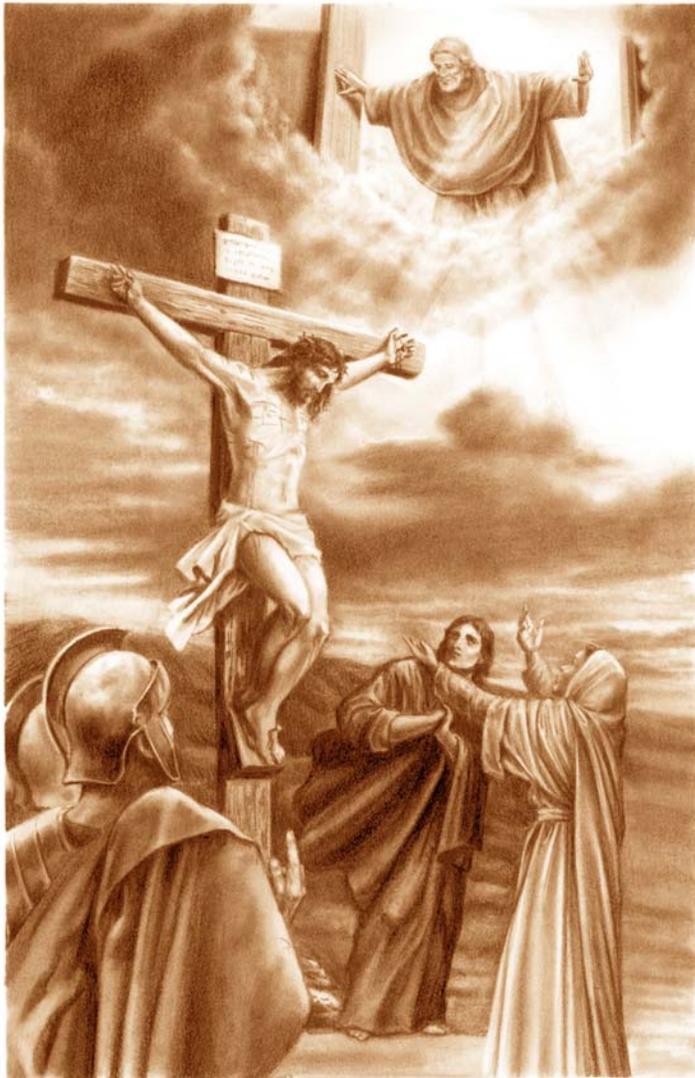
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### Lent

The Tuesday before Ash Wednesday have each family member write his or her chosen fast, whether its denying or doing, on a piece of paper with their signature. These can be placed in pull-apart plastic eggs with initials of each person, or collected into an envelope and placed beneath or near a crucifix.

On Holy Saturday, return the written promises to each child. Remind them that they have died with Christ in order to rise with him. Now they can open their eggs, or receive back their papers, and share with the family any difficulties, benefits or learning that resulted.



Attend the Stations of the Cross during the Fridays of Lent and/or go to Eucharistic Adoration as a family every week. Participate in the Holy Thursday Evening Mass and the Good Friday Veneration of the Cross at your parish. Go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a family sometime before Easter.

On Good Friday, watch a movie about the life of Christ. If the movie is long, divide the movie into parts and watch a part of it a few evenings of Holy Week.



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### **St. Joseph, the Husband of Mary (March 19)**

Begin the celebration of this day with Mass.

As spouse of Mary and virgin father of Jesus, Joseph is, next to Jesus, the perfect model of manhood. This is especially so in his role as head of the Holy Family.

Keywords to describe the attributes of Joseph are: chaste, just, faithful, protective, leader, industrious, nurturing, kind, prayerful, obedient, thoughtful, modest, and skilled.

Assign these attributes to family members to illustrate. They can look for pictures in magazines or draw their own. Make a collage with the pictures on a 14x18 backdrop. In the center, write the words, “St Joseph” or paste his picture. Frame and hang this masterpiece as a reminder of the noble qualities of this beloved saint and the qualities to be emulated by all men.

Honor Dad, husband of Mom, with a festive table, his favorite meal, and dessert. At this meal, Dad will pray each line of the following prayer and the family will repeat:

**St Joseph, husband of Mary, (all repeat)**  
**You presided at the table with Jesus and Mary (all repeat)**  
**enjoying meals with the most holy and wonderful of people (all repeat).**  
**Please pray for us as we gather around this table (all repeat)**  
**that we reflect Jesus who lives in us, (all repeat)**  
**in our manners and conversation. (all repeat)**

Follow with grace before meals. At the end of the meal before dessert, have each family member honor Dad by thanking him for specific attributes, characteristics or virtues that they find in him.

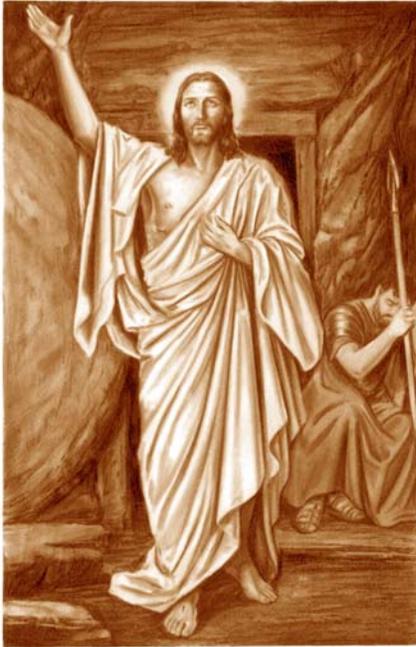


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### Easter



Many of our Christian feasts have become opportunities for gluttony, and many customs have been introduced that have nothing to do with the original meaning of the feast. Easter is one of them. But how do you take candy away from a baby?

Replace the Easter bunny with the Easter lamb, and use eggs as symbols of new life – Jesus’ and ours. In the Easter baskets, fill pull-apart plastic eggs with candies and also cut-up scripture verses from the memory verses in this manual. Then if the recipient can recite the verses in his basket, add to it some extra candies. The Bible verse and candy-filled eggs provide an extra surprise in an egg hunt. What message is God saying to you on this day? It’s in the egg.

Because the Resurrection of Our Lord is the main foundation of our faith, if it is possible, celebrate Easter with a very special meal, according to your means. Have a nice table setting. For a centerpiece, you can use a 6-inch to 8-inch standing cross (without the body of Jesus) and drape a small white cloth by the crossbeam. Put two candles and some flowers beside the cross. Aside from the main meal, place a hard-boiled egg on the plate for each table setting. Don’t eat the egg. After saying the grace before the meal, Dad holds his hard-boiled egg and taps it once against Mom’s hard-boiled egg, while everybody says “Jesus is risen. Allelulia, Allelulia. Spread the word”. The person whose egg did not crack then tries to crack the next person’s egg by tapping it once with his/her egg. Keep going around the table until there is only one egg left that is not cracked.

Once everybody has had their chance, the children will think that the one whose egg is not cracked is the winner. Mom then explains that the cracked eggs actually symbolized the empty tomb of Jesus. So now the person whose egg is not cracked still has Jesus in his tomb. So that everybody gets to have an empty tomb, the youngest child can help crack that egg. Then everybody says together: “Jesus is risen. Allelulia, Allelulia. Spread the word”. Afterwards, everybody can eat their hard-boiled eggs and the main meal can start.

If there are many people because others are celebrating with your family, just ask each person to turn to the person next to them and tap their hard-boiled eggs against each other. Whoever has an egg that did not crack will then try to crack another person’s egg which did not crack, until you have a single person in the party whose egg is not cracked.

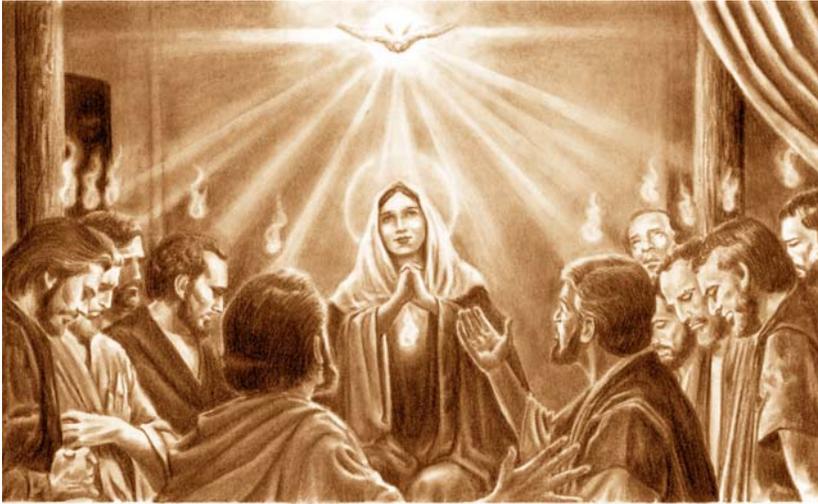


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### Pentecost



How blessed it is that the Easter season now continues on past the Feast of the Ascension (40 days after Easter) to Pentecost (50 days after Easter and 7 weeks from the Jewish Passover). How blessed it would be if the Ordinary Time that follows Pentecost were viewed as Extraordinary Time because of the amazing grace poured out at Pentecost and the immense power bestowed upon the apostles, and now to every Christian, for the advance of God's Kingdom.

The feast of Pentecost can be celebrated outdoors with other families. At your "Pentecost Picnic," incorporate the symbols of Pentecost – dove, flames, the color red – into the food and the décor. Assign each family a dish and ask them in some way to utilize the symbols and/or colors of the celebration in their contribution. God's creativity is unlimited.

Organize some games (see following ideas).

### Pentecost Picnic Games

#### **What is my gift?**

Cut into thirds, 10 sheets of 8 ½ x 11 paper (more if your gathering is larger than 30). Assign children to print with big markers, from the list below, one word or phrase on each piece of paper. These are to be attached with pins or masking tape on the backs of all the guests at your celebration. Instruct your guests to ask questions of others in order to guess what gift of the Holy Spirit they have received. Post a master list in a visible place so they can refer to it to help them discover what is on their back. When they guess correctly, they can remove their sign and report to the designated person who keeps a record of names and their order. Give prizes to the 1<sup>st</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, etc., who guess their gift. For children three years and under, tape one of the symbols below onto their backs, just so they can participate. At the end, they can keep their pictures.



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### Thirty Gifts, Fruits, and Ministries of the Holy Spirit Found in Scripture

#### **Isaiah 11**

Wisdom  
Understanding  
Counsel  
Courage  
Knowledge  
The fear of the LORD.

#### **Romans 12**

Prophecy  
Service  
Teaching  
Exhortation  
Giving  
Leadership  
Mercy

#### **1 Corinthians 12**

Words of wisdom  
Words of knowledge  
Faith  
Healing

Working of miracles  
Prophecy  
Distinguishing of spirits  
Tongues  
Interpretation of tongues

#### **Galatians 5**

Love  
Joy  
Peace  
Patience  
Kindness  
Goodness  
Faithfulness  
Gentleness  
Self control

#### **For Children Three Years and Under**

Flame  
Heart  
Dove  
Flexed Arm (Courage)  
Shield (of faith)

### **“Fishers of Men” Fish Pond**

Set an age and visit limit for this activity. You could possibly hand out old or handmade tickets. Ask each family to contribute a bag of white elephant prizes for the age bracket and number of visits you have determined to cover their family. These prizes will form the “pond”.

Teenagers can set up and operate the “pond”. They will need a pole or branch with a cord tied to one end that is long enough to tie around a large gift and that has a clothes pin at the end for small items. Provide plastic bags for parents to collect the prizes. The pond must have at least one person behind the curtain to attach a gift and one person in front to inform the one behind of the age and gender of the fisherman, to assist the fisherman, and to keep track of visits.



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### May Crowning



Consider a family project to build an indoor or outdoor shrine for Our Lady. Statues of Mary suitable for outdoors can be found in garden stores or on the internet from \$40 up. If the shrine is indoors, put the statue of Our Lady with 2 candles and flowers by your family prayer table. For the dedication of your shrine, you can have a crowning. Make a wreath using spring flowers to place on Mary's head. Sing Marian hymns, crown Our Lady, and kneel to pray the Rosary. Give each child a part in the family Rosary by asking them to offer a prayer petition, or to lead the recitation of a decade or a part of it. Commit to saying the Rosary or a decade of it either every day or every Saturday in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Honor Mary by honoring Mom. Prepare and clean up after the evening meal to give Mom some free time, or go out for dinner following the ceremony. At the end of the meal before dessert, have each family member honor Mom by thanking her for specific attributes, characteristics or virtues that they find in her.



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### Corpus Christi



This feast celebrates our Lord's gift of His Body and Blood as our Eucharist – sacrifice of thanksgiving – and our redemption. As a family, stay for an extra time after Sunday Mass or go to Eucharistic Adoration and offer your praise, thanks and adoration to Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist. You can say one or both of the following prayers which the Angel taught the three shepherd children at Fatima:

Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore You profoundly. I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the Tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifferences by which He is offended. By the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart and through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in union with St. Joseph, I beg the conversion of poor sinners. Amen.

O my God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love Thee.

I ask pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love Thee.  
Amen.

At the family meal, precede the praying of grace with the Anima Christi:

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.  
Body of Christ, save me.  
Blood of Christ, fill my veins.  
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.  
Passion of Christ, give me strength.  
O good Jesus, hear me.  
Within Thy wounds hide me.

Let me never to be separated from Thee.  
From the wicked foe defend me.  
At the hour of death let me hear Thee  
call, bidding me to come to Thee,  
That with Thy saints I may ever praise  
Thee. Amen.



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### All Saints Day (November 1)

If you allow your children to go door-to-door collecting treats on All Hallows Eve, how about turning this into an opportunity for evangelization?

Choose costumes that reflect the theme of “All Saints” such as an angel, saint, a biblical person or symbol, such as warrior (against Satan), bride, lamb, good news, fruit of the Spirit, final harvest, etc. Your children can study about and depict the saint or symbol they are named after in costume.

When going door-to-door, children may offer a “Treat for Treat” and present a Catholic tract tied around a candy stick. These can also be handed to those who come to your door. Or you can hand out individually wrapped “Scripture cookies” (the same cookie handed out in Chinese restaurants, but with a Scripture inside), available in Christian book stores and on the internet.





## ALL HALLOWS (SAINTS') EVE Treat for Treat!

Are you a SAINT or would you like to be? It's as easy as **ABC!**

- **A**cknowledge and confess our sinfulness and dependence on a loving Father and Savior.
- **B**elieve that God loves us personally.
- **C**onvert and live virtuous lives in response to God's love for us. Join other fellow "saints" in Church.

P.S. If you already are a "saint", please pass this on.

**\*Ephesians 2:19-20** So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but **you are fellow citizens with the saints** and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

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### All Souls Day

(November 2)



This is an opportunity to get to know more about previous generations in the family and then to show compassion for those being purified for heaven through prayer. Prepare a week or two in advance. Assign to each of your children a deceased family member to learn more about by asking questions of grandparents, etc., and then to intercede for this person at Mass for All Souls.

When the family is gathered, recite this prayer:

*Our Lord told St. Gertrude the Great that this prayer would release 1,000 souls from Purgatory each time it is said. The prayer was extended to include living sinners which would alleviate the indebtedness accrued to them during their lives.*

Eternal Father,

I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son,  
Jesus,  
in union with the Masses said throughout the world today,  
for all the Holy Souls in Purgatory, especially

\_\_\_\_\_ ,  
for sinners everywhere,

for sinners in the Universal Church,

those in my own home and within my family. Amen.

If possible, visit and bring flowers to the grave site of your deceased family members or visit a cemetery close to you. Pray the above prayer and an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be for the repose of their souls and for the intentions of the Holy Father.

An indulgence, applicable only to the Souls in Purgatory, is granted to the faithful who devoutly visit a cemetery and pray, even if only mentally, for the departed. The indulgence is *plenary* (complete release from the temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven) each day from the 1st to the 8th of November; on other days of the year, it is *partial* (removal of a part of the temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven) provided the other conditions for indulgences are met. See question 214 in *The Apostolate's Family Catechism* for more information on the conditions for gaining indulgences.

(Source: *Enchiridion of Indulgences*, June 29, 1968)



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### Immaculate Conception

(December 8)



When Mary was conceived in her mother's womb, the angels rejoiced that the worthy one who would bear and give birth to the Messiah was now on earth. She, a daughter of Eve, was saved from Original Sin in advance by the eternal sacrifice of her Son.

This can be a time of instruction about conception, the stages of development in the womb and childbirth, explained to children in light of God's plan for creation – that each child is destined to live forever in heaven with God. The family could visit a local birthright or crisis pregnancy center to see their models of the developing child.

This can also be a time of instruction about Original Sin (*The Apostolate's Family Catechism*, Q#53, 54, 201) and its effects. Explain how Jesus cancelled the most serious effect -- exclusion from heaven -- by His death on the cross. Also, through His death and the sending of the Holy Spirit, Jesus made it possible for us to be victorious over sin and to be co-redeemers in bringing others to salvation. Mary, as His and our Immaculate Mother, is the glory of our race. She assists us in all our efforts to please God and live righteously.

Serve cake and ice cream at a festive meal in honor of this day. A statue or picture of Mary, flanked by candles, would be a fitting centerpiece. After the family says grace, repeat three times:

**O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.**



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### Christ the King

(Last Sunday before Advent)



After Mass, have a kingly feast. Let the family choose their favorite food. Serve the meal at a formally set table using the best china. Create a beautiful centerpiece that suggests royalty, including a statue of Jesus if possible. Preceding the meal, pray on your knees the prayer below.

You may wish to explain that a partial indulgence is granted to the faithful who piously recite the Act of Dedication of the Human Race to Jesus Christ King. A plenary indulgence is granted, if it is recited publicly (this

would mean at church) on the feast of our Lord Jesus Christ King. See Q#214 in *The Apostolate's Family Catechism* for the conditions for gaining an indulgence.

#### Act of Dedication of the Human Race to Jesus Christ, King

Most sweet Jesus, Redeemer of the human race, look down upon us humbly prostrate before you. We are yours and yours we wish to be; but to be more surely united with you, behold each one of us freely consecrates himself today to your Most Sacred Heart.

Many indeed have never known you; many, too, despising your precepts, have rejected you. Have mercy on them all, most merciful Jesus, and draw them to your Sacred Heart.

Be King, O Lord, not only of the faithful who have never forsaken you, but also of the prodigal children who have abandoned you; grant that they may quickly return to their Father's house, lest they die of wretchedness and hunger.

Be King of those who are deceived by erroneous opinions, or whom discord keeps aloof, and call them back to the harbor of truth and the unity of faith, so that soon there may be but one flock and one Shepherd.

Grant, O Lord, to your Church assurance of freedom and immunity from harm; give tranquility of order to all nations; make the earth resound from pole to pole with one cry: Praise to the divine Heart that wrought our salvation; to it be glory and honor for ever. Amen.

(Prayer Source: *Enchiridion of Indulgences*, June 29, 1968)