

Some resources for the Christmas Season

Some resources already available on this site are:

- 2011: Some ideas for including all ages in the Christmas Eve Liturgy
 - Some christmas blessings & prayers
 - Is Advent Christmas?: How the Christmas season looks & sounds and how to support families in this season.
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St Stephen, martyr

St Stephen was a deacon, a community worker, & a martyr. The deacon is the one who stands for and with the marginalised in our communities. For this reason, the deacon stands by the altar in our liturgies – as a sign that the marginalised are at the heart of who we are and what we do as Christians. Stephen invites us to live for Christ, to be Christ's hands and feet for the needy of this time and place ... for when we do this for the least of these our brothers and sisters; we do it for Jesus himself.

Why is this day called Boxing Day in some countries?:

St. Stephen was one of the first 'social workers' in the Church, and it was his task to organize meals to feed the poor. In remembrance of Stephen's work for the needy, the British people used to collect money throughout the year in little clay boxes. On the feast of St. Stephen or 'Boxing day' as it is called in Britain, these boxes were broken and the money was distributed to the poor. (This is the origin of the 'piggy bank'.)

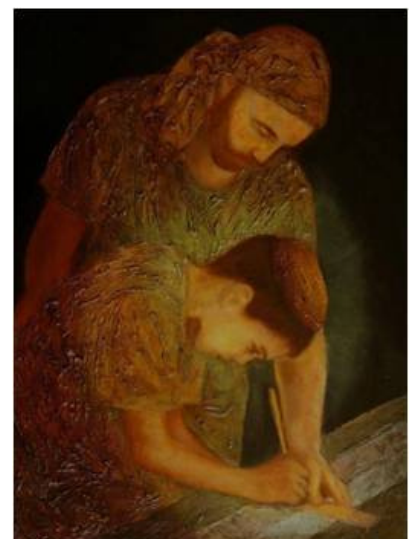
In some homes and communities a box is labeled and set beside the Christmas tree. Members of the family, in gratitude for their Christmas blessings, choose one of their gifts for the "St. Stephen's Box" — clothing and other useful articles which are sent abroad to the poor or to a mission country

From www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=988



The feast of the Holy Family

Think about it. The creator of the universe spent most of his human life as a craftsman, working with dad in the family business and ultimately taking it over. Mary, the holiest of all creatures, spent most of her time changing diapers, cooking, and cleaning. The secret to holiness is not to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things with extraordinary love and gratitude (Col 3:15-17).



The above lovely homily is available here:

www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/318/Feast_of_the_Holy_Family.html

This feast is celebrated on December 30th this year (2011), as no Sunday falls between Christmas and New Years Day. Background reading and resources are available here:

www.churchyear.net/holyfamily.html

January 6th – Epiphany

This day is a celebration of the epiphany (manifestation) of Christ to the Gentiles (the whole world). Jesus does not offer himself for some of the people, some of the time – but for us all, for all people, for all time. Gods love is boundless, open and available to all who turn towards God.

Today is an excellent day to celebrate cultural diversity in your parish. At Christmas liturgues, invite everyone to consider their faith journey, the road they have come, and to come along on January 6th dressed appropriately (cultural costumes etc), or bringing something that speaks to them of their faith journey (baptismal candle, picture of wedding day etc). Offer to bless each item brought as a reminder of Gods great love and constant presence with us on our journey.



What is the significance of the Gifts of the Magi?

The gifts of the wise men are symbolic of who Jesus is, and what he did and taught. Gold symbolizes that Jesus is king, since precious metals were often given as gifts to royalty. Myrrh is symbolic of the sacrificial death of Jesus, since it was one of the burial spices used on Jesus' body. As a medicinal agent, it also symbolizes that Jesus is a healer, and healing was a major component of his adult ministry. Frankincense, i.e. incense, symbolizes Jesus' role as priest, since ancient Jews and Greeks believed that incense, used in worship, carried prayers to heaven. St. Irenaeus (180 AD) describes the symbolism in a similar fashion, although he connects frankincense to Jesus' divinity:
