

Grow

We invite households to GROW in their faith by completing 2-3 activities from below that reinforce the month's theme. Please choose the activities that appeal to your household members.

December's Theme: The Gift Awaits You, Prepare!

Scripture: Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. –Romans 12:12

Past Months –Link to activities and replays from previous months

We're well into Advent – in fact Christmas is coming! The seasons of Advent and Christmas hold so many wonderful ways to prepare for and celebrate the birth of Jesus, up through celebrating the Baptism of the Lord.

Rejoice in Hope

- Learn about **The Colors of Advent** and how to incorporate them in your home. Fun for children and grandchildren.
- The Diocese of Des Moines offers some wonderful ways to **grow your faith during the season of Advent** and offers Christmas movie **suggestions with great conversation starters** for all members of the household.
- Throw a **birthday party** for Baby Jesus! Decorate, bake a cake, sing, give gifts, and **play a game**.
- Here are some fun ways to **celebrate the Christmas season** to its fullest.
- When you think about the song The Twelve Days of Christmas, when is the first day? Is it the day we celebrate the birth of our Lord – Christmas Day? Here's a fun recap of

the [tradition of the famous carol](#) and a [deeper dive](#) into the history of the Twelve Days.

- **Keep the Advent Wreath & Decorations up!** Does your advent candle wreath include a white Christ candle? If so, simply remove the purple and rose candles. If your wreath does not include a white candle, place a large white pillar candle in the center of your wreath. Light this Christ candle for your Christmas dinner and keep it as a table centerpiece through the Epiphany (January 3rd) or even the Baptism of our Lord (celebrated on January 10th), which concludes the liturgical season of Christmas.
 - Celebrate the other feasts and solemnities in this season of wonder. Check out the links for more information on each one. [Stephen, the first martyr and deacon](#) (December 26), [John the Apostle](#) (December 27), and the [Holy Innocents](#), the infants slain by King Herod (December 28, Matt. 2:16–18) are known as the *comites Christi*, “companions of Christ,” because their lives gave unique witness to Jesus through martyrdom (Stephen and the Innocents) and the written word (John). The [Feast of the Holy Family](#) is celebrated the Sunday after Christmas and [Mary, Mother of God](#) is New Year’s Day. The liturgical season of Christmas ends with the [feast of the Lord’s Baptism](#) (Sunday after Epiphany).
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Be Patient in Suffering

- To get good at something we have to practice! As we practice the art of silence this month, here is [a story](#) from the bible that talks about why silence is so important (1 Kings 19:11-13). This can be done with the entire household or one on one with a child.
- Consider adding [The Seed Who Was Afraid to be Planted by Anthony De Stefano](#) to your library. This simple story is perfect for explaining to children why God allows suffering. Although this story is written for younger children, the high-quality illustrations and timeless parable-like story will make it a favorite with all ages.

- Listen to one of these speakers on FORMED addressing the topic of suffering: **Fr. Damian Ference** (30 mins, for teens), **Dr. Scott Hahn** (60 mins, for adults), **Jeff Cavins** (60 mins, for adults).
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Persevere in Prayer

- Participate in a **Christmas Card Blessing**. As you receive Christmas cards from friends and family, take time as a family to pray for each family that sent the card. Keep the cards in a basket and continue to pray for these families throughout the year.
- After decorating your Christmas Tree, gather around and **bless the tree** with this prayer.
- A novena is any prayer or set of prayers offered for nine days consecutively, usually ending on the vigil of a feast day or prayed with a particular intention in mind. Start Dec 16 with this easy-to-follow **Christmas Novena**.