

The Nativity Fast - Preparing for His Coming

The Nativity Fast is the 40 day period before Christmas, which is devoted to the preparation for the coming of the Messiah. It begins on November 15th and extends until December 24th. It is a period of fasting, prayer, and scripture reading. It is important to attend church and participate in the sacraments to enable us to capture the full meaning of Christ's coming.

A very effective way of celebrating the Nativity Fast in the home is through the use of The Nativity Wreath. The circle (wreath) is a Christian symbol for God Who is eternal. The evergreen color of the wreath symbolizes eternal life, or the life of God, of which Jesus came to make us partakers. The candles represent Christ, who brought the world out of darkness and into the light.

The color of each candle expresses something special that will be discussed each week of the Nativity Fast as the family celebration unfolds. Family members can take turns lighting a different candle each week and and sharing in the readings.

First Sunday of The Nativity Fast (Red)

1. One family member lights the RED candle and says,
The RED candle is to express LOVE.
As we light the red candle let us remember the words of St. John when he said that, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son."

2. Another member of the family then reads:

One Nativity Wreath candle now we light
To show the coming gift of light
Now hasten to over darkened sight
The light that's given from above.

3. Another family member reads the Prophecy from Isaiah 9:2; 6-7, 40:3-5; 52:7.

4. The family sings together the carol, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel."

5. A family member reads the following prayer:

Dear God,
As the world that sat in darkness looked forward to Your coming, so we on this first Sunday of The Nativity Fast, light the candle of our anticipation. We eagerly desire Your coming to our souls to dispel the darkness of sin and prideful living, to ignite in us the flame of love and service to our fellow humans. Amen

6. Discussion: God kept His promise to send the Messiah. What other promises does God make? Does He keep them?

Second Sunday of The Nativity Fast (White)

1. One family member lights the RED candle and says,
The RED candle is to express LOVE.

Then lights the WHITE candle which signifies THANKSGIVING and HOLY COMMUNION.

The candle reminds us that Christ, Who came in Bethlehem and Who will come again at the end of time, comes to us now in the great Sacrament of Thanksgiving - Holy Communion. The reason He was born in Bethlehem was that we might allow Him to come and be born in the manger of our hearts.

2. Another family member says:

Our Nativity Wreath candles, two now glow,
Remind us of His presence now
In simple food of bread and wine.
For us His Body - a gift sublime!

3. Another family member reads about the coming of the Logos in John 1:1-18.

4. The family sings together the carol, "Silent Night."

5. Another family member reads the following prayer:

Lord, We thank You that You not only came in Bethlehem
but that You continue to come in every Eucharist. Amen.

6. Discussion: Talk about Holy Communion.

Third Sunday of The Nativity Fast (Gold)

1. One family member lights the RED candle and says,
The RED Candle is to express LOVE.

Then light the WHITE candle and say,
The WHITE candle reminds us THANKSGIVING and
HOLY COMMUNION.

Light the GOLD candle and say,

The Gold candle reminds us of the HOPE we have that Christ
will come again this year to bring new hope into our lives.

2. Another family member says,

Now the Nativity Wreath lights are three,
Let us hasten to renew our needs
To travel over field and stone
To find the Child and be at home.

3. Another family member reads the promise from Luke 1:5-31.
4. The family sing together the carol, "Hark the Harold Angels Sing"
5. Another family member reads the following prayer:

Lord, Help us to have hope that You will come to us this
Christmas. Grant us Your grace that we may smooth out the ruts of sin and
remove the roadblocks of pride. That we may return to You and be
embraced like the Prodigal Son. Amen.

6. Discussion: Christ came to bring us hope and to make our life
complete. How does He bring hope to your hearts today? Why
should all Christians have hope?

Fourth Sunday of The Nativity Fast (GREEN)

1. One family member lights the RED candle and says,
The RED Candle is to express LOVE.

Then light the WHITE candle and say,
The WHITE candle reminds us of THANKSGIVING and
HOLY COMMUNION.

Then light the GOLD candle and say,
The GOLD candle reminds us of HOPE.

Light the GREEN candle and say,
The GREEN candle signifies GENEROSITY.
God expects us to love our neighbors and be generous
towards others.

2. Another family member says,
Four Nativity candles burn. Now when the Wise Men turn
To seek the Child Who brings us light and follow Him wherever
He goes in blazing sun or blackest night.
3. Another family member reads the Journey to Bethlehem in Luke
2:1-18.
4. The family sing together the carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem"
5. Another family member reads the following prayer:
Heavenly Father, Help us to remember Your great Gift to
us at Christmas - The Gift of Your Son - Jesus.
May His love possess our hearts this Nativity to be
generous and kind to all our needy mankind. Amen
6. Discussion: Talk about the life of St. Nicholas (celebrated Dec. 6th)
who was know for his great generosity in distributing gifts and money to
the poor. He preferred to disguise himself and deliver his gifts after dark
so that no one would know who had left them. How can you follow his
example in giving gifts to the needy this Christmas?

Fifth Sunday of The Nativity Fast (Blue)

1. One family member lights the RED candle and says,
The RED Candle is to express LOVE.

Then light the WHITE candle and say,
The WHITE candle reminds us of THANKSGIVING and
HOLY COMMUNION.

Then light the GOLD candle and say,
The GOLD candle reminds us of HOPE.

Then Light the GREEN candle and say,
The GREEN candle signifies GENEROSITY.

Light the BLUE candle and say,
This BLUE candle reminds us of JOY.
The birth of Jesus should bring everyone much joy.
2. Another family member says:
Five Nativity candles burning bright.
As we await His glorious light.
For all the girls and boys
May His gift of Christmas bring you joy.
3. Another family member reads about preparing the way for the coming to
the Messiah in Mark 1:1-18, 14-15
4. The family sings together the carol, "Joy to the World"
5. Another family member reads the following prayer:
Lord, Come into our joyless world.
Put a smile on our lips and a song in our hearts.
We have been sad too long. Amen
6. Discussion: Christ came to bring joy and to make our joy complete.
How does He bring joy to our hearts today? Why should the
Christian be joyful?

Sixth Sunday of The Nativity Fast (PURPLE)

1. One family member lights the RED candle and says,
The RED Candle is to express LOVE.

Then light the WHITE candle and say,
The WHITE candle reminds us of THANKSGIVING and
HOLY COMMUNION.

Then light the GOLD candle and say,
The GOLD candle reminds us of HOPE.

Then light the GREEN candle and say,
The GREEN candle signifies GENEROSITY.

Then light the BLUE candle and say,
This BLUE candle reminds us of JOY.

Light the PURPLE candle and say,
This candle is PURPLE to express FAITH.
The faith that we have in God that He will send us His Son.

2. Another member of the family reads:
Our Nativity candles, six now glow,
Remind us of what we know.
God loves us with all his might.
And we have faith that the will hold us tight.
3. Another family member reads the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Luke
1:26-38
4. The family sings together the carol, "O Come All Ye Faithful"
5. The family member reads the following prayer:
Dear Lord, Help us to remember the reason Jesus came to earth.
To forgive our sins and the promise of eternal life if we believe in Him.
6. Discussion: What does FAITH mean to you?

Seventh Sunday of The Nativity Fast (CENTER) **(or Christmas Ever or Day)**

1. One family member lights the RED candle and says,
The RED Candle is to express LOVE.

Then light the WHITE candle and say,
The WHITE candle reminds us of THANKSGIVING and
HOLY COMMUNION.

Then light the GOLD candle and say,
The GOLD candle reminds us of HOPE.

Then light the GREEN candle and say,
The GREEN candle signifies GENEROSITY.

Then light the BLUE candle and say,
This BLUE candle reminds us of JOY.

Then light the PURPLE candle and say,
This candle is PURPLE to express FAITH.

Light the CENTER candle and say,
The CENTER candle represents CHRIST who gives us PEACE.

"For unto us a child is born, Unto us a son is given,
and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Almighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

2. Another family member says,
Candles at Christmas! Deep in their warming light. Are shepherds'
fires, a guiding star at night. The holy radiance of a Baby's Birth.
The Christ, who brought the light of God to earth.
3. Another family member reads the Christmas story in Luke 2:1-7.
4. The family sings together the carol, "Let There be Peace on Earth"

**MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYONE! MAY GOD BLESS
ALL OF YOU IN THE NEW YEAR!**

