

Creator of the Stars of Night

Creator of the stars of night,
Your people's everlasting Light,
O Christ, Redeemer of us all,
We pray you hear us when we call.
In Sorrow that the ancient curse,
should doom to death a universe,
You came, O Savior, to set free,
your own in glorious liberty.
Come, Sun and Savior, to embrace,
Our gloomy world, its weary race,
As groom to bride, as bride to groom,
The wedding chamber, Mary's womb.
At your great name, O Jesus, now,
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow;
All things on earth, with one accord,
Like those in heav'n, shall call you Lord.
Come in your holy might, we pray,
Redeem us for eternal day;
Defend us while we dwell below,
From all assaults of our dread foe.

– Advent evening hymn from the 8th century

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew:

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us."

– Matthew 1:18-23

Guidance from St. Ignatius: Discovering Emmanuel, God with us, day by day

What do I dwell upon through the course of each day? To what am I giving my attention, my life, my concern, my thought, my energy? Where is my heart throughout each day? What are the emotions I most commonly experience? What am I dwelling on?

To make more deliberate choices about how we spend our energies and our lives, we want to stop once or twice each day to re-orient our awareness, our consciousness, our focus. We do this by asking two simple questions: What has happened so far today for which I am already grateful? And, what has happened so far today for which I could have been grateful, or should have been grateful, but I missed it entirely or let go of it too quickly?

By asking the first question, we "re-train" our awareness to notice and hold onto experiences of goodness. This is important because our awareness has been trained to be much more attentive to those things which are imperfect or undone. To the extent that this is true for us, we are not experiencing the goodness that is already part of our lives.

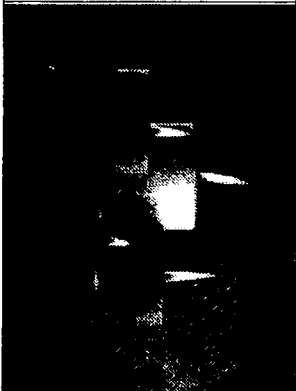
The second question allows us to go back through our day and sift through it all with a finer sieve, in order to find the gold we had missed the first time through. It is crucial to remember that we are not searching for that which was perfect, but rather for that which was good. Often we can discover moments of goodness even in the midst of some of the most challenging experiences of the day. "I apologized to someone this morning, and it went pretty well." That's worth being grateful for! "My teenager told me about something that happened at school, and spoke an entire paragraph." That, too, is worthy of gratitude!

We want to be as concrete and specific as we can when we answer these questions. We sift through the ordinary things that make up our days: our conversations and interactions with others, the things we have done, the matters we have mulled over, the feelings we have had. The goal of our reflection is to recognize and savor the moments of goodness that are part of our everyday lives.

By reclaiming our awareness of the very concrete and particular experiences of goodness each day, we reclaim our sense of the presence of God in all the moments of our lives. We come to know more deeply the truth that God walks with us, shepherds us and abides with us, and is intimately involved in our daily lives — all of which are expressions of God's love.

2012 FAMILY ADVENT CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2-24
WWW.USCCB.ORG/ADVENT

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2 Bless the Advent wreath. Sing "O Come Emmanuel" and light the first candle.	3 Consider purchasing Christmas gifts that support farmers and artisans and their families in developing countries and in poor communities in the United States.	4 Make plans to receive the Sacrament of Penance before Christmas.	5 Research an Advent or Christmas custom of your family's ethnic heritage and try it this year.	6 Read the story of <u>St. Nicholas</u> . If you know an engaged couple, pray for them and perhaps give them a small gift.	7 Does your parish have a Giving Tree? Shop for the person or family whose name you picked.	8 On this <u>feast</u> of the <u>Immaculate Conception</u> , sing a hymn in honor of Mary at the evening meal.
9 Light the second candle on the Advent wreath. Recite "A Family Prayer for the Year of Faith."	10 Buy a poinsettia for your home and read <u>The Legend of the Poinsettia</u> .	11 Bless and light the Christmas tree. Be a light to others! Register for the 2013 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering and advocate with others on behalf of the most vulnerable	12 Read the story of <u>Our Lady of Guadalupe's</u> appearance to St. Juan Diego. Put flowers before the family's statue or picture of Mary.	13 Remember the hardships many low-income people face on a daily basis. Visit <u>PovertyUSA.org</u> to learn about their plight and get ideas for how you can help.	14 Reflect on Mary and Joseph's difficult journey to Bethlehem. How can you put love in action and help lighten someone's journey today?	15 Movie night - Make popcorn and hot chocolate and watch a Christmas classic. See our list of suggested films
16 Light the third candle on the Advent wreath. Pray a decade of the <u>Rosary</u> .	17 Begin including the "Q Antiphons" as part of your table or bedtime prayers.	18 Put up and bless the crèche. Hide Baby Jesus until Christmas.	19 As you joyfully await the coming of Christ, take action to proclaim God's kingdom of peace by advocating on behalf of our brothers and sisters in poverty <u>around the world</u> .	20 Spend a few moments reflecting on the wonder of the incarnation, and <u>how you are called to participate in Christ's mission</u> in the world.	21 As we draw nearer to Christmas, take a moment to <u>lift up in prayer</u> the struggles faced by neighbors in your community and around the world.	22 Visit a live Nativity scene. Does it help you imagine Jesus's actual birth?
23 Light the fourth candle on the Advent wreath. Read the Christmas story (<u>Luke 2:1-14</u>)	24 Take a moment to reflect on Jesus' humble roots as the adopted son of a carpenter and Christ's special concern for those in poverty today. Visit <u>povertyusa.org</u>	25 Celebrate the Birth of Christ by participating in Mass and spending time with family and friends.				
<p>"BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE AND BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL NAME HIM EMMANUEL" Mt. 1:23</p> <p>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops</p>						

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In addition to the wonderful resources on Creighton's "Online Ministry" web site, you may find other helpful resources (including this Family Advent Calendar) on the USCCB web site (www.usccb.org).

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

O come, O come, great Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times once gave the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who orderest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.

O come, Thou Root of Jesse's tree,
An ensign of Thy people be;
Before Thee rulers silent fall;
All peoples on Thy mercy call.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace.

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel,
shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.