



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
OF CHARLESTON

SECRETARIAT OF COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

December Toolkit – *Homily Helps*

St. Francis Xavier — Dec. 3

- St. Francis Xavier was born in Navarre, Spain, in 1506. He became a priest in 1534, and six years later, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) was founded. Throughout his life, he travelled to many nations to win souls over to Christ and his Church.
- St. Francis Xavier ministered to the people of the Holy Land, India and Japan. In fact, he is the first credited to have converted a Japanese person to Catholicism. He died shortly before he reached China to continue ministering there.
- He was a man of great mental fortitude and faith and was canonized in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV. Francis Xavier is the patron saint of all missionaries.

The Immaculate Conception — Dec. 8

- The Catholic Church teaches that Mary, mother of Jesus, was free of original sin from the moment of her conception. While this belief was popular in the early Church, it became official dogma hundreds of years later in Pope Pius IX's 1854 papal bull *Ineffabilis Deus*.
- Early Church fathers referred to Our Lady as the “new Eve.” Jesus called his mother “woman,” as the sinless counterpart to our ancestor Eve. Where Eve rejected God's plan, Mary did not question it, and through her participation, the Christ was born. Jesus, the new Adam, came to open the gates of paradise for humanity, once shut by the original sin of Adam.
- The early fathers also conferred on her the title *Theotokos*, literally “God-bearer.” It was implied and understood that Mary had been set aside in holiness to give birth to the Son of God.
- Due to her participation in God's plan and her sinless humanity, she is the perfect mediatrix, our advocate in the sight of God. Let us pray for her intercession, and for her protection, especially in the face of temptation.

Our Lady of Guadalupe — Dec. 12

- Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to St. Juan Diego in the winter of 1531 near modern day Mexico City.
- She asked that a chapel be built on Tepeyac Hill and performed a miracle — producing out-of-season roses and an imprinted an image on Juan Diego's cloak, or tilma.
- Our Lady of Guadalupe is known as the patroness of the Americas and the patroness of the unborn.

- In Juan Diego’s culture, pregnant women would wear black sashes around their waist to denote that they are expecting a child. Hers is the only known / confirmed Marian apparition in which she was pregnant with the Christ Child.
- Let us pray for the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, that she might bring all her spiritual children closer to the son she carried and bore.

The Eucharist & Christmas (Dec.)

- In a way, every Mass is like Christmas. When Jesus was born, he was laid in a manger, a food trough for animals. This was a foreshadowing of the institution of the Eucharist and offering of his body and blood on the cross.
- He was born in a town called Bethlehem, which literally translates to “house of bread.”
- John 6:35: “I am the bread of life.”
- When we look at the Eucharist, we often contemplate the crucifixion, but we should also think on his birth, our first glimpse of the coming feast.

Christmas Generosity Over Consumerism

- Jesus came into the world to give of himself. This and every Christmas season, we are called to do the same.
- While it is easy for us to give during periods of festivity, giving is often most meritorious when we are uncomfortable, when we don’t feel like it, when we have less.
- This time of year, we can get caught up in the hurriedness of the “holiday season.” Products are heavily marketed to us, specifically designed to make us long for things we do not need. Sometimes we limit our vision to the “things” that Christmas brings.
- Let us restore Christ as the center of the season. This is best done by going to Mass, preferably with family. In the Mass, we receive the gift of the Eucharist, Christ’s body and blood. In this feast, we find our fullness, fulfillment of what we truly long for — the only gift that can truly satisfy.

Holy Innocents — Dec. 28

- The feast of the Holy Innocents commemorates the children that were murdered at the hands of King Herod in his attempt to kill Jesus in infancy. Today, we celebrate the feast for all victims of murder.
- We especially keep in mind the unborn whose lives prematurely end due to abortion.
- This feast is a call to action to preserve life in all its stages. We are called to imitate those who defended their children in the Gospel, plus the Magi who refused to give in to Herod’s pressure.
- We do this by spreading awareness of human dignity in our communities, praying for conversions of heart, voting for laws which advocate for the common good and the lives of those around us.

Feast of the Holy Family — DEC. 31

- The feast of the Holy Family is the day in which we especially contemplate and commemorate the daily, family life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. What would their

lives have been like? Not much is written of Christ's childhood, but there is a lot that can be inferred in the Gospels.

- Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived a quiet, steady life among other extended family members. Jesus took up the trade of his father under his apprenticeship.
- Mary and Joseph were tasked with raising and protecting Jesus in his youth. They safeguarded the Word Made Flesh as he truly lived among them.
- How can we emulate the Holy Family? We need to first pray, so that we are in communication with God, the giver of all good things. To love others, we must first be able to communicate with them. In your own homes, that could be putting away distractions when someone is speaking to you, or going out of your way to ask how their day is going.
- We also need to sacrifice and keep the balance within our families. Every member has a role to play in everyday life. By carrying out our tasks consistently and virtuously, and with their intercession, we can model our home lives after that of the Holy Family.