



FAMILY
PRAYER BOOKLET
Advent / Christmas 2021

He came among us . Face to Face .
He came to live among us . Face to Face .

DIOCESE OF BERGAMO



Dear families,

I am deeply grateful for the prayer booklet we hold in our hands. As I suggested in the Pastoral Letter, it wishes to become “companion” for your journey of prayer and, in turn, prayer to become “bread” of love in the family. Bread broken and shared, between adults and children, so that the life that happens in your homes can regain strength and vigor.

The Advent journey desires to train us for an authentic encounter with the Lord, face to face. This time will be a progressive illumination of that nocturnal landscape in which we enter, up to the splendor that spreads from the grotto of Bethlehem. The divine becomes a Child, he comes to dwell among us and illuminates our life with a new meaning. While life happens, he is born within houses in a simple family and surrounded by some shepherd, with his animals.

Therefore, I invite you to open wide the door of your home and the heart of your family to the God who comes. Do not be afraid of the life that he may find you living, rather entrust it to His hands, so that it may be blessed and saved.

I accompany you and pray with you!

Happy Advent,
+ Vescovo Francesco

He came to live among us. Face to face

THE PROPOSED PRAYER ITINERARY
INTENDS TO BE A DAILY JOURNEY SHARED
BY THE WHOLE FAMILY, IN DIFFERENT
WAYS AND TIMES DEPENDING
ON ITS COMPOSITION.

The title “face to face” will accompany us through the strong seasons which we will live during this pastoral year, particularly dedicated to the family. It is a “slogan”, but it is also a goal for which we train daily in prayer: to see God, face to face, as given to us in chapter 13 of the First Letter to the Corinthians, chosen by our Bishop as an apostolic icon. We will meet him as a Child and then Crucified and Risen, to contemplate two great mysteries of our faith: Incarnation and Resurrection.

During the four weeks of Advent, we will be joined by some characters who, with their testimony, will outline the features of the face of God that we are called to recognize in the life that happens: John the Baptist will invite us to change and sharing, Mary and Elizabeth will show us the tenderness of a welcoming embrace, Joseph and the Magi will be good teachers of courage and prophecy. The existential dynamics evoked will be traced in the ordinary and extraordinary experiences lived by each family.

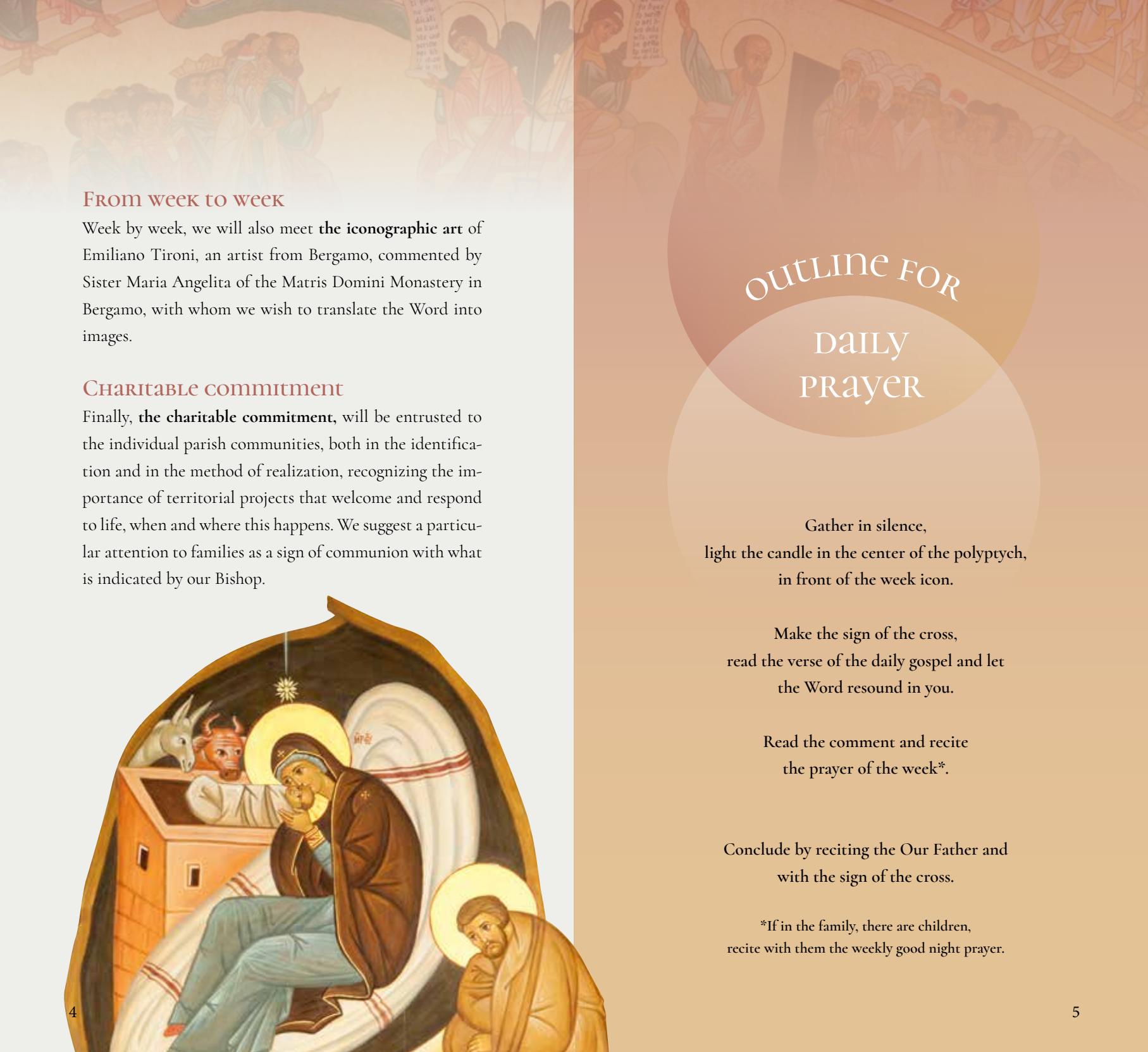
The booklet is accompanied by a **polyptych**, representing the 7 icons that accompany the festive Gospels, and by a **candle**, so that we cannot only reserve time, but also a space for prayer.

On feast days

On **feast days**, the sharing will take place around a table, listening to the Gospel of the day and concluding with a prayer track for the blessing of the table. Particularly invited to live the Eucharist in their own parish, the commentary on the Word is entrusted to the witness of a family with respect to the existential dynamic evoked by the festive Gospel.

On weekdays

On **weekdays**, we will be accompanied, day by day, by a verse from the Sunday Gospel, commented on by a priest of the Community of the Sacred Heart, and invited to conclude the moment with words of invocation and praise. The desire is **to also have attention of the little ones in the house** to whom a particular good night prayer is particularly dedicated, which we invite to live in front of the crib, where we can meet the evoked character.



OUTLINE FOR DAILY PRAYER

FROM week to week

Week by week, we will also meet the iconographic art of Emiliano Tironi, an artist from Bergamo, commented by Sister Maria Angelita of the Matris Domini Monastery in Bergamo, with whom we wish to translate the Word into images.

CHARITABLE commitment

Finally, the charitable commitment, will be entrusted to the individual parish communities, both in the identification and in the method of realization, recognizing the importance of territorial projects that welcome and respond to life, when and where this happens. We suggest a particular attention to families as a sign of communion with what is indicated by our Bishop.



Gather in silence,
light the candle in the center of the polyptych,
in front of the week icon.

Make the sign of the cross,
read the verse of the daily gospel and let
the Word resound in you.

Read the comment and recite
the prayer of the week*.

Conclude by reciting the Our Father and
with the sign of the cross.

*If in the family, there are children,
recite with them the weekly good night prayer.



FIRST WEEK
ADVENT

In the family it happens... to WAIT

Stand up and raise your heads

(Lk 21, 28)

The icon has several planes, converging upwards, where God the Father is located, depicted as a white-haired old man, surrounded by angelic hosts. On the left the blessed and the heavenly Jerusalem; on the right the Risen One and Calvary, the place of judgment and salvation. In a dark circle the angels who rebelled against the Creator. In the lower right level, we see those who lived before Jesus Christ and the door guarded by Peter, in the center of the angels with a scale, symbol of judgment. Just above, on the right, the Mother of Jesus, with the first redeemed, the good thief. On the left the souls called to judgment at the sound of trumpets. On the second level all humanity and two angels with books, in which the works done in life are written. Above them the apostles participate in the judgment and are turned towards Christ the Judge, in the center, with Mary, John the Baptist, Adam and Eve. Judgment reveals the struggle between good and evil, life and death; the man below, tied to the column, is a symbol of those who stop at earthly life and do not care to know and love God.





sunday

28

NOVEMBER

From the Gospel of Luke (21:25-28.34-36)

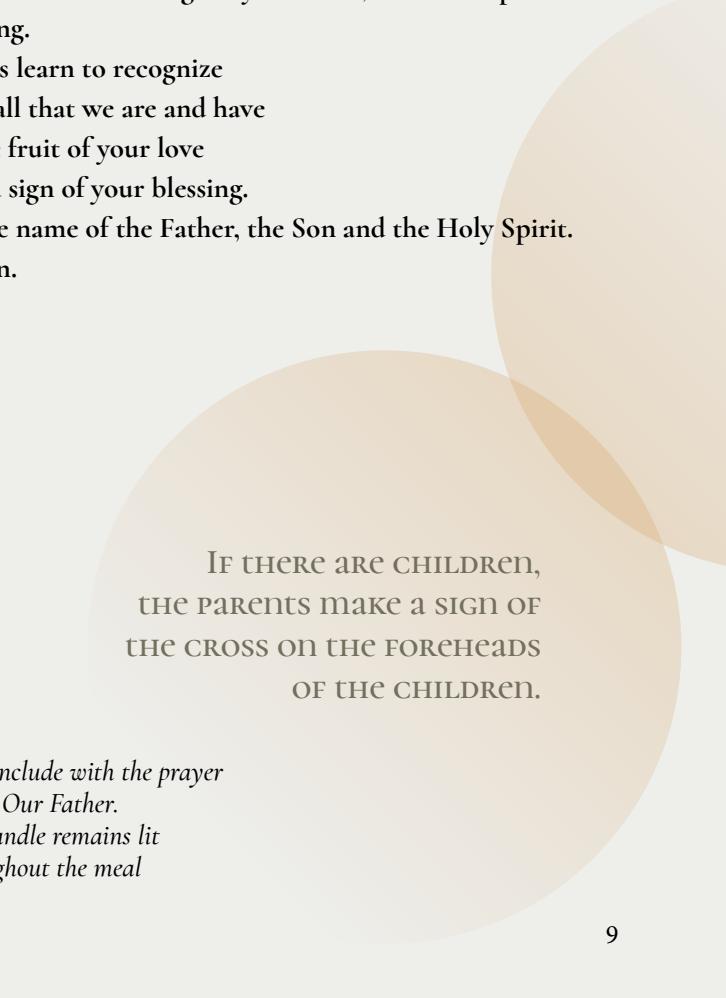
At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand".

"Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man".

BLESSING OF THE TABLE

Let us light a candle, symbol of the Lord in our midst. Standing up, we create silence and pray with the words that follow.

We thank You Lord
for this abundant meal
which you give us today to share in joy and peace.
Bless all of us who take our seats at this table:
in this time of waiting for your birth, make us capable of
sharing.
Let us learn to recognize
that all that we are and have
is the fruit of your love
and a sign of your blessing.
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.



IF THERE ARE CHILDREN,
THE PARENTS MAKE A SIGN OF
THE CROSS ON THE FOREHEADS
OF THE CHILDREN.

We conclude with the prayer
of the Our Father.
The candle remains lit
throughout the meal

to Wait

Testimony of Massimo and Monica

God has a plan of salvation for each of us. We were given the grace to live the first 25 years of marriage with our four children. As long as the boys lived in the house, much of our energy was devoted to the family. In recent years our children have progressively left home to study and work abroad. Suddenly we found ourselves alone, with much more time available, with the sense of feeling more and more on the margins.

In this period, we have experienced the onset of the pandemic on the front line. Massimo works in the hospital and has found himself managing the situation with all Covid patients with other colleagues. This situation has also had a heavy impact on our family as couple. At Christmas 2020 we got sick, just when the children came back to be together again: we had to see each other from “afar”.

Now, we are re-planning; the “far” is becoming “waiting”, of children and events. Our life before was more predictable; the “far” sometimes makes it mysterious, but it is helping us to be more available, to accept events, to commit ourselves to the realization of a world we hope better, saying our yes to God’s plan.

PROVOCATION

As a couple and as a family, can we see the signs of God’s presence, in the great challenges as well as in our daily lives?

AMORIS Laetitia

«To love anybody is to expect from him something which can neither be defined nor foreseen; it is at the same time in some way to make it possible for him to fulfil this expectation».
(AL 322)





Adults

PRAYER OF THE WEEK FOR

Lord Jesus,
give to our family
eyes and a heart capable
of recognizing
the greatest expectations
that each person carries
within himself.

Let us learn
to walk next to others
because, waiting together for your coming,
we experience together the greatest joy
of the meeting with you.

Amen.

little ones

GOOD night PRAYER WITH THE

Lord, it is the beginning
of the time of waiting,
that time which separates us
from the encounter with You.

On this day, not always,
I knew how to wait
without complaining about
who I had next to me.

I offer you the actions
I have done today, the beautiful things and also
the difficult moments. Help me learn to put
commitment and passion
in what I do every day,

as the shepherd does with his sheep.

Amen

LIVE PRAYER EVERY DAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (21:25)

*"There will be signs in the sun,
in the moon and in the stars".*

november
29
Monday

TO REFLECT...

The season of Advent begins with an invitation, that is, to know how to recognize the signs of the Lord. It is essential to raise our gaze, to let ourselves be challenged by the Word, to move those certainties that prevent us from walking and dreaming. Waiting for that God who comes among us in the "Sign" of the Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger (Cfr. Lk 2:12), let us learn to recognize the signs of God's presence in our lives. It's a matter of looking!

november
30
tuesday

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (21: 27)

*"They will see the Son of man come
with great power and glory".*

TO REFLECT...

Seeing someone come to meet us is a very nice experience, especially in the family. Parents go to meet their children and vice versa, so do husband and wife, so do siblings, etc. The other is a gift, it is a sign of God's closeness. In Advent, greater care should be taken of welcoming the other, considering the preciousness of his presence, the joy of his coming. Too many times we do not even notice the other who comes to meet us, how could we see the Son of man coming towards us?

FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON PAGE 5

December
1

wEDNESDAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (21:28a)
“Stand up and raise your heads”.

TO REFLECT...

To stand and rise are two verbs that recall the resurrection and therefore hope. In a time marked by the pandemic, similar verbs have often been used, with the desire to encourage the recovery, so desired by all. Many times, however, we seem to lack the strength to recover, the energies are lacking and fatigue, sadness and disappointment take over. Faith in God's promises is the “engine” of every journey, it is always the love of Christ that impels us. (cf. 2 Cor 5:14)

December
3

FRIDAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (21:34)
“Be careful of yourselves,
that your hearts do not become weighed down”.

TO REFLECT...

A burdened heart makes the journey more tiring. The worries and things of life prevent the seed of the Word from sprouting and then disperse. The Lord, with loving care, warns us of ourselves, of our “I” that tends to take over by taking away space from God. May the Lord give us a free and light heart.

December
2

THURSDAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (21:28b)
“Your liberation is near”.

TO REFLECT...

How often do we talk about freedom: it is a right, a sign, an aspiration. Jesus reminds us that we are free because we are liberated, that is, redeemed, saved. Even He himself presents himself as liberation and therefore only he is truly free. Our liberation is near, that is, Christ is near. We live the “already” and the “not yet” of salvation. The time of Advent is comparable to the dawn: the night is advanced; the day is near. (cf. Rom 13:12)

December
4

SATURDAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (21,36)
“Watch at all times by praying”.

TO REFLECT...

Sleep, often the consequence of a burdened and tired heart, prevents us from seeing the Lord who is come and therefore from welcoming him. In the prayer of Compline/ the Church prays with these words: “if our eyes close, our heart watches over you”. May the season of Advent be an occasion of vigil, of expectation, of desire. In the night we see the coming of the Lord, the Morning Star. May prayer nourish our desire and keep our souls alert.

LIVE PRAYER EVERY DAY



FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON PAGE 5

In the family it happens... to CHANGE

Prepare the way of the Lord

(Lk 3,4)

English translation. The figure of John the Baptist the Precursor dominates the texts of Advent because he is the one who prepares the way for the Lord and shows us how we must wait for the Lord. Looking at the icon suggested for the Second



Sunday we can grasp in the symbols the prophetic task of John, who receives from God himself (the hand that is seen above). John is the man of listening: his lifestyle is essential to allow the heart to make room for the words that God addresses to it. He is in the desert, he dwells in silence, he dresses like the ancient prophets (Elijah's camel, hair, robe); his figure is stretched towards the One who is waiting, he holds a scroll (his preaching) and a tray with his head (his death). Behind him the axe of imminent judgment. His figure tells us that waiting must not be empty, but full of trust, courage and faith, ready for change. Let us remember that the icon is not a devotional object, but a liturgical element with the aim of transmitting to us the good news of salvation, the Gospel, not through sounds and words, but symbols, colors and figures.





SUNDAY

5

December

From the Gospel according to Luke (3, 1-6)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. He went throughout (the) whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God".

BLESSING OF THE TABLE

*Let us light a candle, symbol of the Lord in our midst.
Standing up, we create silence and pray with the words that follow.*

In the gift of all that we share today
at the table of our family,
We recognize your abundant blessing,
Lord.
May this food, consumed in the happiness and joy of
sharing,
grant us strength
to walk the way that leads us to
meet you in Bethlehem,
and that many times asks us for courage
to change some of our habits
and our lifestyle.
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

IF THERE ARE CHILDREN,
THE PARENTS MAKE A SIGN OF
THE CROSS ON THE FOREHEADS
OF THE CHILDREN.

We conclude with the prayer
of the Our Father.
The candle remains lit
throughout the meal.

to change

testimony
OF DAVIDE
AND FEDERICA

This historical position of Luke at the beginning of his Gospel makes us think that we are not listening to a parable or a story, but real facts that bind God with Man even more. In this incipit we have the prelude of the God who becomes flesh, of the God who chooses our earthly dimension and who descends among us. John is the prophet who proclaims the True God, the God-with-us; it is the aurora that heralds the Sun.

"The voice that cries out in the desert" is indeed John the Baptist, but we can also think of the 40 days of Jesus in the desert. The impervious roads, the ravines and the mountains will not be an obstacle to the arrival of the Word; Jesus will be able to overcome the temptations of the devil, even on the cross. The Baptist announces a time of great change; as often happens also in our families: to pass from one city to another, from one job to another, from one Christian community to another; but within all this the most radical change, that of conversion to Jesus.

This continuous interweaving of the Old and New Testaments, of promises that become real facts, gives us a sense of peace and trust. God is with us and promises us that "EVERY man will see the salvation of God." Is there anything more beautiful?

PROVOCATION

How do we live "mercy"
within our family?
Do we know how to live a feast of forgiveness?

AMORIS Laetitia

"Marital problems are "often confronted in haste and without the courage to have patience and reflect, to make sacrifices and to forgive one another".
(AL 41)





Adults

PRAYER OF THE WEEK FOR

Lord Jesus,
who asks us to be ready
to change our lives
to be able to welcome you,
help us to recognize and welcome
all those small and big changes
that every day allow our family
to prepare the way of the encounter with you.

Amen.

little ones

GOOD NIGHT PRAYER WITH THE

Lord,
how often our behaviors
hurt the people around us.
I haven't always been able
to acknowledge
my mistakes and apologize.
Tomorrow I want to commit
to change: I would like to be kinder
and more altruistic.
Support me in facing the challenges of the day,
never losing faith in you, as Joseph did.

Amen.

LIVE PRAYER EVERY DAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3,2)
The Word of God came to John [...] in the wilderness.

TO REFLECT...

The Word of God came upon John in the wilderness. This is the place of essentiality and silence but particularly, it is the place that recalls the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt. The desert reminds us of the path necessary to emerge from our small or great slavery. It makes our freedom. Advent invites us to change, starting from all those existential places where there is a lack of freedom to reach where the Word, which alone guides us resounds.

december
6
monday

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3,3)
John preached a baptism of conversion.

december
7
tuesday

TO REFLECT...

To be baptized is to be immersed, swallowed up by water. It is a sign of our mortal condition: we recognize ourselves as finite, weak, fragile. The re-emergence from the water says all the desire for life present in man. Baptism says, therefore, on the one hand, the human awareness of one's own finitude and, on the other, cries out the promise of full life inscribed in every man. The real change to which Advent calls us is to stay within this tension with trust in the Lord.

FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON PAGE 5

December
8
WEDNESDAY

Feast of
the Immaculate
Conception

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3,4)
*Voice of one crying out
in the wilderness:
prepare the way of the Lord.*

TO REFLECT...

The desert is the place of the truth of God and of man. There resounds a voice called to take flesh in a Word, that of the Lord, which gives meaning to every human existence. This Word proposes to us the way of freedom. It is He who wants to meet us. For this reason, a small yes of ours is enough, just like the one pronounced by Mary in response to the angel Gabriel in the mystery of the Annunciation. To change is to dispose the heart to the encounter with the Lord.

December
9
THURSDAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3,5a)
*Every ravine will be filled,
every mountain and every hill
will be lowered.*

TO REFLECT...

It's time for a change. The ravines of the injustices of the world must be filled with the solidarity and charity of man. Those of human despair need to be filled by God's mercy. Faith, God's gift for every man, allows us to believe that the promised Kingdom is not an illusion and that the mountains and hills of pride and arrogance will turn into ways of humility. God is at work.

LIVE PRAYER EVERY DAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3,5b)
*The winding roads will become straight
and the impervious ones paved.*

December
10
FRIDAY

TO REFLECT...

Life happens with all its complexity and often presents obstacles that seem insurmountable. Often in the family, in front of what seems difficult to solve we are taken by despair and this blocks us. We need to change. We do not save ourselves. We need Someone to save us. In the most difficult moments of our family, let us open our hearts to the Lord and help those close to us to do the same.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3,6)
*Every man will see
God's salvation.*

December
11
SATURDAY

TO REFLECT...

God's salvation is for everyone, no one excluded. To be able to access it, it is enough to recognize oneself in one's own fragile and splendid humanity, thus opening oneself to God who saves. The path of conversion that is asked of us passes from a progressive and gradual change from the condition of those who think they are enough for themselves to those who know that only within a relationship is their home found. Let us ask the Lord for the grace to learn more and more every day to abandon ourselves to Him.

FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON PAGE 5

In the family it happens... to NEED

Whoever has two tunics should give one to those who have none.

(Lk 3,11)

We still have John the Baptist as a guide for the Advent journey; the icon chosen for the third Sunday has two parallel scenes, which tell of the martyrdom and in a certain sense announce



the path of John the Precursor; on the left we see the moment of his death as the Gospels narrate it. It is because of his fidelity to God, matured in the desert (indicated by the mountain behind him) that John is killed. But even at the moment of death his attitude is one of supplication prayer. On the right we see the delivery of his head to the young daughter of Herodias, behind whom we notice the palace of Herod, where the scene turns. Her mother was able to seize the propitious moment to eliminate her enemy. But then where was God? Didn't he protect his prophet? In reality, the hand that protrudes from the upper left side indicates that God approves of John's life and choices, welcomes his faithful service as a prophet, as the Gospel of John will say: the Precursor has put his Lord in the foreground (he must grow and I decrease).



sunday

12

December

From the Gospel according to Luke (3,10-18)

And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” He said to them in reply, “Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise.” Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?” He answered them, “Stop collecting more than what is prescribed.” Soldiers also asked him, “And what is it that we should do?” He told them, “Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages.” Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. John answered them all, saying, “I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

BLESSING OF THE TABLE

Let us light a candle, symbol of the Lord in our midst. Standing up, we create silence and pray with the words that follow.

We recognize in this food, Lord,
your abundant blessing!
Our work, and our efforts,
blessed by your love,
are transformed today into gifts to share with the family.
Make us attentive to the needs of children and adults;
raise our lives the desire to share among us and with
others, the time, the expectations, the joys.
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

IF THERE ARE CHILDREN,
THE PARENTS MAKE A SIGN OF
THE CROSS ON THE FOREHEADS
OF THE CHILDREN.

We conclude with the prayer
of the Our Father.
The candle remains lit
throughout the meal.



to need

testimony OF DIEGO AND PATRIZIA

How can we welcome the coming of Jesus into our family? "Whoever has two tunics, give one to those who do not have". In our family we share this extra tunic with the children and young people who are entrusted to us: it is a question of poverty not so much economic, as of care, attention, accompaniment, affections. Before we got married, nourished by experiences of volunteering and visiting missions, we wondered what it could mean for us to be a Christian family.

We were answered by a proposal that came to us a year before the wedding: a house confiscated from the mafia destined for a social good, for which a family home was imagined. It was Lent when this request was made to us and at Easter, we gave our answer.

We try to live the good news in ordinary everyday life, nothing extraordinary and nothing sacrificial: this for us means going to work, preparing food for 8, having a beautiful large table ready to stretch, making our natural children experience sharing daily, listening to needs expressed in various ways and trying to make us close, for a stretch of road, to those who have lost the road a little.



PROVOCATION

In our family, what form does the tunic that we can give have?

AMORIS Laetitia

"Through their union in love, the couple experiences the beauty of fatherhood and motherhood, and shares plans, trials, expectations and concerns; they learn care for one another and mutual forgiveness".

(AL 88)

Adults

PRAYER OF THE WEEK FOR

Lord Jesus,
 You ask us the courage
 to share what we are and
 what we have with
 those in need.
 Teach us to recognize
 that we too need others,
 their friendship, their advice,
 their closeness.
 Amen.

*GOOD night PRAYER WITH THE
little ones*

Lord,
 too often I am presumptuous,
 I think I'm invincible and
 I don't need anyone.
 On this day,
 I have not always been able
 to ask for help.
 I offer you my willingness
 to communicate when
 I need the closeness
 of the people who are close to me.
 Help me to be like the beggar who,
 without shame,
 does not hide his need f
 or your love.
 Amen.

LIVE PRAYER every day

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3,10)
*The crowds asked John:
 What are we to do?*

To reflect...

The season of Advent offers us an active wait, where it is necessary to do something. Waiting is not the same as being comfortable or nothing; those who wait for the Lord are vigilant in good, in charity, in the care of today. The crowds rushed by the Baptist understand that waiting for the Messiah requires a radical change, a new life and ask the Prophet to show them what to do. Let us overcome the risk of spiritual apathy and “roll up our sleeves” in expectation of the Lord!

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3,11)
*Who has two tunics give
 them to those who do not have.*

To reflect...

John the Baptist gives practical and concrete indications to those who ask him about what to do. Apparently, it could appear “not very spiritual” advice: in reality, the following of Christ is measured exactly by the care for the brother, by giving a tunic to those who do not have. We are therefore invited to overcome that worldly mentality that focuses everything on accumulating and thinking about one's own interest. The brother without a tunic is Christ himself who comes to meet us!

december
13
monday

december
14
tuesday

FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON PAGE 5

December
15
WEDNESDAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3:12)
Publicans also came to be baptized.

TO REFLECT...

Among those who come as penitents to John there were also publicans. It is an important fact, also emphasized by Jesus when he reminds the scribes and Pharisees that “publicans and prostitutes will pass before them” because they have allowed themselves to be reached by the invitation to conversion. It can happen that those whom we consider “more distant” surprise us and therefore precede us on the path to the Lord. It is therefore necessary to overcome the many prejudices that we carry with us and to let ourselves be amazed by the wonders that God’s Grace works.

December
16
THURSDAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3:15)
The people were waiting.

TO REFLECT...

The people are waiting and wondering who the Messiah is: John the Baptist or someone else? It is important to understand that it is the questions that arouse the expectation. If these are extinguished, the desire for fullness fades to the point of almost disappearing. Is the world waiting for Christ? The Church? Our communities? Our families? Beyond the phrases made and circumstance, at the beginning of the Christmas Novena, it is appropriate to ask: are we really waiting or are we enough for ourselves?

LIVE PRAYER EVERY DAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3:16a)
*I baptize you with water,
but he who is stronger than me comes.*

December
17
FRIDAY

TO REFLECT...

John the Baptist announces the coming of one stronger than himself. It is a characteristic, strength, which lends itself to many misunderstandings. What does it mean to be strong? What does it mean that the God we await is strong? What is force measured by? These are not unrealistic but central issues because our faith and our relationships depend on the idea that we make of God. Instead of defining a priori what God’s strength is, let Him reveal it to us. What if it were the strength of a Child?

December
18
SATURDAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (3:16b)
*He will baptize you
in the Holy Spirit and fire.*



TO REFLECT...

Jesus comes to immerse us in the fire of the Holy Spirit, that is, in the Relationship of love that indissolubly unites the Father and the Son. In other words, Jesus comes to immerse us in the Most Holy Trinity, the bush of truth and love. Too often we imagine a distant and cold God, almost insensitive to our daily busyness. Nothing could be more wrong! God is so close that he invites us to immerse ourselves in him, he is fire that illuminates, warms and sustains.

FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON PAGE 5

In the family it happens... to WELCOME

To what do I owe this,
that the mother of my
Lord should to come to me?

(Lk 1,43)

Mary carrying Jesus in her womb goes to Elizabeth. In this episode Mary is the holy Ark of God's presence in the midst of his people. The encounter between Mary (on the left) and Elizabeth (on the right) is represented with the gesture of embrace. Behind them we see a mountain because as the Gospel of Luke tells us, Mary quickly reached Elizabeth "in a mountainous region". On the other side there is the door of a house, with a curtain, a sign that the meeting between the two women takes place precisely inside Elizabeth's house. Mary is represented as a young woman, up straight, in the fullest of her strength. Her cloak is purple, the color in which the Byzantine empress dressed. The dress is blue, a sign of closeness to the divinity. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is an elderly woman, you can see it from the marks on her face and from the fact that she is a little more curved than Mary. Elizabeth's garments are raised and give an idea of movement and momentum, the dynamism given by the Holy Spirit who animates both women.



sunday

19

December

From the Gospel of Luke (1,39 – 45)

During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled".

BLESSING OF THE TABLE

*Let us light a candle, symbol of the Lord in our midst.
Standing up, we create silence and pray with the words that follow.*

Bless this food that we will soon share;
bless mom and dad who with their work make
sure that our family is well.
Teach us to share this food with each other and
with all those we meet every day and that you ask us
to welcome in our days: colleagues, schoolmates,
friends of sport, teachers and
the poor we meet on the street.
In the name of the Father,
the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

IF THERE ARE CHILDREN,
THE PARENTS MAKE A SIGN OF
THE CROSS ON THE FOREHEADS
OF THE CHILDREN.

We conclude with the prayer
of the Our Father.
The candle remains lit
throughout the meal



to welcome

testimony of PAOLO and Sara

The Gospel passage starts with a detail referring to Mary that seemed to us almost in contradiction with the theme of hospitality. "Mary (...) she hurriedly reached the city of Judah". Haste is that element that, in general, seems not to give space to gestures of welcome, in everyday relationships.

However, it brings us back to the context of our times: very intense days, sometimes strongly tiring within which we are called to decline our choices. In this context, which cannot be ignored, we are visited every day by requests for welcome, that arise within the people close to us, first of all the family members.

The real difference that defines full acceptance, passes through the spirit (the Gospel passage overflows with the Holy Spirit) with which one accepts to respond to these needs. The welcome offered for lack of alternatives and therefore an end in itself suffers from the great limit of the exhaustion of personal patience.

The welcome given with joy is possible if lived in a broader journey of fidelity to a promise of love that concretely circulates among people.

PROVOCATION

Faced with the other's need to welcome, do we know how to find the resources to transform the rush to do, into a care to listen?

AMORIS Laetitia

"The beauty of this mutual, gratuitous gift, the joy which comes from a life that is born and the loving care of all family members – from toddlers to seniors – are just a few of the fruits which make the response to the vocation of the family unique and irreplaceable".
(AL 88)



Adults

PRAYER OF THE WEEK FOR

Lord Jesus,
teach us the art
of hospitality:
between us and with people
we barely know, with friends and
with those we rarely see,
with those we wish to have close by
and those we prefer to distance.

It is through each of them
that you come to meet us and
you ask us to recognize you.

Amen.

little ones

GOOD NIGHT PRAYER WITH THE

Lord,
welcoming the other
with you is often difficult,
so I turn to the other
side and pretend nothing.
Today, I happened to leave
my companions on the sidelines
and to make fun of them.
I offer you the actions of the day and
my commitment to listening
the needs of everyone, not just those
I think are the best.
Help me to follow the example of Mary,
a welcoming mother;
her life is full of gestures of care.

Amen.

LIVE PRAYER EVERY DAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (1,39)

*Mary rose up and hurried
to the mountainous region,
to a city in Judah.*

To reflect...

Reception... a matter of feet... It may seem strange that in order to welcome, one must set out on a journey, and yet, Mary teaches us that her education in waiting and welcoming the child also passes through setting out on a journey, going to meet. Only by training one's feet, one's legs to meet the other, can one recognize the fatigue of the journey of others in coming to meet us. Isn't this also the case in a couple?

december
20
monday

december
21
tuesday

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (1,41a)

*As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's
greeting, the child leapt into her womb.*

To reflect...

When we say: "react from the belly": the will that sets our feet in motion is not enough... there is also a need for heart, belly, emotions. I do not reflect a moment, but a deep feeling that animates all of ourselves. And who can say that they have never experienced such a jolt, in the approach of the loved one? It was so for John, in Elizabeth's womb, it is so for the groom in taking his bride in his arms.

FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON PAGE 5

December
22
WEDNESDAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (1:41b)
*Elizabeth was filled
with the Holy Spirit.*

TO REFLECT...

And when there is no space? How do you welcome? A rather frequent refrain, these days. Hospitality is not simply a matter of spaces but of styles... Elizabeth, already from the pregnant womb, where there is no more room for anything else, does not miss the opportunity of that meeting to let herself be filled again, with the Holy Spirit. Isn't this also the case in the couple and in the family? Where hospitality generates more acceptance and is transformed into life.

December
23
THURSDAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (1:43)
*To what do I owe the mother
of my Lord to come to me?*

TO REFLECT...

It is not acceptance that does not become recognition of the other and therefore appreciation and discovery of his dignity and greatness. Elizabeth, thanks to the Holy Spirit, recognizes herself in her humility precisely at the moment when Mary is presented to her as the handmaid of the Lord. Only because she is a servant can she be a mother, only because she is humble can she be lifted up. So, in the couple, the greatest discovery will be the adventure of those who know how to give dignity to the other.

LIVE PRAYER EVERY DAY



December
24
FRIDAY

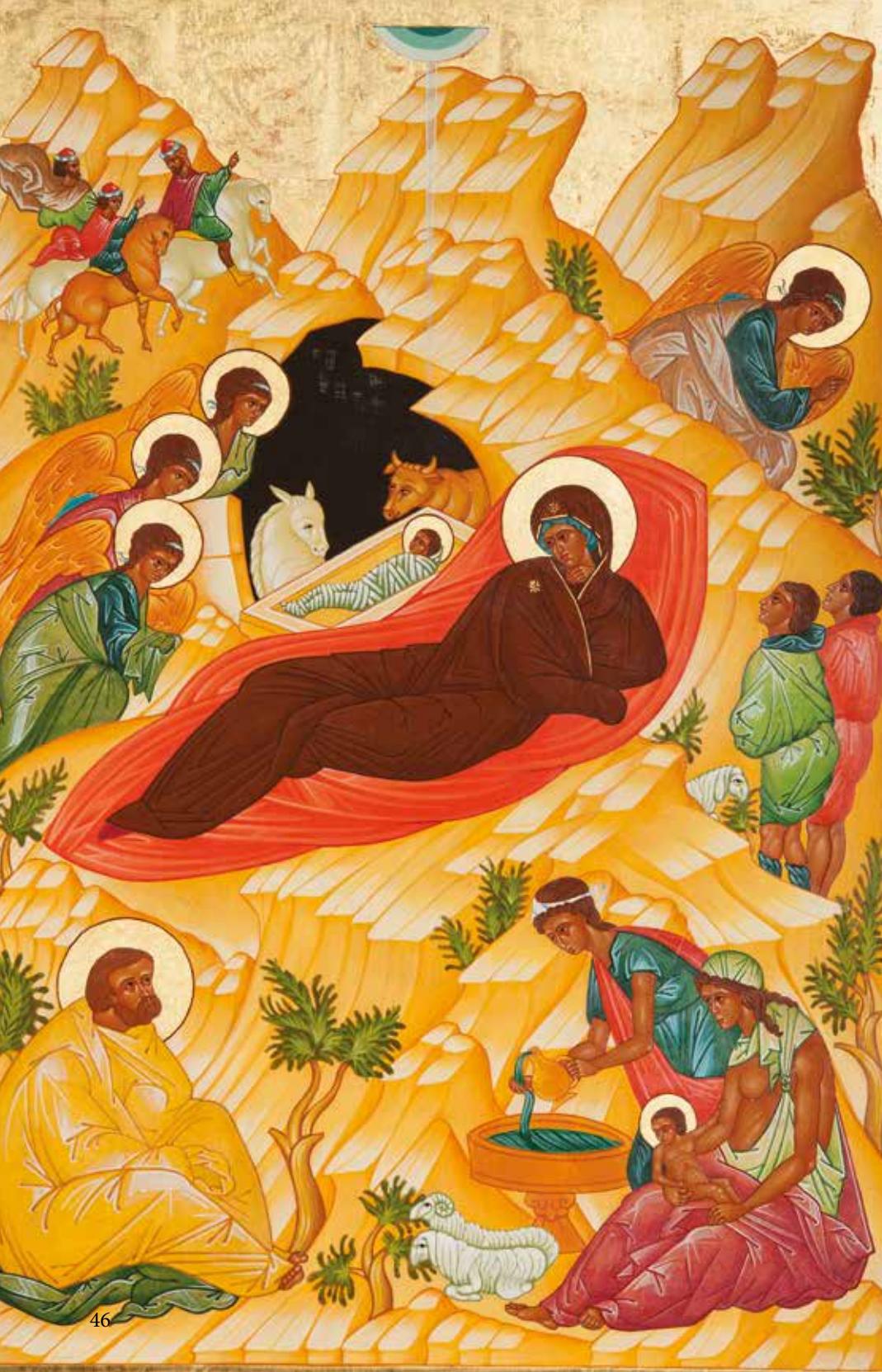
SIGN OF THE CROSS

From the Gospel according to Luke (1,45)
*Blessed is she who believed
in the fulfillment of what the Lord told her.*

TO REFLECT...

And unworthiness leaves room for amazement. The courage of the encounter, the mystery of the other, opens us to amazement and wonder. Beatitude is no longer exclusively elitist of those who have had as a gift the motherhood of the Child of God, but it is for every believer, who recognizes in his own life the happening of the Lord's words. And do we, the family of God, who are preparing for the encounter with him at Christmas, recognize the fulfillment of his words for us today?

FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON PAGE 5



CHRISTmas OF THE LORD

In the family it happens... to SEE GOD

You will find a baby
wrapped in swaddling
clothes lying in a manger

(Lk 2, 12)

The icon of the Nativity of Jesus has the mountain as a background, because the elevated places are those that spontaneously make us think we are closest to the Lord. From above, a beam of light descends: it is the star that guides the Magi, visible at the top left. The star illuminates the Child. The latter is wrapped in swaddling clothes, placed in a manger inside a cave, heated by the donkey and the ox. This dark cave and the swaddling clothes of Jesus make us think of his burial, of his redemptive death, that is, the mission that Jesus came to fulfill. In front of the Child there is Mary, who, lying down, looks into the distance, intent on reflecting on this extraordinary event. On the left some angels who adore the child, with veiled hands, as a sign of respect. On the right, another angel announces the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. In the lower part of the icon we see Joseph on the left, who looks at the scene in amazement and still does not know what to think. On the right there are two women bathing Jesus, a sign that he needs care like any other child.



SUNDAY
25
December

From the Gospel according to Luke (2,1-14)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger". And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests".

BLESSING OF THE TABLE

*Let us light a candle, symbol of the Lord in our midst.
Standing up, we create silence and pray with the words that follow.*

We saw you, born, in the crib!
We see you in the faces of all those who today,
day of great celebration,
they share the same table of joy!
We recognize you in all those who want our good!
Thank you Lord for the abundant gifts
that today you grant to our family!
Grant that the joy that will dwell
this Christmas day,
train us to see your face everywhere.
In the name of the Father,
the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

IF THERE ARE CHILDREN,
THE PARENTS MAKE A SIGN OF
THE CROSS ON THE FOREHEADS
OF THE CHILDREN.

We conclude with the prayer
of the Our Father.
The candle remains lit
throughout the meal



to see GOD

testimony OF ENRICO AND SILVIA

"You must see the Lord present in your lives and teach him to your children with word and life" we often hear ourselves as parents: but is it possible to notice him if our life is enraptured by haste and filled with things to do?

God chose to become man two thousand years ago in a small town on the outskirts of the Roman Empire, and he has not changed his style: he speaks to us even today with a light voice, like that of our children.

As a family we have learned to recognize it in small phrases and gestures of strangers, who often know how to speak to the heart more than the many around us, as long as we keep our eyes and ears open to listening to the neighbor that we encounter every day on our paths of life.

Immediately after birth, our youngest son was hospitalized for some time: it was not yet clear what the problem was, but it was difficult for him to breathe life deeply. "Everything will be fine", we hear people say behind us as we looked at our baby looking out of the crib without being able to touch him: even though he didn't know what he had and if he could heal him, a friar from the hospital brought us God's caress in the moment of suffering.

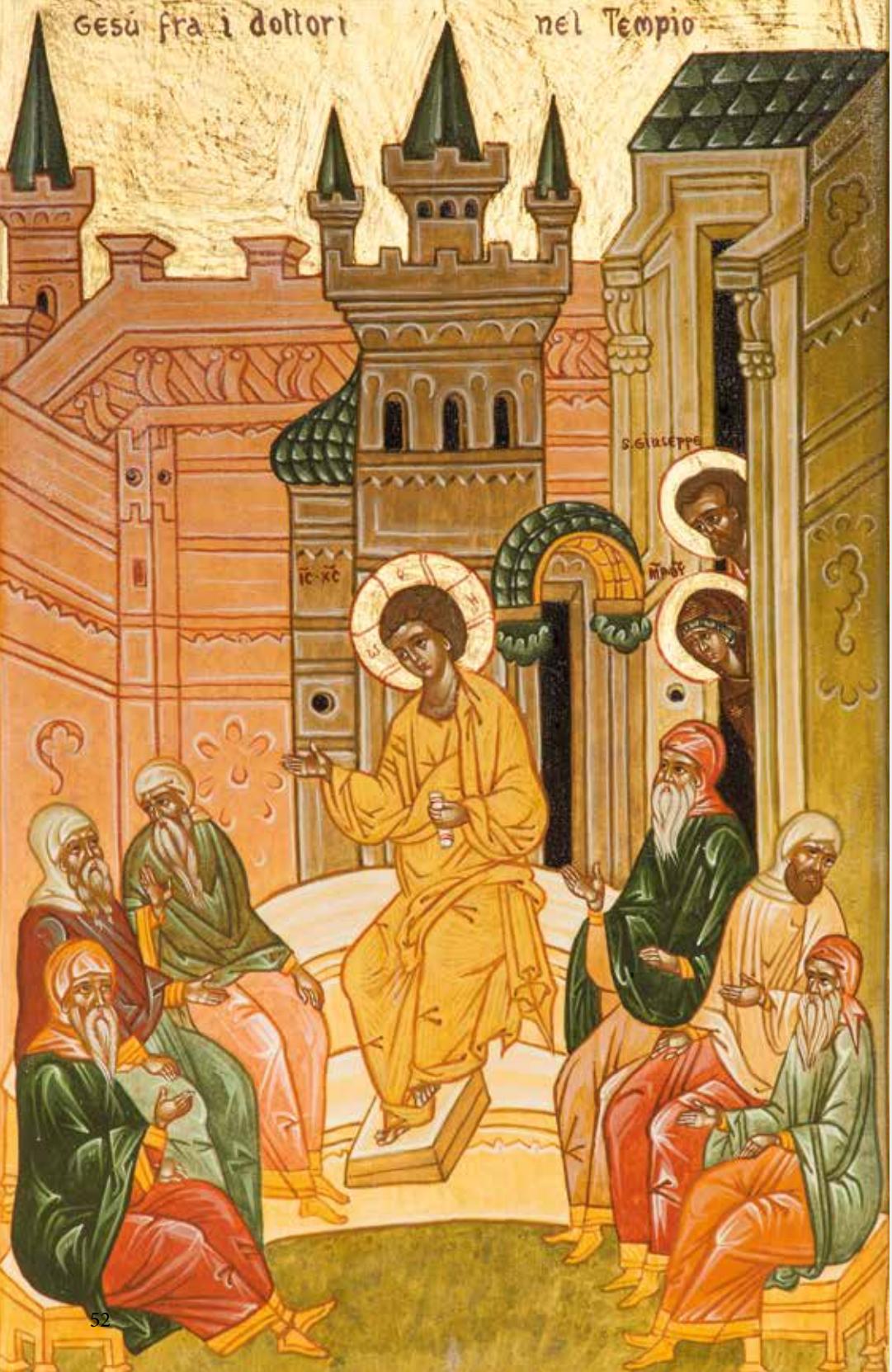
PROVOCATION

Where in our family do we see the presence of God? Are we able to surprise ourselves? Is it a presence that makes us fruitful?

AMORIS Laetitia

The ability of the human couple to generate is the way through which the history of salvation develops. In this light, the fruitful relationship of the couple becomes an image to discover and describe the mystery of God.
(AL 11)





GESÙ fra i dottori

nel Tempio

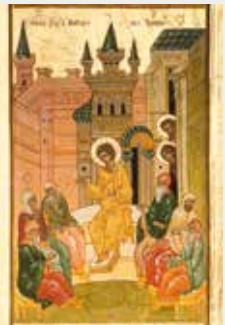
Feast of the
Holy Family

In the family it happens... to HAVE GOOD NEWS

Jesus grew in wisdom,
age and grace before
God and men

(Lk 2:52)

The icon chosen for the feast of the Holy Family presents Jesus among the doctors of the temple, with reference to the growth in age and wisdom of the child Jesus. The presence of the thirteen-year-old Jesus in the temple among the priests and Levites, immersed in a discussion on the Scriptures is rendered with many details. The buildings in the background indicate the temple and Jerusalem. In the center, Jesus sitting on a chair, like a teacher surrounded by his disciples, tells us his superiority in respect to men older than him who certainly knew the sacred texts very well. His wisdom is not the fruit of study with a rabbi, but of the communion of love with the Father, of his faith and of the desire to carry out the will of his Father. The face of Mary and Joseph, who have been looking for him for three days, appears on the right behind the door, a discreet presence even if worried. The essential thing for Jesus is to do what pleases His Father, because good things can only come from this search, good news even if sometimes life makes us live in anxiety.





SUNDAY

26

December

From the Gospel according to Luke (2,41-52)

Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom.

After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."

And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

BLESSING OF THE TABLE

Let us light a candle, symbol of the Lord in our midst. Standing up, we create silence and pray with the words that follow.

**Together with the food you give us today,
Lord bless our family.**

Bless our mother

**that by doing a thousand runs every day
she takes care of each of us.**

**Bless our father who strives to ensure that
we never lack for anything.**

**Bless the children who are growing up
and who carry so many dreams and desires in their hearts.**

**Bless all our brothers with which
we accompany each day.**

**Bless the union that we seek to cultivate
with commitment and passion and forgive our
narrow-mindedness and silences
which sometimes prevent us from living well.**

**In the name of the Father,
the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

Amen.

**IF THERE ARE CHILDREN,
THE PARENTS MAKE A SIGN OF
THE CROSS ON THE FOREHEADS
OF THE CHILDREN.**

*We conclude with the prayer
of the Our Father.
The candle remains lit
throughout the meal*

to Have GOOD news

testimony
OF NICOLA
AND SABRINA

Tonight Bea is reading the Advent booklet to the brothers (Gio and Miri follow on theirs). Every year my husband and I promise to read it with the children but we have never been able to really do it. This scene provokes me: but who did they get them from ?! Certainly not from our ability or constancy, and perhaps not even from an imitation. We two have many things but not "saints"! And so while our Advent booklet gets dust on the bedside table, the children's book comes to life; silently, this gesture involves and "infects" us adults too.

We cannot give ourselves any credit for this small fact (precisely we who are unable to be consistent with Sunday mass); however, a fact so powerful as to move the hearts of us adults, taken by our daily routines. It is a method, that of God, which educates us through small gestures such as the initiative of our children; in so doing it surpasses us, amazes us, reminds us where our life rests. Probably God makes his way where he finds a heart free from too many things to do.

PROVOCATION

Our children, natural and spiritual, are a gift from God, who entrusts them to us so that we can raise them as his children. What does this actually mean for us?

AMORIS Laetitia

"The strength of the family lies essentially in its capacity to love and to teach to love".

(AL 53)





epiphany
of the lord

In the family it happens... to GIVE AND RECEIVE GIFTS

**They were overjoyed
at seeing the star.**

(Mt 2, 10)

The Epiphany icon explicitly recalls that of Christmas, for the Eastern Church in fact today the birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated. We find Mary with the baby Jesus in a cave that recalls the sepulcher; the meditative figure of Joseph; the angels appointed by God the Father (in the halo from which the star descends) to announce to the shepherds and all the people the great joy: "Today the Savior is born for you" and on the left the three magi, dressed like the wise Persians, those who they observe the skies. They, with royal insignia, offer precious gifts and are in an attitude of adoration, in fact they bow before the Child and his mother. The Magi have different ages as to indicate all peoples and all generations. The mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, his manifestation to the humble of the earth and the universal destination of the communion of life with him are summarized in this image which also recalls the event of Easter, the place where the divine manifestation in the man Jesus was fully realized.



THURSDAY

6

January When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage".

When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel'".

Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance.

He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage".

After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.

They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother.

They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

From the Gospel
according to Matthew
(2,1-12)

BLESSING OF THE TABLE

*Let us light a candle, symbol of the Lord in our midst.
Standing up, we create silence and pray with the words that follow.*

Once again we thank you Lord:
tomorrow we return to our usual life
enriched with infinite gifts
that in this Christmas season you have granted us.
We are still together around the table
and, thanks to the food we share,
you make us more and more attentive to each other.
The Magi, who are our traveling companions today,
teach us the recipe for joy:
always looking up to find the signs that speak of you.
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

IF THERE ARE CHILDREN,
THE PARENTS MAKE A SIGN OF
THE CROSS ON THE FOREHEADS
OF THE CHILDREN.

We conclude with the prayer
of the Our Father.
The candle remains lit
throughout the meal

to GIVE and RECEIVE GIFTS

testimony
of MAURIZIO
and ADONELLA

Sometimes it happens to look for things elsewhere, far away, imagining that exceptional situations and opportunities are necessary to achieve them.

Instead, it sometimes happens that in following these objectives, these desires, it is discovered that something precious and extraordinary is not above or far away but it is INSIDE.

For our family it was recognizing the gift that the other gives you even in the daily life of caring.

It always surprises us how in the eyes of our children, when they look for a reference, it moves the desire to re-know each other. This always happens when you return home from the Disabled Day Center or from the projects.

Basically this thing was certainly not desired, however it made us understand that in the theme of care there is something precious, as the mystery of the other, of his will, of his freedom is enormous and that is not played out in the maximum systems but also in small things.

Here too there is a gift that opens up a new path (by other ways they returned), different from the one we had desired, yet dense and rich in other meaning.

PROVOCATION

What is beautiful about our family, beyond our limits, our efforts and our difficulties?

AMORIS Laetitia

"The covenant of love and fidelity, of which the Holy Family of Nazareth lives, illuminates the principle that gives shape to every family, and enables it to better face the vicissitudes of life and history. On this foundation, every family, despite its weakness, can become a light in the darkness of the world".
(AL 66)



FRIDAY
January
7

It IS CHRISTmas! Yes, even today, on January 7th.

For some Christian communities, also present in our Diocese, the nativity of Christ is celebrated not on December 25, but on January 7. Religious feasts are an opportunity to talk about the different traditions in our homes. You may find that some neighbors are equally Christian despite having different traditions and dates. It is nice to discover what unites us, as well as it is important to know and respect the holidays of others and to take the opportunity to greet each other. Try to find someone close to you who is celebrating Christmas on January 7th! This date respects the Julian calendar, valid both for some Orthodox communities and for some Catholic communities (the Eritrean, for example, which adopted the Alexandrian rite ge'ez).

From this year alone, the large Ukrainian Catholic community in Italy will also celebrate Christmas on December 25th. This is the decision of the exarchate, to approach the times of the Roman rite Catholic community, the majority in Italy. But families, says Don Vasyl, the priest who accompanies the community, they will keep the celebrations also on January 7th as per tradition!

Thanks to:

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