

# Faith Loops

Faith Loops are PowerPoint presentations with information and

images that will help us grow in the understanding of our Catholic faith. They are projected on the screens during the twenty minutes prior to each weekend mass.

**To learn more about your faith while waiting for Mass to begin, come a few minutes early.** During that time, the slides will loop, or repeat, themselves. Thus, the name: Faith Loops.



# Gaudete Sunday

Today, the Third Sunday of Advent, is also known as Gaudete Sunday. The word 'Gaudete', pronounced GOW-DAY-TAY, means '**rejoice**' in Latin. With Christmas fast approaching, we anticipate the joy of celebrating Christ's birth. (For the same reason, we recognize Laetare Sunday on the fourth Sunday of Lent, in anticipation of the celebration of Easter.) On both days, the clergy wear rose-colored vestments. Today, the rose (pink) candle is lit on the Advent wreath to symbolize this joy.



# Word of the Week

## *Maranatha*

*Marana tha* means 'Come, our Lord' in Aramaic, one of the languages that Jesus spoke.



# Saint of the Week: St. Nicholas



Saint Nicholas (270 – 343 A.D.) was the bishop of the city of Myra in what is now the country of Turkey. Every year, on December 6, we celebrate the feast day of St. Nicholas. Little is known about the early life of Saint Nicholas, but there are many stories of his generosity and holiness.

# Saint of the Week: St. Nicholas

For example, Nicholas is said to have rescued three girls from prostitution. According to legend,



Nicholas anonymously dropped three bags of gold coins so their father could pay a dowry for each of them.

# St. Nicholas

Another story tells us that, during a voyage to the Holy Land, Nicholas calmed the seas when a violent storm threatened the ship, just like Jesus did on the Sea of Galilee!

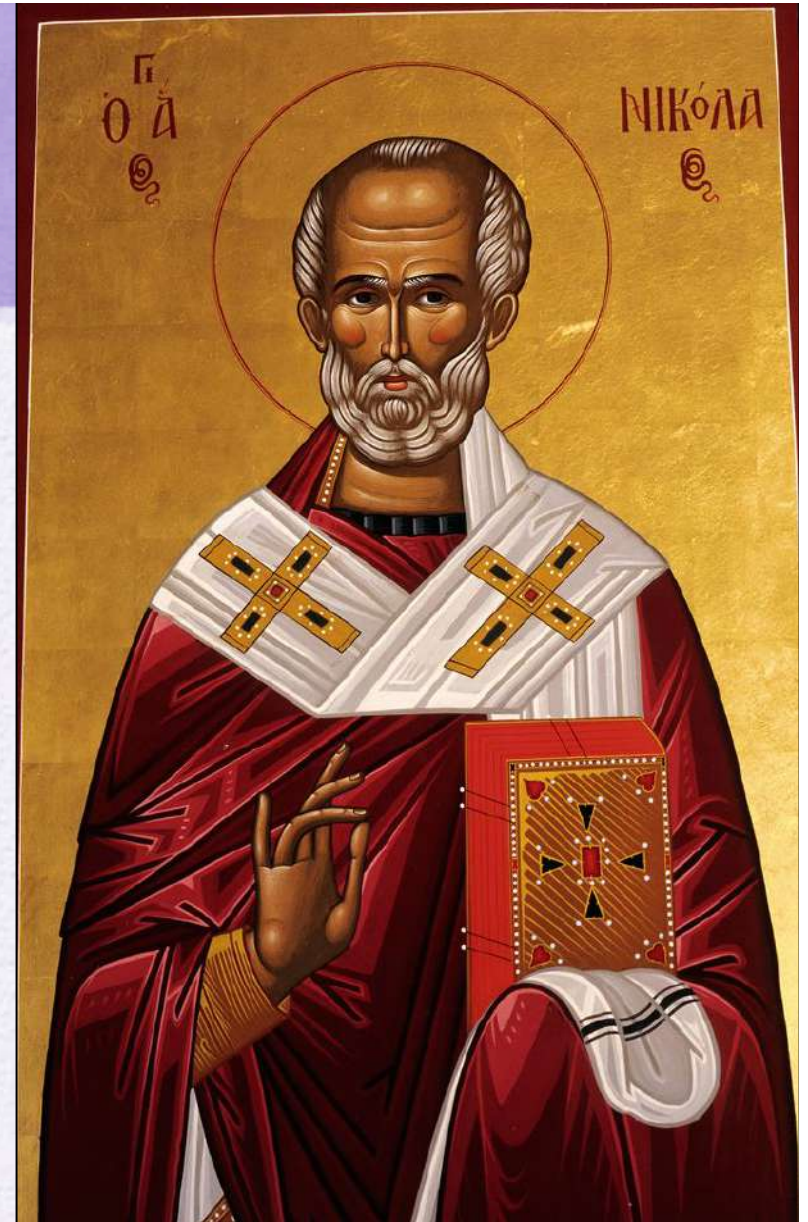
This story is depicted in this Dutch fresco.



# St. Nicholas

St. Nicholas is the patron saint of Greece and Russia, of children, and of sailors. The Italian word for 'saint' is Santa. The name 'Santa Claus' derives from Santa Nicholas.

In some countries, children leave their shoes or socks out on the eve of his feast day so that St. Nicholas can fill them with treats while they are sleeping.



# 'O' Antiphons

The Roman Church has been singing the 'O' Antiphons since at least the eighth century. The "O Antiphons" are prayed for seven days in preparation for Christmas: December 17–23. They are prayed in the Liturgy of the Hours each day as antiphons with



the Magnificat. They are based on Isaiah's prophecies and reveal the different titles given to the Messiah. Their repeated use of the imperative "**Come!**" embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah.

# 'O' Antiphons

## December 17 O Sapientia (**Wisdom**)

Come, O Wisdom of our God Most High,  
guiding creation with power and love:  
teach us to walk in the path of knowledge!

*(from Isaiah 11:2–3)*



## December 18

## O Adonai (**Lord or Ruler**)

Come, O Leader of ancient Israel,  
giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:  
rescue us with your mighty power!

# 'O' Antiphons

## December 19 O Radix (**Root**)

Come, O Flower of Jesse's stem,  
sign of God's love for all his people:  
save us without delay!



## December 20 O Clavis (**Key**)

Come, O Key of David,  
opening the gates of God's  
eternal Kingdom:  
free the prisoners of darkness!

# 'O' Antiphons

## December 21 O Oriens (**Radiant Dawn**)

Come, O Radiant Dawn,  
splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:  
shine on those who dwell in darkness  
and in the shadow of death.



## December 22

## O Rex Gentium (**King of Nations**)

Come, O King of all nations and  
keystone of the Church:  
save us, whom you formed from the dust!

# Learning About Liturgy

## *Why do we present gifts to the priest at Mass?*

We present bread and wine because they are needed for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. On Sundays we also bring forth any money that people have donated for the needs of the poor and to pay for the running of the church: electricity, janitorial and secretarial staff, maintenance, as well as the many programs and activities that take place in the parish.



# Learning About Liturgy (cont.)

## *Why do we present gifts to the priest at Mass?*

In the early days of Christianity, the people may have brought food, clothing, candles, and even gifts like chickens and eggs and pigs for the priest to use. They would also bring other gifts of money or food to be shared later with those in need.



# Learning About Liturgy (cont.)

## *Why do we present gifts to the priest at Mass?*

When we bring the gifts to the altar, we also **offer ourselves and our lives to God**. We offer our joys and sufferings, our accomplishments and our failings, our works and our worries ... all that we are.

Through these gifts we offer ourselves and all that we have to God. The priest will offer our gifts to Christ. God responds to our gifts by giving us His Son in Communion.

# Learning About Liturgy (cont.)

## *Why do we present gifts to the priest at Mass?*

All we have comes from God and now at this time of the Mass we give these gifts back to God, and He uses them in wonderful ways. The bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ.

And even we are transformed. Through our participation in the Mass, we are sanctified. We become more faithful, more holy, and more loving of God and of neighbour.

# Top 20 Christmas Gifts

This Christmas:

- Mend a quarrel
- Share some treasure
- Keep a promise
- Find the time, listen
- Give a soft answer,  
encourage youth
- Seek out a forgotten friend
- Apologize if you were wrong
- Be gentle, laugh a little



# Top 20 Christmas Gifts (cont.)

- Laugh a little more
- Express your gratitude
- Welcome a stranger
- Gladden the heart of a child
- Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth
- Speak your love
- Speak it again
- Speak it still once again



by Daniel L. Lowery, Csr.

# You Were Wondering ...

## *What is the significance of mistletoe at Christmas?*

Prior to Christianity, among the Druids in present-day Britain, mistletoe was considered to be a sacred plant with powers for healing and protection. So sacred was it that, if enemies were to meet under mistletoe, they were to declare a truce. In time, the tradition developed of hanging it over doorways as a symbol of peace and goodwill.



# You Were Wondering ...

## *What is the significance of mistletoe at Christmas?*

When Christianity arrived, mistletoe was considered to be a pagan practice. However, it became a symbol of Christ and his power to heal. It no longer has religious significance but is used as a Christmas decoration. And should you find yourself under the mistletoe with someone of the opposite sex, you are, apparently, entitled to a kiss.



***GOD MADE US FOR JOY.  
GOD IS JOY, AND THE JOY OF LIVING  
REFLECTS THE ORIGINAL JOY  
THAT GOD FELT IN CREATING US.***



*St. Pope John Paul II*

# Test Your Knowledge

## Why do Christians have Christmas trees?

- a. Evergreen trees point to new life during the dead season of winter.
- b. Evergreens never die, just as Christians will live forever because of Christ.
- c. It follows the eighth-century tradition of St. Boniface.
- d. All of the above.



# Answer

## d. All of the above

Saint Boniface cut down the sacred tree of the pagan god Thor to stop the sacrificing of humans. He told the people to take an evergreen tree, which pointed to heaven, into their homes, saying:

“Call this the tree of the Christ Child. Gather about it, not in the wild woods but in your homes. There it will shelter no deeds of blood, but loving gifts and lights of kindness” (The Catholic Source Book).



# Test Your Knowledge

Candy canes symbolize \_\_\_\_\_.



- a) the shepherds who visited the Christ child
- b) the sacrifice (red stripes) and the purity (white stripes) of Christ
- c) the body of Christ when it is broken and shared
- d) all of the above

# Answer

## d. All of the above

Before people could read, most Christians were taught the faith through art and symbols, especially during the great seasons like Christmas and Easter.



# St. Teresa of Calcutta wrote:

**AT THIS CHRISTMAS WHEN  
CHRIST COMES, WILL HE  
FIND A WARM HEART?**

**MARK THE SEASON  
OF ADVENT BY LOVING  
AND SERVING OTHERS  
WITH GOD'S OWN LOVE  
AND CONCERN."**

from Love: A Fruit for all Seasons



# From the Suggestion Box ...

## Who made the Jubilee Year and for what reason?

Good question!

The Jubilee Year has its origin in ancient Hebrew tradition.

In the Book of Leviticus, Chapter 25, we read about the Lord instructing Moses to celebrate a year of jubilee every fifty years, at which time debts would be forgiven, prisoners and slaves would be set free, and land would lie fallow.



# From the Suggestion Box ... the First Jubilee Year

The first 'Christian' Jubilee was proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII in the year 1300. At the time, the people were suffering from wars and diseases, like the plague. Seeking comfort and peace, 1000s of people came to Rome at Christmas in the year 1299.

Pope Boniface declared the year 1300 as a year for the pardon of sins. The people were required to go to confession and to visit the Basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul fifteen times to gain full pardon for their sins.

# From the Suggestion Box ... the First Jubilee Year

Today, the Catholic Church celebrates a Jubilee year, also known as a holy year, every twenty-five years. It offers opportunities for us to receive forgiveness for our sins, and freedom from the punishment due to sin that must be faced in Purgatory.

The Jubilee Year of Hope began on December 24, 2024 and comes to an end on the Feast of Epiphany (January 6, 2026).



# Prayer Before Mass

Dear God, help me to be open to all that you want to  
give me at Mass today.

My heart is open.

I come empty and unsure and troubled.

I come in hope.

I come in need to be loved by you,  
united with this faith community,  
strengthened by your word,  
and nourished by the Bread of Life.

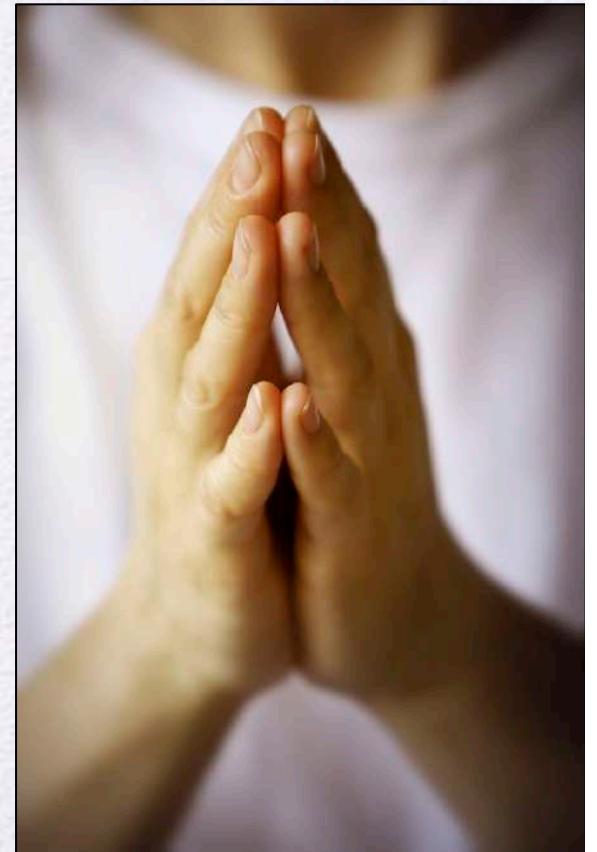
Cleanse me. Refresh me.

Strengthen me for the journey ahead.

Lead me to heaven.

Thank you, God, for this time together.

Thank you, God, for everything. Amen.



# Questions???

Do you have a question about the Catholic faith or about the celebration of the Mass?

If so, write it on a piece of paper and drop it into the marked shoebox on the table at the back of the church. We will try to answer it in a Faith Loop at a later date.

Thank you.

