

**THEME / TOPIC OF THE MONTH:**

Love MAS...CHRIST

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES OF THE MONTH:**LUKE 2:10-11**

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.

HOUSEHOLD TEACHINGS OF THE MONTH:

JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON!

by Fr. Ed Broom OMV

DISCUSSION QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

In what ways will I commit to Love MAS CHRIST these CHRISTMAS and Advent seasons?

SONG OF THE MONTH:

BREATH OF HEAVEN by Amy Grant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1Lu5udXEZI&list=RDh1Lu5udXEZI#t=7>

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**PARAGRAPHS OF THE MONTH:**

CCC 487- 507

SAINT OF THE MONTH:

St. John of the Cross

PRAYER OF THE MONTH:

Christmas Prayer

MEDIA (BOOK) OF THE MONTH:

A Catholic Family Advent: Prayers and Activities
by Susan Hines-Brigger (Author)

JOKE OF THE MONTH:

Christmas Promise

“FAITH WITHOUT ACTION IS DEAD”**APPLICATIONS OF THE MONTH:**

1. Put CHRIST back in CHRISTmas and greet everyone you come across this month with a “Merry CHRISTmas”!
2. Be faithful to your Christmas Promise to Jesus these Advent and Christmas seasons.

DECEMBER 2015

Subject: 2015 CFCUSA Pastoral Formation Materials – Love MAS... CHRIST (ROH#26)

Dear CFC USA Family:

Through the years, Christmas time has always been my favorite time of the year.

- As a young child, I was excited for Santa Claus (aka Daddy Jet and Mommy Myrna), the board game gifts from Ninang (Godmother) Pacita, the new, crisp, good smelling Christmas money from Ninong (Godfather) Nestor and many more gifts.
- As a youth, I was mesmerized by the Christmas decors at the Jets home and the COD display in Cubao, the Christmas music (Johnny Mathis' Winter Wonderland and Ray Conniff's Jolly Old St. Nicholas) and festive lights everywhere.
- As a teen, it meant Christmas vacation and fun times caroling from door to door, Kris Kringle and parties left and right with friends.
- As a young, single adult, it was Noche Buena (puto bumbong, kakanin), the gatherings and reunions with close family members, long lost relatives and friends.
- As a newly married husband, it was the shopping for the perfect gifts and best deals for my loved ones in my long Gift List.
- As a married Dad, it was my turn playing Santa Claus to my daughters, excited to see them open their gifts and more gifts...

All these reasons are great reasons to be excited about Christmas, because the season is about fun, family, merriment and...LOVE. Yes, LOVE that came down from Heaven. LOVE that took human form. LOVE that was born in a humble manger with barn animals and shepherds as its first visitors. Through the years, it became clearer that the reason for the season is LOVE spelled J-E-S-U-S. True God and True Man. Word made flesh.

May these seasons of Advent and Christmas prepare us to open our hearts and hands to respond to LOVE by loving more God and neighbor and putting MAS (more) of CHRIST this CHRISTMAS and beyond.

Finally, let me be one of the very first to greet you, my beloved CFC USA brothers and sisters in Christ a most Blessed Christmas and a 2016 filled with God's love, peace and joy!

In Christ through Mary,
Bro. Toffee Jeturian

Theme/Topic of the Month:
Love MAS...CHRIST

Scripture Passage of the Month:
Luke 2:10-11

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.

Household Teaching of the Month:

NOTE: Please read ROH #26

Letter first, then click on the link for our Song of the Month

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQs0H7dvwy0>

JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON!

Shop until you drop! Buying, having, possessing and allowing your possessions to possess you! Rushing for this sale and this discount. Stampeding into stores concentrating on things more than on human persons. Worrying about the food, the drink, the parties and the pleasure. Sad to say, this has all become the modern immediate preparation for Christmas. Moreover, in many places even the word "Christmas" has been forbidden from modern vocabulary!

I want my "things!"

In other words, the true meaning of Christmas, far and wide has been obliterated from the minds of the modern world. Christmas has been transformed into a secular even pagan holiday.

To counteract this enormous materialistic and paganistic tendency we would like to encourage all to reflect upon five simple and clear ideas so as to live a truly spiritual Christmas.

1. JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON. The whole focus of Advent which culminates in the Solemnity of Christmas is a PERSON! That person is Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus is the true reason for the entire season. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary in the humble, poor stable of Bethlehem. The name "Jesus" means Savior. He came to open up the gates of heaven, to save us from slavery to sin, the devil and eternal damnation. This Christmas let us contemplate the Person of Jesus and the purpose of His mission. Let our hearts overflow in humble praise and thanksgiving. St. Ignatius of Loyola accentuates the fact that Jesus did all of this not simply for humanity as a whole but for me individually. Jesus was born, suffered, died and rose from the dead for me, as if I were the only person in the uni-

verse. How important I am for God! How important Christmas—the birth of Jesus—should be for me!

CFC brethren, Philippians 4: 4-7 is our anchor verse and our theme for 2016- REJOICE, PRAY and GIVE THANKS! Let us be ahead of the curve and start living our CFC 2016 battlecry this Advent and Christmas seasons.

2. “REJOICE IN THE LORD!” Christmas is a time to rejoice! However true joy cannot be acquired by things of creation, but by approaching the Creator of all things--- the God of the universe! The third Sunday of Advent is “Gaudete” this is Latin for rejoice. This quotation is taken from Philippians 4:4-5: “Rejoice in the Lord; again I say, rejoice. Indeed the Lord is near.” Pleasure can be bought with money and depends on the exterior stimulus of the senses. Joy cannot be bought with money but it can be received freely by opening our hearts to the Holy Spirit who gives His Gifts and fruits freely. Among the fruits of the Holy Spirit are joy, peace, patience and chastity. Therefore, this Christmas may our hearts be overflowing in joy; however, a joy that is based on a strong conviction of God’s infinite love for us manifested in the Incarnation of His Son, the Lord Jesus!

3. SILENCE AND PRAYER. In the holiday season, it is all too easy to be absorbed by an endless barrage of noise; let’s call it “Noise pollution”. Nevertheless, for us to enter into deep contact with God, silence is an indispensable pre-condition. Call to mind the encounter of Elijah and his mountain experience. This great prophet did not discover God’s voice in the storm, thunder, nor in the earthquake. Rather, he discovered God’s voice in the whispering of the wind. The young Samuel heard the Lord’s voice in the temple and responded: “Speak Lord for your servant is listening.” It is indeed hard to hear the voice of the Lord because we are bombarded by so many different noises. Call to mind one of the traditional Christmas hymns: “Silent Night!” May our hearts rest in the silence of Bethlehem and come to adore Him! “O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him Jesus the Lord.”

CFC brethren, Prayer (personal, couple and family Prayer Times) is one of the most important PFO initiatives for the whole CFC USA. Why not commit to silence and prayer times this Advent season?

4. CHRISTMAS—The literal interpretation of this word is “The Mass of Christ”. The most pleasing gesture I can carry out, the most pleasing gift I can give to Jesus, the most total way I can live out Christmas, would be to attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In the moment of Consecration in Holy Mass, Jesus is truly born in the hands of the priest when he says: “This is my Body... this is my blood... Do this in memory of me.” Even more, when I receive Jesus into my heart in Holy Communion then Jesus is truly born in my heart. The word “Bethlehem” means “House of Bread”. My heart indeed becomes the “House of Bread” when I receive Jesus the “Bread of Life” in Holy Communion. In reality, attending Mass daily and receiving Holy Communion daily, I can be experiencing Christmas every day! This is also the BEST way to give THANKS to GOD. In fact, “Eucharist” comes from the Greek by way of Latin, and it means “thanksgiving.”

CFC brethren, this is one of the most important PFO initiatives for the whole CFC USA – attend DAILY MASS and receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Why not start this Advent season?

5. WISE MEN STILL FIND JESUS IN THE ARMS OF MARY. The bumper sticker on the back of my car reads: “Wise men still find Jesus in the arms of Mary.” Christmas would be all but incomplete if we ignored the person and the presence of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Indeed, the Season of Advent is imbued with a Marian spirit. December 8th the Church celebrates the patroness of the United States of America, the Immaculate Conception. “O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.” Four days later, Dec 12th, the Church celebrates Our Lady of Guadalupe. Blessed Pope John Paul II proclaimed her as the Patroness of the Americas. Of course Christmas is the birth of Jesus, who was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary has four unique privileges freely given to her from an all-generous God: her Immaculate Conception, her Perpetual Virginity, her Assumption into heaven in body and soul, and finally her Divine Maternity. The greatest of these Marian privileges--- which are also Marian dogmas of faith—is her Divine Maternity. This means that Mary was chosen by God to be the Mother of God. We honor this privilege every time we pray with love, faith, and devotion the “Hail Mary”, saying, “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen”.

CFC brethren, this is also one of the most important PFO initiative for the whole CFC USA – Marian Consecration through the book 33 Days to Morning Glory by Fr. Michael Gaitley. Why not start this 33 day retreat this Advent season?

May Our Lady, the Mother of God, the Mother of the Church, and our loving and tender Mother attain for us the most joyful, peaceful and holy of Christmases in our entire life! The most blessed of Christmases!

Mary is the Mother of God and our Mother--Blessed and holy Christmas!

SPECIAL THANKS TO FR. ED BROOM OMV

Discussion Question of the Month:

In what ways will I commit to Love MAS CHRIST this CHRISTMAS and Advent seasons?

Reflection of the Month

Breath of Heaven (Song of the month)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQs0H7dvwy0>

Song of the Month

Breath of Heaven by Amy Grant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1Lu5udXEZI&list=RDh1Lu5udXEZI#t=7>

I have traveled many moonless nights
Cold and weary with a babe inside
And I wonder what I've done
Holy Father, You have come
And chosen me now to carry Your Son

I am waiting in a silent prayer
I am frightened by the load I bear
In a world as cold as stone
Must I walk this path alone?
Be with me now, be with me now

Breath of Heaven, hold me together
Be forever near me, Breath of Heaven
Breath of Heaven, lighten my darkness
Pour over me Your holiness for You are holy
Breath of Heaven

Do you wonder as you watch my face
If a wiser one should have had my place?
But I offer all I am
For the mercy of Your plan
Help me be strong, help me be, help me

Breath of Heaven, hold me together
Be forever near me, Breath of Heaven
Breath of Heaven, lighten my darkness
Pour over me Your holiness for You are holy
Breath of Heaven, hold me together
Be forever near me, breath of Heaven
Breath of Heaven, lighten my darkness
Pour over me Your holiness for You are holy
Breath of Heaven, Breath of Heaven, Breath of Heaven

Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraphs of the Month: CCC 487- 507

II. ...Born of the Virgin Mary

487 What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ.

Mary's predestination

488 "God sent forth his Son," but to prepare a body for him, he wanted the free cooperation of a creature. For this, from all eternity God chose for the mother of his Son a daughter of Israel, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth in Galilee, "a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary":

The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in the coming of death, so also should a woman contribute to the coming of life.

489 Throughout the Old Covenant the mission of many holy women prepared for that of Mary. At the very beginning there was Eve; despite her disobedience, she receives the promise of a posterity that will be victorious over the evil one, as well as the promise that she will be the mother of all the living. By virtue of this promise, Sarah conceives a son in spite of her old age. Against all human expectation God chooses those who were considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to his promises: Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Deborah; Ruth; Judith and Esther; and many other women. Mary "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from him. After a long period of waiting the times are fulfilled in her, the exalted Daughter of Sion, and the new plan of salvation is established."

The Immaculate Conception

490 To become the mother of the Savior, Mary "was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role." The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as "full of grace." In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith

to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace.

491 Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, "full of grace" through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.

492 The "splendor of an entirely unique holiness" by which Mary is "enriched from the first instant of her conception" comes wholly from Christ: she is "redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son." The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" and chose her "in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love."

493 The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God "the All-Holy" (Panagia) and celebrate her as "free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature." By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.

"Let it be done to me according to your word..."

494 At the announcement that she would give birth to "the Son of the Most High" without knowing man, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary responded with the obedience of faith, certain that "with God nothing will be impossible": "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word." Thus, giving her consent to God's word, Mary becomes the mother of Jesus. Espousing the divine will for salvation wholeheartedly, without a single sin to restrain her, she gave herself entirely to the person and to the work of her Son; she did so in order to serve the mystery of redemption with him and dependent on him, by God's grace: As St. Irenaeus says, "Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race."

Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert: “The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith.” Comparing her with Eve, they call Mary “the Mother of the living” and frequently claim: “Death through Eve, life through Mary.”

Mary’s divine motherhood

495 Called in the Gospels “the mother of Jesus,” Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as “the mother of my Lord.” In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father’s eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly “Mother of God” (Theotokos).

Mary’s virginity

496 From the first formulations of her faith, the Church has confessed that Jesus was conceived solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, affirming also the corporeal aspect of this event: Jesus was conceived “by the Holy Spirit without human seed.” The Fathers see in the virginal conception the sign that it truly was the Son of God who came in a humanity like our own. Thus St. Ignatius of Antioch at the beginning of the second century says:

You are firmly convinced about our Lord, who is truly of the race of David according to the flesh, Son of God according to the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin,...he was truly nailed to a tree for us in his flesh under Pontius Pilate... he truly suffered, as he is also truly risen.

497 The gospel accounts understand the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work that surpasses all human understanding and possibility: “That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit,” said the angel to Joseph about Mary his fiancée. The Church sees here the fulfillment of the divine promise given through the prophet Isaiah: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.”

498 People are sometimes troubled by the silence of St. Mark’s Gospel and the New Testament Epistles about Jesus’ virginal conception. Some might wonder if we were merely dealing with legends or theological constructs not claiming to be history.

To this we must respond: Faith in the virginal conception of Jesus met with the lively opposition, mockery, or incomprehension of non-believers, Jews and pagans alike; so it could hardly have been motivated by pagan mythology or by some adaptation to the ideas of the age. The meaning of this event is accessible only to faith, which understands in it the “connection of these mysteries with one another” in the totality of Christ’s mysteries, from his Incarnation to his Passover. St. Ignatius of Antioch already bears witness to this connection: “Mary’s virginity and giving birth, and even the Lord’s death escaped the notice of the prince of this world: these three mysteries worthy of proclamation were accomplished in God’s silence.”

Mary — “ever-virgin”

499 The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary’s real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man. In fact, Christ’s birth “did not diminish his mother’s virginal integrity but sanctified it.” And so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the “Ever-virgin.”

500 Against this doctrine the objection is sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers and sisters of Jesus. The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, “brothers of Jesus,” are the sons of another Mary, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls “the other Mary.” They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression.

501 Jesus is Mary’s only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: “The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formulation she cooperates with a mother’s love.”

Mary’s virginal motherhood in God’s plan

502 The eyes of faith can discover in the context of the whole of Revelation the mysterious reasons why God in his saving plan wanted his Son to be born of a virgin. These reasons touch both on the person of Christ and his redemptive mission, and on the welcome Mary gave that mission on behalf of all men.

503 Mary's virginity manifests God's absolute initiative in the Incarnation. Jesus has only God as Father. "He was never estranged from the Father because of the human nature which he assumed.... He is naturally Son of the Father as to his divinity and naturally son of his mother as to his humanity, but properly Son of the Father in both natures."

504 Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary's womb because he is the New Adam, who inaugurates the new creation: "The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven." From his conception, Christ's humanity is filled with the Holy Spirit, for God "gives him the Spirit without measure." From "his fullness" as the head of redeemed humanity "we have all received, grace upon grace."

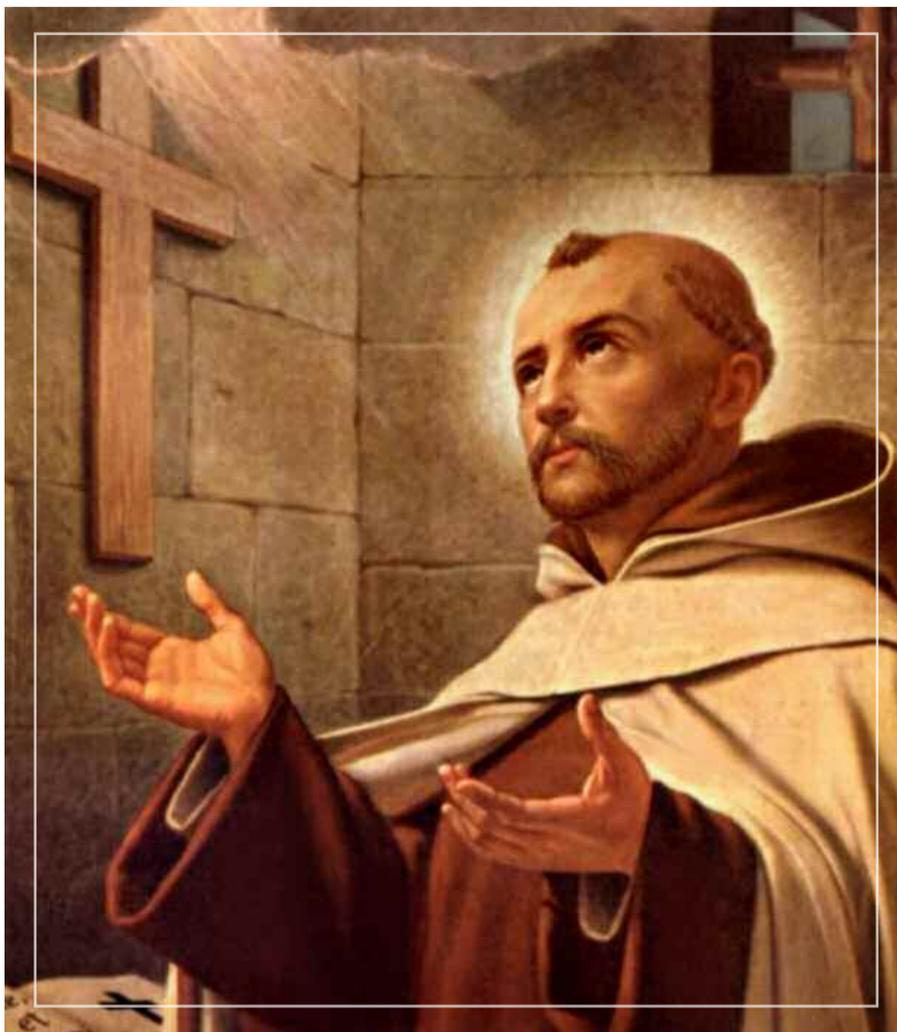
505 By his virginal conception, Jesus, the New Adam, ushers in the new birth of children adopted in the Holy Spirit through faith. "How can this be?" Participation in the divine life arises "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." The acceptance of this life is virginal because it is entirely the Spirit's gift to man. The spousal character of the human vocation in relation to God is fulfilled perfectly in Mary's virginal motherhood.

506 Mary is a virgin because her virginity is the sign of her faith "unadulterated by any doubt," and of her undivided gift of herself to God's will. It is her faith that enables her to become the mother of the Savior: "Mary is more blessed because she embraces faith in Christ than because she conceives the flesh of Christ."

507 At once virgin and mother, Mary is the symbol and the most perfect realization of the Church: "the Church indeed... by receiving the word of God in faith becomes herself a mother. By preaching and Baptism she brings forth sons, who are conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God, to a new and immortal life. She herself is a virgin, who keeps in its entirety and purity the faith she pledged to her spouse

Saint of the Month

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS



Feast day: December 14

Birth: 1542

Death: 1591

It may be no accident that St. John of the Cross' feast day is celebrated during the Advent season (December 14). For it is he who is best known for his moving account of the "dark night of the soul" that all Christians must experience on their way to God. This darkness may be terrifying, but it is no cause for despair. As one Carmelite nun has written: "The darkness of that Bethlehem night held the glory of God's greatest gift to humanity. The

Carmelite friar's description of going to God through the night is not a sad dirge at all. He tells us that the night he describes is really God coming to us with the intensity of a light so dazzling it overwhelms our capacity to see. We walk through the nights of our lives with the assurance that we will see a new dawn, more glorious than any we have looked at before." Indeed, to paraphrase this writer, much like the shepherds waiting in the darkness of that night in Bethlehem, so too are we standing vigil for the Second Coming of Christ.

Born in Spain in 1542, John learned the importance of self-sacrificing love from his parents. His father gave up wealth, status, and comfort when he married a weaver's daughter and was disowned by his noble family. After his father died, his mother kept the destitute family together as they wandered homeless in search of work. These were the examples of sacrifice that John followed with his own great love -- God.

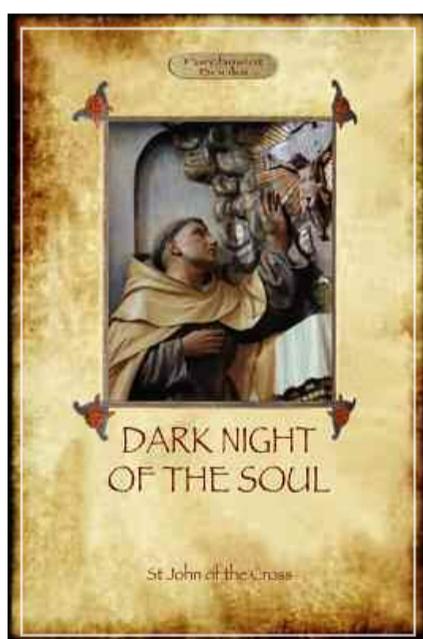
When the family finally found work, John still went hungry in the middle of the wealthiest city in Spain. At fourteen, John took a job caring for hospital patients who suffered from in-

curable diseases and madness. It was out of this poverty and suffering, that John learned to search for beauty and happiness not in the world, but in God.

After John joined the Carmelite order, Saint Teresa of Avila asked him to help her reform movement. John supported her belief that the order should return to its life of prayer. But many Carmelites felt threatened by this reform, and some members of John's own order kidnapped him. He was locked in a cell six feet by ten feet and beaten three times a week by the monks. There was only one tiny window high up near the ceiling. Yet in that unbearable dark, cold, and desolation, his love and faith were like fire and light. He had nothing left but God -- and God brought John his greatest joys in that tiny cell.

After nine months, John escaped by unscrewing the lock on his door and creeping past the guard. Taking only the mystical poetry he had written in his cell, he climbed out a window using a rope made of strips of blankets. With no idea where he was, he followed a dog to civilization. He hid from pursuers in a convent infirmary where he read his poetry to the nuns. From then on his life was devoted to sharing and explaining his experience of God's love.

His life of poverty and persecution could have produced a bitter cynic. Instead it gave birth to a compassionate mystic, who lived by the beliefs that "Who has ever seen people persuaded to love God by harshness?" and "Where there is no love, put love -- and you will find love."



John left us many books of practical advice on spiritual growth and prayer that are just as relevant today as they were then. These books include: *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *Dark Night of the Soul*, and *A Spiritual Canticle of the Soul and the Bridegroom Christ*

Since joy comes only from God, John believed that someone who seeks happiness in the world is like "a famished person who opens his mouth to satisfy himself with air." He taught that only by breaking the rope of our desires could we fly up to God. Above all, he was concerned for those who suffered dryness or depression in their spiritual life and offered encouragement that God loved them and was leading them deeper into faith.

"What more do you want, o soul! And what else do you search for outside, when within yourself you possess your riches, delights, satisfaction and kingdom -- your beloved whom

you desire and seek? Desire him there, adore him there. Do not go in pursuit of him outside yourself. You will only become distracted and you won't find him, or enjoy him more than by seeking him within you." Saint John of the Cross

IN HIS FOOTSTEPS:

John of the Cross believed it was just as dangerous to get attached to spiritual delights as worldly pleasures. Do you expect to get something -- a good feeling, a sense of God -- from prayer or worship? Do you continue to pray and worship when you feel alone or dry?

PRAYER:

Saint John of the Cross, in the darkness of your worst moments, when you were alone and persecuted, you found God. Help me to have faith that God is there especially in the times when God seems absent and far away. Amen.

Prayer of the Month

CHRISTMAS PRAYER

<http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=345>

Lord, in this holy season of prayer and song and laughter, we praise you for the great wonders you have sent us: for shining star and angel's song, for infant's cry in lowly manger. We praise you for the Word made flesh in a little Child. We behold his glory, and are bathed in its radiance.

Be with us as we sing the ironies of Christmas, the incomprehensible comprehended, the poetry made hard fact, the helpless Babe who cracks the world asunder. We kneel before you shepherds, innkeepers, wisemen. Help us to rise bigger than we are. Amen.

Media (Book) of the Month:

A Catholic Family Advent: Prayers and Activities

by Susan Hines-Brigger (Author)

For many families, the four weeks leading up to Christmas can be a time of great stress, unrealized dreams, a commercial blur, and a financial burden. Susan Hines-Brigger, the

mother of four children, knows well that the days counting down to Christmas can easily become for parents and grandparents a nightmare of whiny behavior, crowded to-do lists, and a less-than-spiritual experience. That's why this mother who has seen and heard it all in her own home during Advent created this resource with prayers and activities: She wants to put Christ back into the family holiday celebration and help families—even hers—become holier. Using *A Catholic Family Advent* on a daily basis will give Catholic families time together to pray, reflect on Scripture, and do a simple activity together. This daily source of inspiration can be used in the family setting as prayer before or after meals, as morning and evening prayer, or as family time in front of the Advent wreath or Christmas crèche.

Joke of the Month

Christmas Promise

It was the day after Christmas at a church in Orange County CA. Fr. Francis was looking at the nativity scene outside when he noticed the baby Jesus was missing from the figures. Immediately, Fr. Francis turned towards the church to call the police. But as he was about to do so, he saw little Raphael with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus.

Fr. Francis walked up to Rapha and said, "Well, Rapha, where did you get the little infant?" Rapha replied, "I got him from the church."

"And why did you take him?"

With a sheepish smile, Rapha said, "Well, about a week before Christmas I prayed to little Lord Jesus. I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it."

REFLECTION: Rapha kept his Christmas promise to Jesus, will you?

Applications of the Month:

"Faith without Action is Dead"

1. Put CHRIST back in CHRISTmas and greet everyone you come across this month with a "Merry CHRISTmas"!
2. Be faithful to your Christmas Promise to Jesus these Advent and Christmas seasons.