



CATEHCIST CONNECTION

Dear Catechists:

Welcome to the first edition of the 'Catechist Connection'. It is a monthly newsletter that aims to assist you in your ministry of Catechesis. This month's theme is St. Philip's Fast and some of the Feast days that are celebrated during the St. Philip's Fast.

The Philip's Fast is our forty-day fast before the Nativity of Jesus Christ for us to prepare for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Even though we know that Jesus Christ is present in our lives today, this Fast intensifies the experience of God is with us. Through our prayers, fasting, and almsgiving, we are asked to experience Jesus Christ's presence in all that we do. Also, we believe Jesus Christ was born to save all people, and now we are asked to help others experience Jesus' presence in their lives. Then, as we celebrate the Nativity of Jesus Christ, we can joyfully sing, "God is with us" for all people as promised through the patriarchs and prophets.

(Generations of Faith, Philip's Fast Session)

Philip's Fast begins the day after the Fest of St. Philip (November 14/27) on November 15/28. Although not as prominent as the Great Fast, St. Philip's Fast still requires us to pray, fast and give alms in preparation of the Feast of Nativity. The weeks leading up the Christmas are often filled with celebrations and parties and it is hard to keep to a spirit of fasting and prayer. How do we instill this into our children? One way is a St. Philip's Fast calendar with a list of Activities that we can do that inspire us to think of others first. (See attachments)

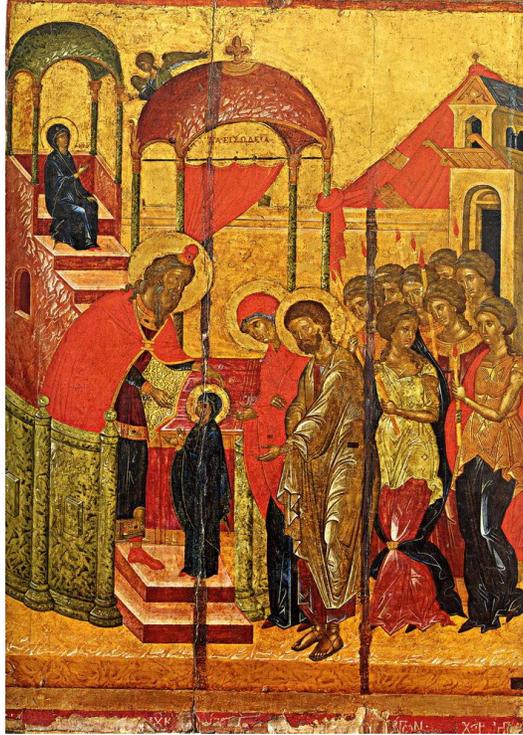
Ideas to Help Us Prepare for the Nativity of Jesus Christ

- * Buy a gift you would personally like to have. Wrap it for distribution to someone your age at a local family shelter.
- * Read the Christmas story in the Bible as a family (Luke 2:1-20).
- * Bake and decorate sugar cookies as a family. Keep half and give the rest away.
- * Offer to help a family member or friend do their Christmas shopping or wrapping.
- * As a family, go without snacks or even a meal. Contribute the money saved to a local soup kitchen or food pantry.
- * Donate a package of heavyweight socks to your local homeless shelter.
- * Read a book about Christmas traditions around the world. Add an idea you like to your family Christmas celebration.
- * Locate Israel and Bethlehem on a globe or world map. Pray for peace in the land and continent of Jesus' birth.
- * Call or write family friends you have not seen for a while. Let them know how much you appreciate their presence in your life.
- * Schedule a date for a family visit to a local nursing home – not now, but in February or March when Christmas is a memory.
- * Buy a family's worth of gloves and hats, and then give them away to a family in need.
- * Invite someone who lives alone to join you for a special Philip's Fast or Christmas meal.

- * Select a cause or charity you would like to support as a family in the coming year and decide how to include it into your budget.
- * Think of a no-cost, “invisible” present (story, joke, favor, hug) you can give to a family member or friend and share it today.
- * Clean house together in preparation for the Nativity of Jesus Christ.
- * Sing a favorite Christmas song together.
- * Make an ornament for your family Christmas tree.
- * Offer a prayer of thanks for someone who went out of their way to make your day better.
- * Look at everything your family does to prepare for Christmas and how you share these tasks. Redistribute the responsibilities so that no one feels overburdened.
- * As you watch or read today’s news reports, think about where Jesus is being born in poverty today and what you can do to help.
- * Take time today to sit and pray. Think about what you are thankful for and what your hopes are for the coming year.
- * Do something good today for someone who will never know you did it or be able to do something for you in return.
- * List the things you least like about Christmas preparation. Decide as a family to eliminate a couple of these things.
- * Figure out what makes you feel best at Christmas time. Find a way to include the feeling into your life throughout the year.
- * List the things you most like about Christmas preparation. Schedule time together to do them, so that they do not get lost in the rush.
- * Play a game tonight as a family instead of watching television.
- * Visit a friend or relative in a nursing home or write a Christmas greeting letter to a resident at a nearby retirement home.
- * At meal prayer tonight, ask each family member to share something he or she is thankful for.

(GOF St. Philip’s Fast Session)

The Feast of the Presentation of the Theotokos in the Temple is celebrated on November 21/December 4. It is a great Feast Day to commemorate during the St. Philip’s Fast.



The Icon

In the Icon of the Entrance of the Mother of God, Mary is shown as a young girl being escorted to the Temple by her parents, Joachim and Anna. The holy virgins carrying candles also accompany her. In all icons of the Presentation, the High Priest greets the holy family at the entrance of the Temple.

The presentation into the temple is the main event, so the figures of the holy family and the High Priest are predominant. The Church honors the Virgin Mary as the God-bearer, (in Greek: Theotokos) the one who, in God's plan of salvation, would give birth to God the Word. In the upper corner of some icons the Virgin Mary is seen already seated in the Temple and being cared for by the Angels. Thus, Mary, the young girl, is not only presented but also participates in the very task of her temple life. Through the icon, we celebrate and share this mystery in the life of the Virgin.

*Taken from Come Bless the Lord Icon Packet
God With Us Publications*

What can you do in your classroom?

- Talk about the icon
- Have a procession with the icon commemorating Mary's entrance into the Temple
- Learn the Tropar of the Feast
- Sing a special Hymn to Mary in honour of the Feast

Upcoming Dates: St. Nicholas is just around the corner. There is a fabulous website with all things St. Nicholas: www.stnicholascenter.org

Blessings, Sr. Marijka and Sr. Bonnie

Your Feedback is appreciated. What would you like to see in upcoming newsletters?

Email us at: rel.ed@sasktel.net Thank you!