



Table Discussion (at mealtime):

What does it mean: “to be friends with Christ”?



St. Francis of Assisi’s Great Idea:

Francis had a problem. So many people had begun to see Jesus as their God, they no longer treated Jesus as a friend and companion. “Jesus didn’t come to lord it over us,” he used to say, “but to become one of us and to show us the love of the Father.”

One year, close to Christmas, Francis had a great idea. “I know what I’ll do,” he said. “I will put on a live nativity play.”

Francis found some sheep, a donkey and an ox. He found a few people to dress up as shepherds, and some as angels and as kings. He found a couple with a baby and dressed them up nice and neat. He built a stable, a manger and some staves for them to hold. Then he invited the children and the people of the town and began to speak of our “Brother Jesus”, both God and man, who became small for us so that we might make friends with God and with one another again.

The people of the town loved it so much, and the children were so excited, that they asked him to do it again the following year. Soon other towns began to copy the idea and the tradition began to grow. Artists began to make live-sized statues for inside the church and smaller ones for inside people’s homes. In a matter of time, nativity plays and nativity scenes sprang up in other countries and in other parts of the world, each depicting Jesus, Mary and Joseph in their own unique way.

Eight hundred years later, we continue to use Francis’ great idea. We put on Christmas plays and dress up in Christmas costumes. We put out nativity sets and tell the Christmas story by candle light.

But do we remember what Francis was trying to tell us. “Remember, brother or sister,” he would say, “Jesus is both God and friend. Draw close to him always as he draws close to you each day.”

Another story about St. Francis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUhZI9F1W-8>

Parenting Corner:

The nativity scene continues to be a wonderful way to bring Christ into your home. Find a time each day, before or after supper or at bedtime, and let your child hold the figurine for a moment. Help your child to imagine how this particular person or animal must have felt at all that was going on. Take a moment to thank God for becoming one of us in the person of Jesus.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for coming close to us in the person of our “Brother Jesus”. Help us to remain close to you always, through Christ our Lord. Amen



“Jesus Ornaments” for this week:

For each day, design a Christmas ornament and read the brief reflection provided.

Day 1: Jesus, the Servant (i.e. a basin and a towel).

The Bible tells us that on the night before Jesus died, he took a basin of water and a towel and began washing the feet of his friends. By this sign, Jesus is telling us that he came not to be served, but as servant. He also teaches us to do the same.

Parent: “Lord Jesus, teach us to serve one another as you first served us.”

All respond: **“Come Jesus, and fill our hearts with your love.”**

Day 2: Jesus, the Healer (i.e. a stethoscope, a first aid kit, a crutch or a band aid).

The Bible tells us that Jesus healed many people and set them free from sin and evil. He was even known to bring the dead to life and to reach out to those who had been lost.

Parent: “Lord Jesus, heal us from all that can harm us.”

All respond: **“Come Jesus, and heal our hearts with your love.”**

Day 3: Jesus, our Comfort and Strength (i.e. a teardrop and a heart)

Jesus tells us to: “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Jesus is the true source of strength and a wonderful person to lean on.

Parent: “Lord Jesus, comfort us and strengthen us with your love.”

All respond: **“Come Jesus, our Comfort and Strength, and fill our hearts with your love.”**

Day 4: Jesus, the Way (i.e. a road sign or a meandering path)

Jesus tells us, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” Anyone who walks along the way that he leads us will never be lost.

Parent: “Lord Jesus, lead us on the road that leads that leads to the Father.”

All respond: **“Come Jesus, and lead our family to greater love.”**

Day 5: Jesus, the Gate (i.e. a gate)

Jesus tells us, “I am the gate of the sheepfold. No one can enter except through me.”

Parent: “Lord Jesus, open the gate so that we may enter.”

All respond: **“Come Jesus, gate of our hearts, and fill us with your love.”**

Day 6: Jesus, the Key to the Kingdom (i.e. a key)

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the key to heaven. When he opens the door, no one can close it. When he closes the door, no one can open it.

Parent: "Lord Jesus, unlock the doors that prevent us from loving one another."
All respond: **"Come Jesus, Key to the Kingdom, and fill our hearts with your love."**

Day 7: Jesus: The King (i.e. a crown)

The Bible tells us that God is king over heaven and earth and Jesus is His Son.

Parent: "Lord Jesus, rule over us with your mercy and forgiveness."
All respond: **"Come Lord, King of Heaven and Earth, and fill our hearts with your love."**



Family Activities:

- Do some Christmas baking as a family and prepare a small plate of it for an elderly neighbour or someone in need of a kind gesture.
- Prepare a small Christmas hamper for the Food Bank, for someone who volunteers to help your child(ren) or for someone else you would like to shower with your love.
- Decorate your living room window with a Christmas Art Display.
- Organize a Christmas Family Photo around one of your Christmas crafts, Nativity Set, Christmas Tree or Advent Wreath. Take some time to decide who you will send it to electronically.
- Volunteer to help decorate your parish church.
- Organize a family Christmas Carol outing. You could sing carols for a neighbour, at a care home, or somewhere else the children will feel comfortable and public health protocols will allow.



Rejoice Sunday Candle Light Service:

Sing: O Come Divine Messiah <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRGFL0JclpE>

(light candles)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, light of the world, we open our hearts to you today. Fill us with hope and the joy of your coming, we ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading:

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near." (Philippians 4: 4 – 5)

Pray the Lord's prayer (Our Father...).