



The Friendly Beasts
Illustrated by Anna Wojtech
Performed and narrated by
Rebecca St. James
Zonderkidz, 2012
32 pages and CD, \$16.99

This traditional 12th-century carol recalls the gifts the animals — a donkey, cow, sheep, camel and dove — gave to the Son of God on the first Christmas. “Thus every beast by some good spell / in the stable dark was glad to tell / of the gift he gave Emmanuel.” Given from the heart, the gifts remind readers of the greatest gift given: “Jesus, our brother, kind and good.” Exceptional illustrations. The accompanying CD features Christian recording artist Rebecca St. James. Ages 4 and up.

Celebrate Jesus, Joy of the World

Children’s Book Picks for Christmas

BY KERRY CRAWFORD AND PATRICIA A. CRAWFORD

Last Christmas, Pope Benedict XVI greeted children at the Vatican by sharing special words with them: “My Christmas wish for you is that, when you make your Nativity scenes, you imagine you are saying to Jesus: ‘Come into my life, and I will listen to you always.’” In inviting Jesus into their lives, the Pope said, children will discover a great Friend, a Friend whom they will meet in prayer, among others and in the Gospel message.

These books celebrate that Friend and the spirit of generosity and joy for which Christmastime — Jesus’ birthday — is known.



Song of the Stars
Written by Sally Lloyd-Jones
Illustrated by Alison Jay
Zonderkidz, 2011
32 pages, \$15.99

“It’s time! It’s time!” rustle the leaves. Hearing the message, the animals glance at the sky. The sky shouts it to the seas; the waves roar it to the whales that sing it to the starfish. From creature to creature, the secret is joyfully shared: On that night of wonder, a single star pours down light on a small shed. Inside, animals gather around a young mother and her infant “sleeping under the stars that he made.” The time has come: The world is changed forever. Ages 4 and up.



Christmas Is Here
Words from the King James Bible
Illustrated by Lauren Castillo
Simon & Schuster, 2010
32 pages, \$12.99

A young family sets off for a walk on a snowy evening. A sign posted on a tree — “Live Nativity Tonight” — directs them to an outdoor church pageant. As the little boy peers into the manger holding the baby, a story within a story unfolds. The family and readers travel to a different time and place. Shepherds are keeping watch over their flocks. An angel appears, announcing the good news: “For unto you is born ... a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” The text, taken exclusively from Luke 2, shortens the distance between that first Christmas and the Christmas of today, which finds the family, at the end, standing in awe before the Nativity tableau. Ages 3 and up.



Candy Canes in Bethlehem
Written by Miriam Van Scott
Illustrated by Traci Van Wagoner
Pauline Books, 2012
32 pages, \$7.95

Five-year-old Daniel wants to help Deacon Matthews set up the best manger scene ever. Along the way, Daniel’s friends share with him their traditions and customs to celebrate the birth of Jesus. In short time, decorations from around the world add to the Nativity’s beauty and meaning. Daniel’s own contribution is a small candy cane placed beside Jesus in the cradle. This book illustrates how seemingly secular holiday symbols can be transformed into signs that Jesus is born for all. Ages 6-8.

Facts of Life

Be Holy

During his installation Mass homily on Nov. 20, Bishop James Conley, the new bishop of Lincoln, Neb., stressed the need for holiness, reported EWTN News. “My brother bishops, there is nothing more important for a bishop than the care of souls,” he said. “If the Church is to flourish in the world today, if the New Evangelization is to really take root, if we are to truly build a culture of life, holiness must begin with us.” Bishop Conley also had a message for the laity: “Your greatest vocation is to holiness. Your holiness can transform the world.”



SHUTTERSTOCK

Why Do Catholics ... ?

What is a good prayer for the Christmas season?

EWTN.com offers a “Christmas Anticipation Prayer”:

“Hail and blessed be the hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in the piercing cold. “In that hour, vouchsafe, I beseech thee, O my God, to hear my prayer and grant my desires, [here mention your request] through the merits of our Savior Jesus Christ and of his blessed Mother. Amen.”

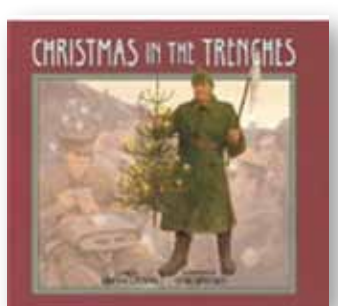
Christmas songs, such as *Silent Night*, are also prayers. The BBC has reported on its Catholic origins: “Father Joseph Mohr wrote his six-stanza poem *Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!* in 1816, when he was assigned to a pilgrim church in Mariapfarr, Austria. Two years later, after a transfer to St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria, the Catholic priest decided he wanted his poem set to music. On Dec. 24, 1818, he asked his friend Franz Gruber to create a melody and guitar accompaniment. The two men sang the carol at Christmas Mass in St. Nicholas Church, with Father Mohr playing his guitar and the choir repeating the last two lines of each verse.”

*Silent night, holy night.
All is calm; all is bright.
‘Round yon virgin,
mother and Child,
Holy infant, so tender
and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Sleep in heavenly peace.
Silent night, holy night.
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from
heaven afar.
Heav’nly hosts sing,
“Alleluia.”
Christ the Savior is born.
Christ the Savior is born.
Silent night, holy night.
Son of God, love’s pure
light.
Radiant beams from thy
holy face.
With the dawn of re-
deeming grace.
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.
Jesus, Lord at thy birth.*



SHUTTERSTOCK

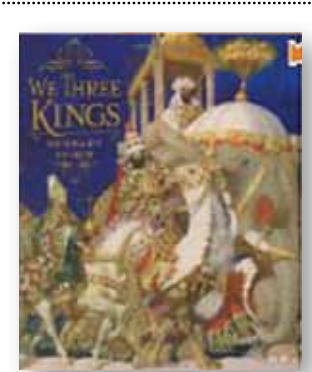
Have you always wondered about some aspect of the faith? Or maybe you’d like to know some trivia about Pope Benedict. If you do, email us your question at editor@ewtn.com and look for the answer in an upcoming issue.



Christmas in the Trenches
Written by John McCutcheon
Illustrated by Henri Sorensen
Peachtree Publishers, 2006
32 pages and CD, \$16.99

The presents have been opened and dinner enjoyed, when Thomas asks Grandpa to tell him about his favorite Christmas. “Why don’t I start at the beginning?” the old man says. The beginning was 1914, when Grandpa was a young, frightened soldier trying to be brave. Christmas Eve, like many other nights before, would be spent in the muddy trenches of war: “No Man’s Land,” a field, separated the Allied Forces from the German soldiers. At first, the voices were faint; then they grew louder: “*Stille nacht, heilige nacht.*” The words were foreign, but the melody familiar. “Silent, holy night,” echoed the Allies. In the midst of war, on a lonely Christmas Eve, peace broke out in what is now known as “The Christmas Truce.” This fictionalized account of the historic event is based on the author’s song by the same name. Ages 6 and up.

‘FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN ... A SAVIOR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD.’

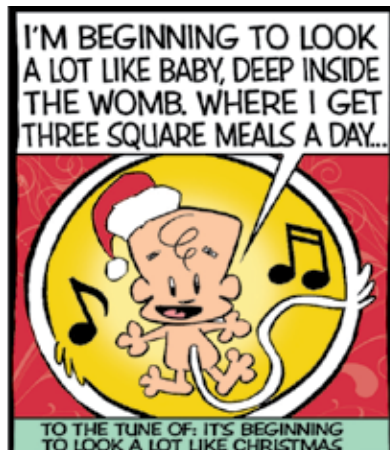


We Three Kings
Illustrated by Gennady Spirin
Atheneum, 2007
32 pages, \$17.99

American John Henry Hopkins Jr., an Episcopalian clergyman, wrote the lyrics and music for *We Three Kings* in 1857. More than 150 years later, Gennady Spirin celebrates the Wise Men’s journey following the “star of wonder.” “Wonder” not only describes the star leading to the “perfect light,” but also Russian-born Spirin’s exquisite art. Realistic detail defines the bejeweled kings making their way across the desert astride camels, elephants and horses. At the same time, a choir of angels fills the dark sky heralding the well-known chorus (“O star of wonder, star of light / Star with royal beauty bright / Westward leading, still proceeding / Guide us to the perfect light”). Ages 4 and up.

The Crawford sisters write from Pittsburgh.

Umbert the Unborn BY GARY CANGEMI



26 GIFTS. ... LET CHRISTMAS LAST ALL YEAR.



This Christmas, give a gift you’ll feel good about giving. Give the gift of authentic Catholic reporting with a gift subscription to the *National Catholic Register*! The *Register* — owned by EWTN — provides exclusive news, views and features that will inform and equip your loved ones to explain the Church’s stands on today’s social and political events. They won’t miss a single opportunity to grow in the faith, bring the joy of Christmas to the world and embrace faith-teaching moments with family and friends.

- Give a full-year of the *Register* (26 issues) for just \$49.95 — a savings of 36% off the cover price!
- Each additional gift is only \$39.95.

If you received this copy of the *Register* from someone else, don’t miss out – subscribe today! The *National Catholic Register* will keep you and your family informed on the critical developments and issues impacting our families, our nation and our world.

TO PLACE AN ORDER

- Subscribe
NCRegister.com/subscribe
- Give a Gift
NCRegister.com/gift
- For Faster Service
Call (800) 421-3230 today



NATIONAL CATHOLIC REGISTER
America’s most complete Catholic news source
A Service of EWTN

“I’ve read the *National Catholic Register* for more than 30 years. It has always been, and it remains, one of the real treasures of American Catholic media. For news that matters, and for intelligent, articulate, faithfully Catholic commentary, the *National Catholic Register* has no peers.”

— Most Reverend Charles Chaput, Archbishop of Philadelphia