

# Christmas Gift Guide 2019

Faith-Inspired Presents for Everyone on Your List

In anticipation of Christmas, we offer our readers a selection of gift ideas that honor Jesus — the first and best Christmas gift. (Prices subject to change.) Unless otherwise noted, to order: Visit [EWTNRC.com](http://EWTNRC.com) or call (800) 854-6316.



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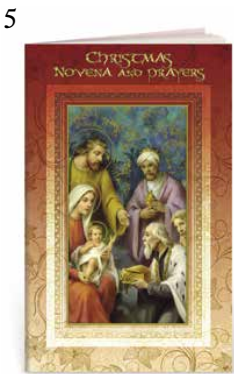
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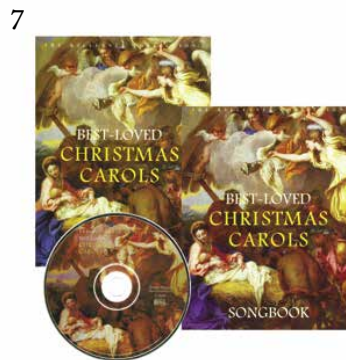
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**1. NATIVITY MUSICAL GLITTER DOME WITH THREE KINGS**  
This musical glitter dome features the Holy Family and the Three Wise Men in the glass globe that swirls with glitter when tipped upside down and plays the *Little Drummer Boy* music when wound. The globe is 4 inches in diameter, and the decorative base is made of resin. Measures 6 inches high. Item: 33028, \$38.

**2. HOLY FAMILY IN CHERRY FRAME**  
This beautiful print of the Holy Family is displayed under glass in a natural tiger cherry finish frame with carved gold edges. It has a hook for hanging and a black velvet easel back for tabletop display. Measures 12 inches x 10 inches. Item: 22362, \$20.

**3. WINTER WHISPER HOLY FAMILY ORNAMENT**  
A small Holy Family ornament with delicate filigree paper cutout details of the city of Bethlehem is made of resin and measures 5 1/3 inches high. Item: 32994, \$6.

**4. HOLY FAMILY STAINED-GLASS ORNAMENT**  
This beautiful miniature stained-glass window Christmas ornament features the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph and the newborn Baby Jesus surrounded by a cerulean blue sky with the bright star of Bethlehem above them. Oval ornament measures 4 1/2 inches high x 3 3/8 inches wide and comes with a silver chain for hanging. Item: 56387, \$10.

**5. CHRISTMAS NOVENA AND PRAYERS**  
This novena is translated from the Italian prayers of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori and was first published in 1758. Although this novena is intended primarily as a preparation for the feast of Our Lord's Nativity, it can be used with spiritual profit at any time of the year as a devotion in honor of the Infant Jesus. Also included along with the novena is the "St. Andrew Christmas Novena Prayer to Obtain Favors"; an account of the birth of Christ; a "Litany for the Christmas Season"; and other prayers. Paperback. 25 pages. Item: 43280, \$2.50.

**6. NATIVITY GICLÉE ADVENT CANDLE HOLDER**  
Designed to look like an old-world stone sculpture with tiled artwork, this rustic piece features a beautiful giclée print of the Holy Family, the Magi and an angel on the front. It will hold four taper candles as either an Advent display when using one rose and three violet candles or as a decorative Christmas piece with candles of your choice. Made of a resin-stone mix, it measures 9 inches long x 3 inches high x 1 3/4 inches deep. The candle wells measure 7/8 inch in diameter. (Candles not included.) Item: 33264, \$29.50.

**7. BEST-LOVED CHRISTMAS CAROLS BOXED SET**  
In a richly illustrated book of timeless art from world-class museums, Ronald Clancy offers historical perspective on the development of carols since the 13th century, with fascinating facts about each carol. This boxed set includes a CD with 25 carols performed by world-renowned choirs and orchestras. Also includes a bonus songbook. Item: 4601, \$30.

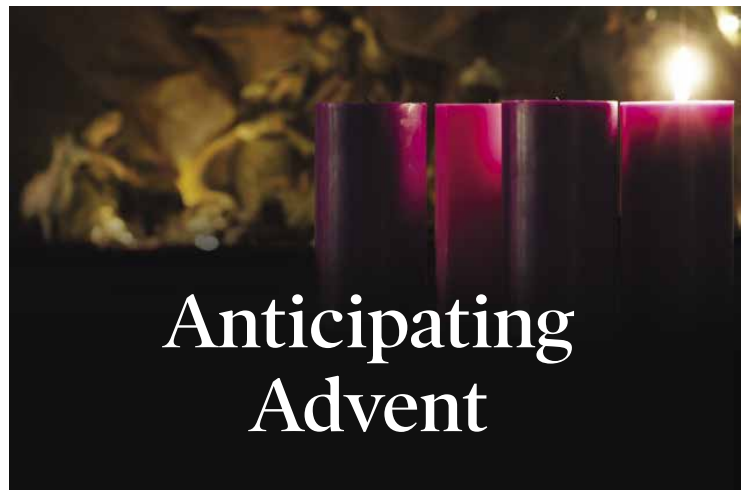
**8. PEACEFUL NATIVITY ADVENT CALENDAR**  
This devotional Advent calendar measures 8 1/4 inches x 12 inches and features a colorful Nativity scene with glitter accents. There are 24 numbered windows with Bible text on the back of the flaps. Count down the 24 days until Christmas with this fun family tradition: Beginning Dec. 1, open window No. 1 and then another each day to reveal a special picture and also read the Bible text that tells a part of the Nativity story. Item: BB811, \$4.

**9. CHILDREN'S FELT NATIVITY SET**  
Young children will delight in the anticipation of Christmas as they re-enact the story of Jesus' birth with this six-piece plush Nativity set. What a wonderful way to keep the focus of festivities on the real reason for Christmas joy. Set includes St. Joseph, Mary, Baby Jesus, lamb, ox and zippered carrying case. Item: 20967, \$24.

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# Anticipating Advent

## 9 Ways to Live The Season Well

BY CLAIRE DWYER

**B**y the time we've put away the pumpkins, Christmas decorations and gift buying are in full swing. Storefronts blaze with advertisements, television specials and commercials light up our living rooms with holiday themes, and the radio has us singing about snowmen and reindeer before we've finished our Thanksgiving turkey.

It can be difficult, especially with children, to keep Advent as a sacred time of preparation rather than a long, run-on feast. By the time we actually arrive at the liturgical celebration of Christmas, we may already feel overstuffed and exhausted from the noise, lights and materialism of our modern culture.

How can we still our hearts and focus on the real meaning of the season with our families — without begrudging the joy of authentic anticipation? This is a time of expectation that should feel sacred but celebratory. Is that possible?

Many Catholic parents have found a healthy balance. Here are some simple ideas to live Advent well.

1. Try to have gift shopping done by the start of Advent, and cull the house of catalogues and references to toys, wish lists and shopping, in order to focus on spiritual preparation.

2. Fill your home and cars with sacred seasonal music — there is music specific to Advent that can balance the holiday tunes filling stores and airwaves. The *Advent at Ephesus* CD from the Benedictine Sisters of Mary, Queen of Apostles, is ethereal and will fill your soul and quiet your heart: <https://music.benedictinesofmary.org/content/advent-ephesus>. This could be a perfect gift for a Catholic teacher, too.

3. Set out an empty manger along with a container filled with pieces of straw or yellow yarn. Each time a child does a charitable deed or makes a sacrifice, have them place a piece in the manger. By the time Christmas comes, Jesus will have a soft bed made out of the straw or yarn that each represent loving actions. On Christmas morning, the first gift to be opened can be the statue of the infant Jesus, and the youngest child can place Jesus in the manger. This *hand-painted Baby Jesus* in the crib is exquisite, from EWTNRC.com, Item: N1126, \$68.

4. Begin your observance of Advent by blessing your Advent wreath with this traditional prayer, which the entire family can participate in (source: EWTN.com/catholicism/library/ blessings-for-advent-4209; from *Shorter Book of Blessings*, USCCB Publishing). This short one is perfect for little ones:

All make the Sign of Cross as the minister says:  
*Our help is in the name of the Lord.*  
All reply:  
*Who made heaven and earth.*  
One of those present or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example:  
*Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah: 9:1-2, 5-6:*  
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwell in the land of gloom, a light has shone.*

*You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing.*

*As they rejoice before you as at the harvest, as men make merry when dividing spoils.*

*For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests.*

*They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.*

*His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, From David's throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains.*

*By judgment and justice, both now and forever.*

A minister who is a priest or deacon says the prayer of blessing with hands outstretched; a lay minister says the prayer with hands joined.

Lord God,  
your Church joyfully awaits the coming of its Savior, who enlightens our hearts and dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin.

*Pour forth your blessings upon us as we light the candles of this wreath;*

may their light reflect the splendor of Christ, who is Lord, forever and ever.

R. Amen.

Or:  
Lord our God,

we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ: he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples,

he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us, he is the Savior of every nation.

Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath.

May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.

May he come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

5. Read the daily Mass readings or the Gospel at dinner. Demonstrate how the readings are leading us up to the birth of Christ with themes of conversion, watchfulness and preparation, and point out how the third week, beginning with Gaudete Sunday, reminds us to rejoice as we light the rose-colored candle.

6. Sing a verse of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* each evening while lighting the Advent candle during before-morning prayers. Nervous about mixing little people and flames? You can use battery-light options: **LED Advent Tea Lights**, Item: 37954, \$7.50.

7. Use a religious **Advent calendar**. At EWTN Religious Catalogue, there are several beautiful, affordable options, including Item: BB886, \$4, and Item: BB88L, \$4.

A fabric option is ideal for little fingers, Item: VC200, \$45. A calendar that allows children to add a sticker to the manger scene each day is also a good choice, Item: BB204, \$6. And a **back-lit Nativity scene/Advent calendar** can become a treasured heirloom (shown on next page). It has 24 drawers that can be custom-filled with a prayer, holy card, charitable deed or even a small anticipatory treat: Item: 32371, \$65.



8. Already have your tree up? What about pink and purple decorations for Advent?

Some families wait until Gaudete Sunday or even later to put up the Christmas decorations.

In the meantime, a Jesse Tree tradition is fun for kids and teaches them about the stories of the Old Testament that lead up to the birth of Christ.

The **Jesse Tree Book and Ornaments Set** is a good choice, from EWTN Religious Catalogue. Item: JTSET, \$49.95 (shown on next page).

9. Seasoned parents would advise not to take on too

CONTINUES ON PAGE 19

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# Valuing Vocations as a Family

BY CLARE WALKER

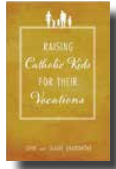
The primary task of Catholic parents is to raise their children to become true disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ and to discern his will for their lives. Yet it is naïve to ignore the current state of the modern world: Every sphere of life — politics, education, entertainment, the media — is hostile to Christian values.

But we also know that with God all things are possible. Authors John and Clare Grabowski are living proof. They raised five kids who, by the grace of God, are still faithful, practicing Catholics. They outline their family's faith journey in *Raising Catholic Kids for Their Vocations*.

First of all, the Grabowskis take pains to dispel the myth that the word "vocation" refers only to priesthood, religious life or marriage. "Every Christian, joined to Christ in baptism, is called by God to a life of holiness," they write. "This is the basic and indelible vocation of every believer."

This distinction is crucial for Catholic parents to understand. Our primary goal is not to steer our children into a particular state in life — priesthood, religious life or marriage. Our goal is to help our children embrace the universal call to holiness. If our children grow up seeking Jesus and pursuing closeness with him, the particular state in life to which God calls them is likely to become clear.

One of the best chapters of this



**RAISING CATHOLIC KIDS FOR THEIR VOCATIONS**  
By John and Clare Grabowski  
TAN Books, 2019  
Item: 13761  
184 pages, \$24.95  
To order: ewtnrc.com or (800) 854-6316

book includes testimonies from each of the Grabowskis' adult children.

All the children praised their parents' deliberate integration of the Catholic faith into every day and into every moment. "Our mother was striking in this," writes one of the children. "She would pray for everything — little things, like asking St. Anthony to intercede for us when we lost something, and big things, like God's blessing in selling our house. Her posture was never one of independence and self-sufficiency but rather of an implicit recognition of utter dependence upon God in the everyday circumstances of life. By not relegating faith to Sunday alone, but by demonstrating it daily, our parents helped to make faith central in our

lives." The children also appreciated their parents' openness to questions and discussion about the faith:

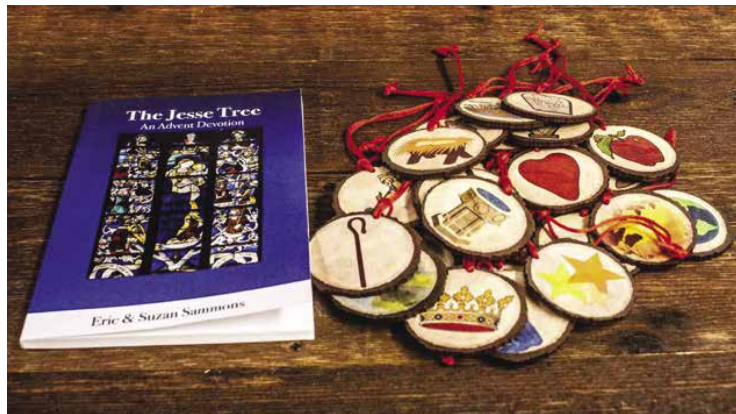
"Our parents helped the faith take root within us by intertwining faith with reason — by allowing and encouraging us to try to understand what we believed. ... The key was that, in presenting a tenet of the faith, our parents would try to explain how it made sense, encourage us to think it through, and ask questions. We were never taught to just blindly believe."

This book is a good balance of theory and practical, actionable ideas, including what they call "post-Cana" formation for married couples.

The Christian family is supposed to be a "school of love" in which children learn by doing and by observing. But if the headmaster and headmistress of that school — Mom and Dad — have a shaky foundation due to inadequate preparation for marriage, some kind of "remedial" formation would no doubt be helpful. Sadly, an in-depth treatment of this idea was beyond the scope of this book.

In the end, though, even successful Catholic parents like the Grabowskis must give all the glory to God, for they know that only his grace enables Christians to navigate the minefield of the modern world, with its many dangers to faith, holiness of life and moral uprightness. Let all Christian parents commend themselves and their children to this grace!

Clare Walker writes from Westmont, Illinois.



## Advent

CONTINUING PAGE 18 STORY  
many traditions. Choose a few that work well for your family, and be faithful to those.

The key is consistency and simplicity and not feeling like you've failed if you don't "do it all." Remember: Children will cherish time together above all else and will continue traditions into adulthood that meant the most to your family. Jesus is our joy.

He is coming, and that is celebration enough!

Clare Dwyer is editor of *SpiritualDirection.com* and coordinates adult faith formation at her parish in Phoenix, where she lives with her husband and their six children.

# The 2019 Christmas Gift Guide

## Virgin, Mother, Queen Encountering Mary in Time and Tradition

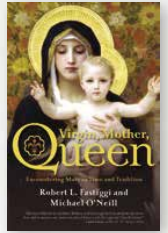
ROBERT L. FASTIGGI AND MICHAEL O'NEILL

In *Virgin, Mother, Queen*, popular radio and television host Michael O'Neill gathers fascinating details from Mary's mystical appearances around the world. Robert Fastigi, professor of systemic theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, answers questions about the historical and theological development of Marian teachings throughout Church history.

192 pages, \$17.95

"A beautiful book."  
—Carrie Gress

Author of *The Marian Option*



## Exalted How the Power of the Magnificat Can Transform Us

SONJA CORBITT

Combining her own story with an invitation to engage the scriptures through personal study and "God prompts," Sonja Corbett will help readers unlock the treasures contained within Mary's song to her cousin Elizabeth, revealing a song that speaks to each of us in a unique way, calling us to delight in the power of God to transform us and make us into everything he created us to be so we can revel in the fullness and joy of life in Christ.

192 pages, \$16.95

"You will LOVE this book!"  
—Rev. Larry Richards

Founder of The Reason for Our Hope Foundation

## Catholic Hipster: The Next Level How Some Awesomely Obscure Stuff Helps Us Live Our Faith with Passion

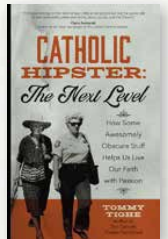
TOMMY TIGHE

Building on the overwhelming popularity of *The Catholic Hipster Handbook*, Tommy Tighe is back with a new cast of fellow hipsters—including Haley Stewart, Samantha Povlock, Matthew Sewell, Fr. Damian Ferrence, and Patrick Neve—to share overlooked saints, forgotten prayers, and profound practices that define the countercultural Catholic lifestyle, inspiring you to live your faith in radical ways.

224 pages, \$15.95

"Belongs on the shelf of any Catholic."  
—Claire Swinarski

Author of *Girl, Arise!*  
Creator of *The Catholic Feminist* podcast



## Abide in the Heart of Christ A 10-Day Personal Retreat with St. Ignatius Loyola

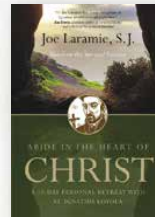
JOE LARAMIE, S.J.

In *Abide in the Heart of Christ*, Rev. Joe Laramie, S.J., offers accessible wisdom from the foundations of Jesuit spirituality—St. Ignatius Loyola's Spiritual Exercises—in a ten-day personal retreat that will help you encounter Christ, grow your relationship with him, and shape your heart.

160 pages, \$14.95

"A journey with Christ."  
—Rev. Mark Thibodeaux, S.J.

Author of *Reimagining the Ignatian Exam*



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## Live Big, Love Bigger Getting Real with BBQ, Sweet Tea, and a Whole Lotta Jesus

KATHRYN WHITAKER

The stressful premature birth of her fifth child threw her orderly world into chaos and ultimately led her to rethink her priorities. In *Live Big, Love Bigger*, Kathryn Whitaker shares her journey and challenges readers to understand that they, too, can live a life of authenticity with joy-filled purpose, love, and faith.

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"I highly encourage you to read this book."  
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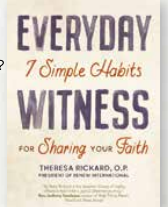
THERESA RICKARD, O.P.

Do you want to share your faith with others but think you might not know enough? Are you worried that conflicts will arise as you openly talk about and share the love of Christ? In *Everyday Witness*, Sr. Theresa Rickard, O.P., president of RENEW International, offers seven simple habits to help fellow Catholics more comfortably talk about and model Christian faith in our everyday lives.

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# Welcoming the Light of the World

## Good Reads for Christmastime

### CHILDREN'S BOOK PICKS

BY KERRY CRAWFORD AND PATRICIA A. CRAWFORD

#### Guess Who's in the Manger? A Christmas Story

Written by **Vicki Howie**  
Illustrated by **Julia Seal**  
Pauline, 2019  
28 pages, \$14.95

A barn owl gives a bird's-eye view of life in a bleak and dismal place: "That stable was dark, / It was bare; it was poor! / No wonder few visitors stepped through the door..." But, soon, some very special guests do indeed come, and suddenly the barn becomes a very different place. The Holy Family arrives announcing, "We've traveled so far, any shelter will do, / We're Joseph and Mary — our baby is due!" The once gloomy barn becomes bright and radiant when the Light of the World comes to dwell within it. Words and pictures are just right for young children and remind readers that Jesus is at the very center of the Christmas story. Ages 3-8.

#### The First Christmas Night

Written by **Laura Godwin**  
Illustrated by **William Low**  
Feiweil and Friends, 2016  
32 pages, \$16.99

What was it like on that first Christmas night? This beautiful picture book invites readers to imagine being there, to think what it must

have been like to see, hear, feel and smell all that surrounded the birth of Baby Jesus. While the quiet, poetic text is prayerful ("Welcome this tiny baby boy, / Feel this hush, / This peace on Earth, / This first Christmas night"), the deep, jewel-toned oversized illustrations add an elegant tone. A great Nativity story for bedtime and beyond. Ages 3-8.

#### Silent Night

Illustrated by **Lara Hawthorne**  
Lincoln Children's Books, 2018  
32 pages, \$15.99

"Silent night, holy night! / All is calm, all is bright." The words of the beloved, well-known carol spring to life in this eye-catching book. The song's traditional lyrics are paired with illustrations that seem to pop off the page with a bold, primitive style. Sensitive rendered images depict the Holy Family loving and gently caring for the "[h]oly infant, tender and mild," while luminescent stars twinkle against an inky black night sky. The depictions and tone reflect life in the Middle East. An afterword includes historical notes about the carol. A perfect choice for reading aloud — and singing along, too! Ages 3-8.

#### The Christmas Fox

Written and illustrated by **Anik McGrory**  
Knopf, 2016  
32 Pages, \$16.99

This gentle tale repositions the Nativity story into a snowy, winter wonderland. One by one, a host of forest animals urge a little fox to prepare for a most important event: "A baby is coming. There's work to be done."

Everyone has a special role to play: The woodpecker spreads the good news, the lamb prepares soft, cozy wool, and the bluebird is ready to sing the baby to sleep. But the little fox just plays in the snow and ignores the call to action. What could he possibly do for the special baby? Finally, the donkey urges the little fox to simply be present, "Just come. It is enough." When the little fox comes to the stable, he brings the perfect gift. He brings joy that makes the baby smile. The warm illustrations will nudge readers to think of ways to welcome the baby in the manger. Ages 3-8.

#### God's Wildest Wonderment of All

Written by **Paul Thigpen**  
illustrated by **John Foley**  
TAN, 2019  
32 pages, \$16.95

A little boy goes to the zoo and is amazed at all of the incredible animals he encounters. Why would God paint parrots various colors of green or give wings to ostriches who don't fly? The rhyming couplets of this story capture the natural curiosity of children ("What's this? Who taught the seals to bark? / Did dogs give lessons on the Ark?"). After pondering the wonders of creation, the little boy decides that human beings have been fashioned in the most wonderful manner of all and that all creatures have the potential to bring God glory in their own ways. With roots in Psalm 139 ("I am wonderfully made"), this book uses engaging images and fun word play to convey the important message that God has lovingly created each of us with a unique and important purpose. Ages 3-8.

#### A Little Camel for Baby Jesus

Written and illustrated by **Maria Gianola**  
Pauline, 2019  
32 pages, \$9.95

The star has appeared! Seven-year-old Joel, the son of a stableman, accompanies his dad and the King's caravan. Following the light, they search for the newborn King of Kings. Joel whittles a small camel for the infant, but freely gives it to a needy baby he meets on the way. Arriving empty-handed at the stable, Joel is surprised to learn just how special his gift was. Inspired by Matthew 25:40 ("Whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me."), it's ideal for Christmas and Epiphany. Ages 3-8.

#### Mozart: Gift of God

Written and illustrated by **Demi Magnificat**, 2019  
48 pages, \$15.99

For the musicians in your circle, this text-rich picture book of young Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart will inspire and amaze. Composing music by the age of 5, Mozart and his sister Nannerl would soon dazzle audiences, including kings and queens throughout Europe. Raised in a Roman Catholic family, Mozart composed his first major piece of sacred music, the *Te Deum*, when he was only 13. A year later he met the pope in Rome — and he would become a favorite musician of a 21st-century pope, Benedict XVI. Ages 7 and older.

#### Saintly Rhymes for Modern Times

Written and illustrated by **Meghan Bausch**  
Our Sunday Visitor, 2018  
40 pages, \$16.95

"Jesus came to Saint Faustina, / asking her to share / the message of his mercy / with people everywhere ..." is just a sampling of the 16 delightful rhymes telling the stories of 19 holy men, women and children. As you turn each page, find beloved friends (such as St. Mother Teresa, Pope St. John Paul II, St. Padre Pio) and friends with whom

to become better acquainted (e.g., Blessed Chiara "Luca" Badano, St. Josephine Bakhita, St. Gianna Beretta Molla and more). Full-page illustrations featuring the saint, "Blessed" or "Venerable" against a background that is particularly his or her own (think snowy mountains for Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati!) make the book all the more engaging. Ages 4-10.

The Crawford sisters

write from Pittsburgh.

All books are available at Amazon.com.

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# The Buy Small, Buy Catholic Gift Guide

30-Plus Ideas for Men, Women, Children, Families and Teachers

BY KATIE WARNER

In this list below, I've rounded up some of my many favorite items for men, women, children, families and teachers — mostly from Catholic small businesses, entrepreneurs and artists. Not only do I think these selections — many of which I already own and love and others I have on my own shopping list — make fabulous gifts, but I also love that I can give something heartfelt to friends and family, while supporting creative Catholic families and companies in the process.

Hope this gift guide matches you with some gems.

#### For Men

1. Wood Pardon Crucifix or other handcrafted items from The Catholic Woodworker. Gorgeous, high-quality rosaries and other prayer aids.
2. *CatholicWoodWorker.com*
3. *Monk Manual*. "A system for being + doing" (basically the coolest type of planner you can imagine).
4. *MonkManual.com*
5. Guadalupe Roastery. Good coffee from a company with a great mission and policies.
6. *GuadalupeRoastery.com*
7. Rugged Rosaries. Paracord rosaries with tons of styles. I think my husband owns at least three of



8. *CordBands.com*
9. *SignumX* T-shirt. Signum X (meaning the Sign of the Cross) apparel was started by a Catholic dad who wanted "So-Cal" style shirts with rich meaning.
10. *TheSignoftheCross.com*
11. *The Catholic Gentleman* book. "A solid and practical guide to virtuous manhood." Author Sam Guzman is a truly genuine soul and wise guide. *EWTNRC.com* or (800) 854-6316; Item: 40684.
12. *For Women*
13. *Brick House in the City* shirts. I love the designs, the gal behind the business, and the fact that they have a new line for kids now, too.
14. *BrickHouseintheCity.com*
15. Jewelry from Telos Art and Design. Custom faith-centered pieces with modern design. While you're browsing the gorgeous necklaces, check out the super cool rosary window clings for the kids.
16. *TelosArtShop.com*
17. Marian pillow cover from

CONTINUES ON PAGE 21

# Warner

**CONTINUING PAGE 20 STORY**

Rooted Designs. If you're looking for something a little more holiday-themed, I also love the Advent wreath coloring pillow.

[TheRootedMom.com](http://TheRootedMom.com)

10. Sacrifice beads from Happy Nest Home Goods. And if you want to grab sets for the little kids, here are some chewable-friendly ones from Little Praying Hands. [Etsy.com](http://Etsy.com)

11. Saint notecards from Saint Script: on my wish list. Love these beautiful, artistic cards for anytime. [SaintScriptShop.com](http://SaintScriptShop.com)

12. *Catholic Mother's Planner*: It has all of the bells and whistles of a regular planner, plus inspirational quotes, spiritual challenges, feast days and more. Blessed Is She also has a lovely planner for Catholic women. [AscensionPress.com](http://AscensionPress.com); [BlessedIsShe.net](http://BlessedIsShe.net)

**For Home and Family**

13. *Theology of Home*. More than a lovely addition to your coffee table, this book will capture you with its beautiful photography while nourishing your soul with its wisdom for cultivating authentic faith at home. [EWTNRC.com](http://EWTNRC.com) or (800) 854-6316; Item: 3655.

14. Wall Rosary. So many different colors and designs, and a wonderful way to give the holy rosary a special place of honor in the home. [Etsy.com](http://Etsy.com)

15. Corda Candles. The scents are amazing and the religious theming is so cool. I have the Compline (reminiscent of the Liturgy of the Hours) and Shower of Roses (in honor of St. Therese) candles, and I plan to get more. [CordaCandles.com](http://CordaCandles.com)

16. Botanical Rosary art. From Rose Harrington, these gorgeous floral mysteries of the Rosary watercolor paintings add so much spiritual depth and color to any room.

[RoseHarrington.com](http://RoseHarrington.com)

17. *\*A Spouse Who Prays*. This little guide to praying for your spouse and marriage has 52 intentions, one for each week of the year, that will take you through praying for an increase in the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues, the fruits and gifts of the Spirit, as well as other virtues and intentions especially important in marital life. [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

18. Rosary wall hanger. From Rough2Rustic, these hangers sell out quickly, but they are lovely, useful and perfect for a living or prayer room wall. I also love the natural-wood Nativity garland, which you can paint, color or stain and jazz up any fireplace mantel. [Rough2Rustic.com](http://Rough2Rustic.com)

**For Kids**

19. *\*First Faith Treasury* books. My absolute favorite board and picture books for little ones and some of the most used and loved books in our home. Check out *Father Ben Gets Ready for Mass*, which is both fun and interactive while also being catechetical, and *Kiddie Cat: A Child's First Catechism Lesson* as a great way to introduce little ones to the story of their Catholic faith.

[FirstFaithTreasury.com](http://FirstFaithTreasury.com)

20. Saint dolls. These handmade Marzipantz shop dolls are my absolute favorites, but can be hard to get your hands on. Your little ones will also love these saint pillow dolls from Blessed Friends Forever or the wide variety of little saint dolls from Shining Light Dolls. [Marzipantz.com](http://Marzipantz.com); [Etsy.com](http://Etsy.com); [ShiningLightDolls.com](http://ShiningLightDolls.com)

21. Catholic baby swaddles. The Our Lady of Guadalupe, Sacred Heart, and Saint Francis blankets from Be a Heart Design are all adorable and perfect for boys or girls. [BeaHeart.com](http://BeaHeart.com)

22. Catholic Family Crate. Monthly packages help you build Catholic culture at home and live liturgically. I love the activities, mementos, prayers and music.

[CatholicFamilyCrate.com](http://CatholicFamilyCrate.com)

23. Saint paper puppets. From Studio Senn, these come in soldier saints and princess saints; perfect shoe stuffers (for St. Nicholas' Day) or stocking stuffer. While you're at her shop, grab a Litany of Humility static cling for your bathroom mirror. (I have one and love it.) [StudioSenn.com](http://StudioSenn.com)

24. Lego Catechism of the Seven Sacraments from Holy Heroes. This book is so cool. Your kids will love it, and you'll learn a lot from it, too! [EWTNRC.com](http://EWTNRC.com) or (800) 854-6316; Item: 870L.

25. Soft saint bracelets from Chews Life. Cute and perfect for little wrists. Also check out their Divine Mercy teether, chewable rosaries, and now their beautiful rosary bracelets for older kids and adults. [ChewsLife.com](http://ChewsLife.com)

26. *My Catholic Keepsake*. A



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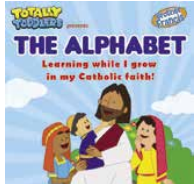
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unique and modern Catholic baby (through high school) memory book to record both faith and developmental milestones. Such a neat way to record your child's sacraments for him/her. [ThyOliveTree.com](http://ThyOliveTree.com)

27. Brother Francis DVDs. These episodes have solid teaching and are incredibly appealing to the little crowd. I love the *Days of Advent* reflections for little ones, as well as all of the various topics on saints, prayer and sacraments. Also check out the newest series, *Totally Toddlers*. [BrotherFrancis.com](http://BrotherFrancis.com)

**For Teachers and Catechists**

28. Coffee cozy. These adorable

coffee cozies from The Cozy Wife come in tons of different colors with lots of great saint quotes, Marian titles and customizable options. Consider designing your own with your favorite Bible verse. [Etsy.com](http://Etsy.com)

29. *\*A Teacher Who Prays: A Journal to Guide You in Praying for Your Students*. Beautiful little companion for teachers to help them pray intentionally, specifically and uniquely for their students each week. [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

30. Religious tea towel. In addition to the stylish tea towels from Live Today Well, I also love their tote bags and mugs as great teacher gifts. [LiveTodayWellCo.com](http://LiveTodayWellCo.com)

Shopping tip: I try to wrap my

gifts before the First Sunday of Advent. This frees up December for making Advent a time of preparation for the birth of Jesus, rather than a month full of stress and shopping. If you haven't tried early holiday shopping before, try it this year. I think you'll be hooked.

Follow Katie Warner online for more Catholic resources for the holidays and year-round @katiwarnercatholic on Instagram, Katie Warner, author & children's book writer on Facebook, and at [KatieWarner.com](http://KatieWarner.com).

\*Denotes books written by the author of this guide.



SHUTTERSTOCK

**Appreciating Advent**

The word Advent is from the Latin *adventus* for "coming" and is associated with the four weeks of preparation for Christmas. Advent always contains four Sundays, beginning on the Sunday nearest the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, Nov. 30, and continuing until Dec. 24. Source: EWTN

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UNSPASH

## Priests, to Save the Church, Answer the Call to Save Souls And Seek the Lord Above All

### BOOK PICK

BY JANET SMITH

*The Priests We Need to Save the Church* by Kevin Wells could, in fact, be the book needed to save the faith of many laity and the priesthood of many priests.

It is an understatement to say that our Church is in a dismal state and that those of us who love her more than our own lives are nonetheless tempted to despair: "Can I really remain in a Church so full of corruption of various kinds and where leaders of the Church seem to be jettisoning dogmas and doctrines we have made many sacrifices to live and defend?"

Our love for the sacraments and our conviction that the Catholic Church is the one founded by our beloved Savior keeps us in the Church despite our shattered trust in our leaders.

Some of us have a hard time conceiving what could possibly be the solution to the crises vitiating the Church today: doctrinal confusion, seemingly rampant sexual misconduct, financial corruption, and the infiltration of alien ideologies. We have lost faith in the bishops as a whole and perhaps especially in the leadership in Rome to be agents of reform; with great reluctance we have come to see they are more of the problem than the solution.

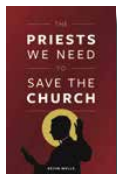
Wells does not dwell on the horrors in the Church, nor does he downplay or ignore them. He does not purport to offer the cure to the life-threatening sepsis in the Church, but he does offer a vision of the priesthood that could strengthen priests and laity and enable us to survive the undoubtedly severe and unsettling purgation that is sure to come, although no one knows the time or hour or what shape it will take. Wells tells that he was urged to write the book by Msgr. John Esseff, once a co-worker of St. Teresa of Calcutta, a renowned exorcist, now 92 years old and still giving retreats and spiritual direction to priests and laity at a ferocious rate.

Decades ago, St. Teresa strongly urged Msgr. Esseff to stop working with the poor and turn his attention to the formation of seminarians. Msgr. Esseff reports that when he began the work, he found seminaries riddled with homosexuality. Wells also records the testimony of priests who have found the priesthood likewise scourged. This problem in the presbyterate is not one that occupies Wells in the book, but it is a part of the background and part of the urgency for finding a way to "save" the Church.

Msgr. Esseff's words seem to permeate Wells' work: "We don't have a priest shortage right now, nor do we have a shortage of vocations. What we have is a shortage of priests who pray. We have a severe crisis in our priesthood because priests are not praying. They are not fathers. If we are to do anything well as priests, it must come from prayer, but we've stopped praying. Consequently, most of our priests seem to be bachelors today."

While this book was written within a year of the revelations concerning the predatory erstwhile cardinal Theodore McCarrick, it is clearly not a rushed project. Wells did his homework: He read the lives of saintly priests and spoke with saintly living priests to clarify what makes for holy priests.

Wells had the great blessing of



### THE PRIESTS WE NEED TO SAVE THE CHURCH

By Kevin Wells  
Sophia Institute Press, 2019  
240 pages, \$17.95  
To order: [sophia institute.com](http://sophia institute.com) or  
(800) 888-9344

being the nephew of Father Thomas Wells, whom he clearly loved and whose life manifested the characteristics Wells found mark a holy priesthood. The key characteristics are prayerfulness, asceticism, and being willing to be radically available to others and to sacrifice for them. Father Wells was known for walking his neighborhood to chat with people, a chat which regularly included an exhortation to take up one's cross in life, softened by his loving and joyful demeanor.

This book is extremely readable. While it might seem implausible to some that a sports writer would be an excellent prose stylist and full of spiritual wisdom, Wells is. I haven't read a great deal of sports journalism in my lifetime but have read enough to know that there are first-rate writers among sports writers: They have the skill of capturing the lure of challenges, the life-enhancing power of struggles, and especially the joy of victory.

While Wells emphasizes the self-sacrificing dimensions of the priesthood and castigates "bachelor priests," he depicts the self-sacrificing life as one full of surprises, adventures and the inestimable reward of saving souls. Wells possesses admirable pedagogical skills; he introduces his subject brilliantly and paces his narrative in such a way that the reader eventually comes to realize that the sacrifices required of a priest are pretty much required of anyone who would be a true follower of Christ.

The book opens with the poignant story of the struggle that Kevin and his wife, Krista, were having with infertility. Krista was so determined to have a baby she was willing to undergo IVF. Kevin arranged a meeting with his uncle,

who cut to the chase and explained why a Christian could not engage in a procedure that was not in accord with God's will for sexuality and procreation.

The priest did not recite comforting platitudes that all would be well and was fully aware of the suffering involved; he simply reminded the Wellses that following our Savior means there will be crosses. Later that night, a drug-crazed man broke into Father Wells' rectory and brutally murdered him.

Wells at one point in his life asked God for a severe suffering to advance his spiritual growth. God's answer was an untreatable brain hemorrhage from which Wells nearly died. When he called upon "Uncle Tommy" for help, his hospital room was filled with light, and Wells was apparently miraculously healed. He attributes his cure to the priest who tended to him on his deathbed and, of course, to his beloved uncle.

Good priests today are hurting — and hurting badly. They are hurting because their flock distrusts them and they distrust their bishops. They are at a loss of how to fortify the faith of their flock when their own faith is under siege.

The laity really do love and appreciate our priests; we should all give this book to priests and seminarians we love — and to the laity we know who wonder what they can do to reform our Church.

Laity should read this book since we too should respond generously to the call that Wells makes to priests: the call to put the salvation of souls above every other good in our lives, to seek intimacy with the Lord through prayer and sacrifice, and to allow that intimacy to guide our every decision.

This book reinforces the message of another book I recently reviewed, Father Carter Griffin's *Why Priestly Celibacy: Reclaiming the Fatherhood of the Priesthood* (Item: 3313, \$24.95, from EWTN Religious Catalogue). Both link celibacy with the demands of being a father and provide a vision of the priesthood totally incompatible with a life of comfort and timidity. Priests who embrace the need for prayer and sacrifice inherent in both priesthood and fatherhood will indeed be the priests we need to save the Church.

Janet E. Smith, Ph.D., is a moral theologian, recently retired from Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit.

### A Prayer for Priests

By St. Thérèse of Lisieux

O Jesus, Eternal Priest, keep your priests within the shelter of your Sacred Heart, where none may touch them. Keep unstained their anointed hands, which daily touch your sacred Body. Keep unsullied their lips, daily purpled with your Precious Blood. Keep pure and unearthly their hearts, sealed with the sublime mark of the priesthood. Let your holy love surround them and shield them from the world's contagion. Bless their labors with abundant fruit, and may the souls to whom they minister be their joy and consolation here and in heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown. Amen.



Source: CNA

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