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Faith at Home

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Dear Families,

Today is Christmas Day; rejoice and be glad! Jesus Christ, the Word of God, became flesh and dwelt among us as one of us because He loves us so much. Our response to such great love can only be to believe in Him, obey His call to love, and carry that love to the whole world (EG, 264; RMI, 11).

Did you know that Christmas is so important that we celebrate this love of God for more than one day? The season of Christmas lasts twelve days, concluding with the celebration of the Epiphany on January 6. This family Christmas kit was inspired by *Liturgy Training Publications Celebrating the Lectionary* series and includes a fun, faith-focused family activity to celebrate four important moments during the Christmas season: Christmas, the Feast of the Holy Family, the Solemnity of Mary, and Epiphany.

We hope that you will join us for Mass to celebrate each of these occasions and that you will enjoy from your homes or wherever your holidays take you all that has been prepared in this Christmas kit. Please consider sharing any photos or feedback about your Christmas kit experience with the staff at Springbank Catholic by emailing your highlights to Alexandria at afung@dol.ca.

Merry Christmas!

Alexandria Fung,
Pastoral Minister to Families & Youth

Christmas

The Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

God created the world out of love and entered into His creation out of love to free us from the power of sin. Jesus Christ, the Word of God, became flesh and dwelt among us as one of us to save us because He loves us.

Our response to such great love – our greatest gift to God – can only be to believe in Him, obey His call to love, and carry that love into the whole world (EG, 264; RMI, 11).

Family Activity | God's Greatest Gift

Using scissors, cut out the red poinsettia flowers on the template provided. Tape or glue the flower pieces together with the largest flower on the bottom and the smallest on top. Place the flower at the centre of where your family will gather to complete the rest of this activity.

Begin by discussing as a family:

- What is the best gift you have ever received?
- Who gave you this gift?
- Why is it so special?

Introduce The Legend of the Poinsettia by sharing that this story is about a little girl who is trying to find the best gift for the baby Jesus. Then read the story together, or watch on YouTube.

Summarize the message of the story with these focus questions:

- What gift did Lucida want to give?
- Which was more important, that Lucida have a special gift to give or that she be with her siblings at church on Christmas Eve?
- What happened when Lucida gave a very simple gift out of love?

Conclude in Prayer

Lord God, here in a humble stable we see Joseph and Mary keeping watch over their newborn son.

We see poor shepherds, and animals whose manger serves as a bed for this baby, the Christ child.

Mary's son and God's son, helpless infant and mighty God.

We are reminded of the happy truth of Christmas:

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling with us” (Jn 1.14).
Through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

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Join us for Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day! See the last page for our Mass schedule.

Feast of the Holy Family

of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

In today's Gospel reading, we see that the life of the Holy Family, like that of our own families, was at times stressful but always characterized by love, care, and concern for the well-being of one another.

The family is the model God gives us to teach us how to live with our fellow Christians (CCC, 1655) and with all people. Jesus teaches us that we are to be brothers and sisters, members of one family with God at the head (GS, 24). When we put our trust in God, just as Joseph trusted in God's guidance and followed the angel's direction, God will lead us to where we are supposed to be.

Family Activity | We Are All God's Children

Carefully cut a rectangle four inches tall and the length of the blank cardstock provided. Write "We Are Family in the Sight of God" on it. Punch a series of holes along the bottom of the poster.

Use the remaining piece of cardstock to cut out circles two to three inches in diameter, one for each member of your family. Write the name of a family member on one side of the circle and draw or attach a photo of that family member on the other side of the circle. Repeat for every member of your family. Punch a hole in every circle.

Cut various lengths of yarn or string and tie one end of the string onto one circle. Tie the other end of the string onto the rectangle poster. Repeat until all circles are tied onto the poster.

Finish this activity by praying these or similar words:

“God, watch over us and help us to trust in You and always follow You.”

Reflect

Choose someone to read the Gospel of the day from the Bible: Matthew 2.13-15, 19-23. If you do not have a Bible at home, biblegateway.com is a free online Scripture resource; just type in the Scripture reference to access the Gospel of the day.

After reading the Gospel, discuss these questions as a family:

- How did God protect the baby Jesus and Mary and Joseph in the Gospel reading?
- Have you ever moved or gone on a long trip? What did you have to do to get ready?
- How did family members care for each other during this time?
- What is one way that you enjoy caring for others?

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Join us on December 30 at 11AM at St. George Parish to celebrate this Feast with Mass!

Solemnity of Mary

After centuries of preparing the world by revealing Himself and entering into covenants with humankind, God entered creation. He humbled himself, choosing to be born into a poor family, in obscure conditions (CCC, 525). He came to offer His people peace, and to teach us to be humble as He was humble, that we might enter into His kingdom (CCC, 526). Mary pondered these events in her heart.

Although humble, He was fully God as well as fully human. Mary, His mother, is called Mother of God because His divinity and humanity are one (CCC, 496).

Family Activity | Heart Full of Memories

Using scissors, cut out heart templates on the pink paper provided (one heart per child, or per family).

Discuss together the memories that we treasure, as Mary treasured the memories surrounding the birth of Jesus. Allow time for each person to share favourite memories of times when God's blessings brought joy and happiness to their lives.

Give each child a cut-out heart on which they can draw or write something that brings to mind a favourite memory of God's blessings. Help them to understand that Mary was very much like us in that she had special memories that she treasured, just as we do.

Conclude in Prayer

Loving Father, as we remember the Holy Family, may we remember Mary, the Holy Mother of God, who said yes to Your plan of salvation.

May we imitate St. Joseph, who protected and loved Your Son and His Blessed Mother.

And may we adore Jesus for ever and ever.

We ask this through the same Jesus Christ, our Light and our Life.

Amen.

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Join us for the celebration of this Feast Day with Mass! See last page for our Mass schedule.

Epiphany

The readings for Epiphany speak of a peaceful, just kingdom led by one who serves and shepherds. Through the Jewish people, the one true God revealed Himself. He made a covenant with their ancestors, promising to make them a great nation. He gave them His commandments, sent them prophets to comfort and reprimand them, and sent His only begotten Son. From them, the light of Christ is to be spread to the whole world (LG, 1); the Magi are symbols of that. Each of us can help to bring about this Kingdom of God through our actions that follow Jesus' teachings.

Family Activity | Bless the Doorway

The Magi came a long way to welcome baby Jesus. Mary and Joseph, in turn, welcomed the Magi. The Church welcomes all people to be baptized into Christ. Blessing the doorway to your home is a symbol of your willingness to welcome all who come to your door. Gather your family at your front door, inside of your home, and pray together:

Peace to this place,
and a smile on each face
that comes to this door
seeking embrace.

Using the chalk provided, write above the doorway:

[first two digits of the year] + C + M + B [last two digits of the year].

The letters stand for the traditional names of the Magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. They also abbreviate the Latin words *Christus maisonem benedicat*: “May Christ bless the house.” The numbers represent the current calendar year and remind us that God is always present in our time.

Conclude in Prayer

The Magi were outsiders and travellers in Israel, yet they were the ones to whom God was revealed in the child Jesus. As a Church, we welcome and offer hospitality to all people, including new members or guests in our communities. Think about people that your family could extend welcome to, name them and pray that they might feel welcome in our Church community.

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Visit us at springbankcatholic.ca for weekend Mass times and children’s liturgy times.

We hope to see you there!



Christmas Mass Schedule

Christmas Eve | December 24

- 5PM Mass at St. George
- 6PM Mass at St. John the Divine
- 7PM Mass at St. George
- 9PM Mass at St. George
- 12AM Mass at St. John the Divine

Christmas Day | December 25

- 9AM Mass at St. George
- 10AM Mass at St. John the Divine
- 11AM Mass at St. George

Feast of the Holy Family | December 30

- 11AM Mass at St. George

Solemnity of Mary | December 31 & January 1

- Saturday 5PM Mass at
St. George & St. John the Divine
- Sunday 9AM Mass & 11AM Mass at St. George
- 10AM Mass at St. John the Divine