

Praying for Christmas: Children's Advent Wreath Devotions

Jeanne Preski

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In this modern age, as families become more and more busy and over-extended, it becomes similarly more and more difficult to practice a religion within a family context. Jeanne Preski faced this problem when she realized her children were overwhelmed by Catholicism's focus on rituals. She also noticed that, during the weeks leading up to Christmas, many children were caught up in wish lists and parties instead of the spiritual, moral, and ethical messages of the season.

In order to help her own children focus on the religious aspects of Christmas and prepare for the holy day with daily family rituals, Preski created this book of accessible devotions, and other religious parents will likewise find it a valuable tool. As Preski says in her introduction, most Advent rituals involve Bible verses and devotional prayers that are much too complicated for young children. In *Praying for Christmas*, she has collected relevant verses for each day of the four weeks leading up to Christmas and offers simple reflections and prayers to go with them.

For example, during the first week of Advent, the daily ritual begins with this reading: "We light the candle of promise to remind us that God kept his promise to send Jesus." Preski provides a different brief Bible verse each day, and one or two sentences of reflection to make the verse relevant to children. The ritual encourages children to end each day of the first week with the same prayer: "Dear God, help me to keep all my promises just like you kept yours. Amen."

The large print and simple language make it easy for children to do the readings, and the repetition of the prayers makes it possible for the whole family to participate. The book would have benefited from more illustrations: only one simple clip-art drawing is used. In addition, the font choice, text color, and spacing lack professional polish.

Despite these shortcomings, this book would be a lovely and useful addition to the Advent devotions of any faithful family.

KAREN MCCARTHY (December 22, 2011)

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