

The Christmas Tree teaches about love

Like many of our Christmas traditions, the background of the Christmas tree is a patchwork quilt of many cultures. One piece concerns St. Boniface, a missionary in the time of Pope St. Gregory II.

St. Boniface's greatest challenge as a missionary was to eliminate pagan superstitions that kept people from accepting the Gospel he preached. One Christmas Eve, St. Boniface was traveling through the woods with his companions and came upon the townspeople gathered around



a sacred oak about to offer a human sacrifice to their god, Thor. St. Boniface stopped the sacrifice and chopped down the oak.

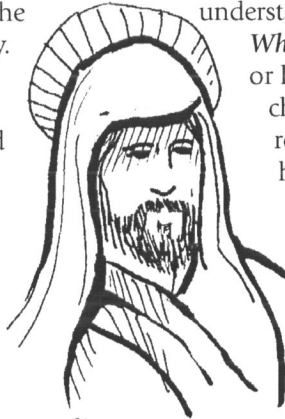
Behind the oak stood a fir tree. St. Boniface asked the people to bring it into town and set up in the great hall of the duke. They placed candles on its branches and listened while St. Boniface told the story of the Nativity and the Baby who would grow up to be the Savior and sacrifice himself for all of us. Many were captivated by the story of love and were converted.

Scripture LESSON

John 1:1-18, Who Is Jesus?

This month we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Word of God, the Second Person of the Trinity. By coming to Earth, living among us and teaching us, he taught us about God and his nature. We are able to share in God's divine life through Jesus's life, death and Resurrection.

In this gospel, St. John explained that Jesus took on our humanity because he loves us and wanted to share our experience. He chose to live as we live. He experienced what we experience. Remembering that, we can



also know with confidence that Jesus understands us.

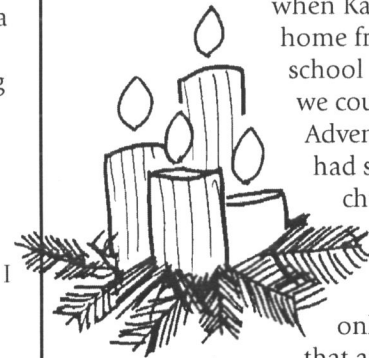
What can a parent do? Sooner or later, we each have to make a choice. Many who saw Jesus rejected him, not recognizing him as the Messiah. Help children to make a deliberate choice to recognize Jesus as their own personal Savior.

Teach them to ask, "Do I live my life as if I'm a child of God?" Tell

them what it means to live as a child of God and to follow Jesus. Jesus is our friend and brother.

Parent TALK

Growing up, we didn't practice many Catholic devotions. So I was at a loss when Kara came home from Catholic school and asked if we could light an Advent wreath. I had seen them in church, but we didn't own one.



I went online and read that an Advent wreath is a symbol of the four-week season before Christmas when we await the coming of the Savior. We could make our own using a Styrofoam ring, three purple candles, a pink one, and some greenery. So I got the supplies and we made a family Advent wreath.

During the busy season it was nice to take a few quiet moments to turn off the lights, light our Advent candles and say our Advent prayers.

Something else that has meant a lot to me is knowing that we joined millions of families all over the world in this beloved ancient tradition.

Feasts & Celebrations

Dec. 6 – St. Nicholas (350). St. Nicholas gave away most of his fortune and is credited with saving three girls from being sold into slavery to pay their father's debt. His anonymous acts of generosity helped him become the patron saint of children.

Dec. 8 – Feast of the Immaculate Conception. The day we celebrate Mary's conception in St. Ann's womb, free from Original Sin. A Holy Day of Obligation.

Dec. 14 – St. John of the Cross (1591). As a Carmelite, St. John led a reform in the Order to encourage

more prayer and simplicity. Some of his most beautiful spiritual writing came while in prison. His mystical-poetical reflections showed his love of prayer.

Dec. 27 – St. John (1st century). An apostle, St. John was known for his fiery temper. He once asked Jesus if he could rain fire from heaven on an inhospitable town. Later, he and St. Peter asked the Holy Spirit to descend upon the Samaritans. Friendship with Jesus really changes a person.



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