

SMALL SACRIFICES FOR THE BABY JESUS

An Advent Family Tradition

Bring this activity to your home this year!



This Advent, teach children to love Jesus



A 50TH ANNIVERSARY RESOURCE
FOR CATHOLIC FAMILIES

Advent is often called a “little Lent.” Prayer, alms, and sacrifices for our fellow man are an essential part of this liturgical season as we prepare for the coming of Christ. During this season the virtues of faith, hope, and charity shine brightly, calling our thoughts away from worldly distractions toward loving God and our neighbor more perfectly. Yet, keeping this liturgical focus throughout the four weeks of Advent can be a struggle, especially for

children eagerly awaiting their gifts to appear under the Christmas tree. A visual aid can be useful in the home to remind children of the true purpose of the season: giving God what *He* wants most—gifts from our heart.

A Christmas crèche (or manger) is a wonderful visual aid that can be used effectively to encourage children to offer Jesus thoughtful gifts in honor of His birthday in the form of small sacrifices. Just as “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16), so children can prepare for Jesus’ birth by imitating God’s self-giving love for others.

Incorporating this Advent tradition is simple, and every family can do it.

HOW TO MAKE A MANGER OUT OF POPCICLE STICKS

Supplied Needed:

1. **A manger or creche**
(See reverse page for how to make one out of popsicle sticks)
 2. **An infant figurine**
(hand-made, repurposed, or store-bought ... get creative!)
 3. **Barnyard bedding**
(Pieces of straw, hay, string, or narrow shreds of paper)
- Continued on reverse page →

www.FaithMorePreciousThanGold.com



Share your creativity!



Please email a photo of your family's Christmas crèche to



50years@rcdoc.org.



All you need is a crèche, an infant figurine, and a stockpile of straw (or something resembling straw) cut to the length of your crèche. The crèche, infant figurine, and straw can be hand-crafted as a family activity by creatively using simple items around the home such as sticks, rocks, cotton, string, fabric, construction paper, paint, glue, etc. Place the finished crèche in a prominent place in the home, perhaps next to the family Advent wreath. Consider decorating it with Christmas greenery and string lights to make it more festive.

Next, encourage children to offer a spiritual gift out of love and gratitude for the Baby Jesus each day of Advent. For every good deed, alms, prayer, or sacrifice done for others, a piece of straw is added to the crèche.

When Christmas Eve arrives, gather the family together to ceremoniously lay the Baby Jesus figurine in the crèche, perhaps accompanied by a favorite Christmas hymn such as "Silent Night." The children will see that the accumulated straw has provided a comfortable resting place for the Baby Jesus, just as Mary and Joseph prepared for Him in the manger at Bethlehem.

This symbolizes the rest we offer Jesus within the crèche of our heart, where He dwells in virtue of our baptism, when we allow charity to grow in us through generous acts of self-denial. The lessons learned from this family devotion will last a lifetime!

This Advent activity is a meaningful tradition to adopt in the home that will encourage parents and children alike to imitate the sacrificial love of Jesus in small and simple ways. And Jesus is greatly pleased when we do things for others in His name:

"And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'" (Matthew 25:40)

What a wonderful way to welcome Jesus into our homes and hearts at Christmas!



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FAITH
MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD
1 PETER 1:7

HOW TO MAKE A MANGER OUT OF POPCICLE STICKS

STEP 1: Glue 4 popsicle sticks together lengthwise. Repeat.

STEP 2: Glue 2 separate popsicle sticks together in the shape of an "X". Repeat.

STEP 3: Stand each "X" upright and lay the sets of 4 glued sticks across the top as shown in the photo below. Secure using strong glue.



Photo: christmasholidayideas.blogspot.com

STEP 4: For each good deed done during the four weeks of Advent, lay one piece of straw in the manger.

STEP 5: Hand-craft or buy a 2"-3" baby figurine. On Christmas Eve, lay the Baby Jesus figure in the manger in celebration of Jesus' birthday.



Photo: christmasholidayideas.blogspot.com

STEP 6: Please email a photo of your Christmas crèche to 50years@rcdoc.org to share it with other families!