

# DECEMBER

The last month of the twelve month calendar is December. It's a misnomer because *decem*, the root of the word December, means ten in Latin.

December is a month when people are busy getting ready for Christmas. As a part of this preparation, be sure your family is aware of the true meaning of Christmas.



## THE MAGI AND THE BABUSHKA

During December Russian families tell their children the story of the babushka who refused to accompany the Magi because she was too busy housecleaning. When she finally changed her mind, it was too late. The legend claims she is still searching for Jesus. Are material pursuits of life keeping you from experiencing Christ more deeply?

## CHRISTMAS PRAYER LIST

December is a wonderful time to pray for people you might not normally include in your prayers. When you check your mail day by day, write down each person or family from whom you receive a card. Then, each evening or morning take a few moments to pray for the individuals on your list.

Keep adding names and saying prayers for as long as Christmas cards continue to arrive at your home. You will be amazed how many people from across the country and the world you will have included in your Christmas prayer list. This surely is a different kind of "Christmas list"!

# ADVENT

Advent is a Christian liturgical season. It is the period of preparation for both Christmas and the Second Coming of Christ. It extends over the four Sundays preceding Christmas. The first Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the church year.

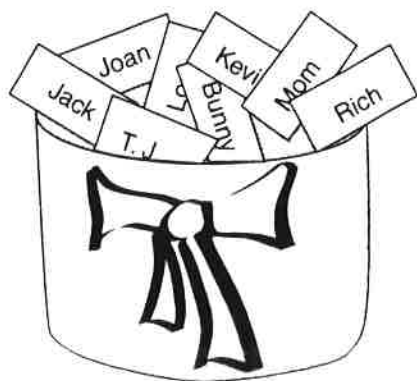
## ADVENT IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

### *Christkind*

The German term for "Christ Child" is *Christkind*. It is the name of an old European Advent practice. It is the custom to pick the name of a secret "Christ Child" before the beginning of the season. Starting with the first day of Advent, everyone does special acts of kindness for their "Christ Child." This practice should continue throughout the season of Advent.

Families can begin a new tradition this Advent. A few days before Advent begins, the family should come together to draw a name of someone as a Christ Child. Throughout Advent, do anonymous good deeds for that person. Pray daily for your *Christkind* asking for an abundance of God's love, peace and joy to flow into that person's life. Each person should try to

keep the name of his/her Christ Child a secret until Christmas Eve. Then a small gift should be given to each *Christkind* revealing the secret name.



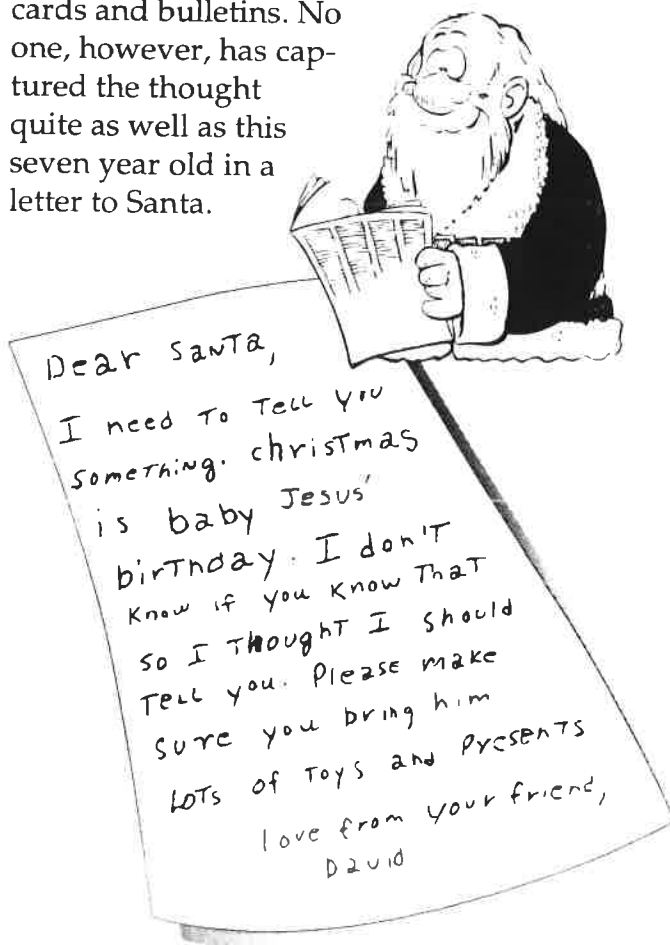
### *Meatless Meals During Advent*

Legend has it that the animals were the first to see the Infant Jesus. In many cultures, Christmas Eve dinner is a meatless one honoring the animals' present at the birth of Jesus. Families can start this custom in their homes by eating several meatless dinners together during Advent.

Before the season begins, the family should gather to plan and choose meatless menu days.

### *Keep Christ in Christmas*

This motto is one many people have heard about through Christmas cards and bulletins. No one, however, has captured the thought quite as well as this seven year old in a letter to Santa.



# ADVENT

Here are some of the holidays and holy days that fall during the four weeks of Advent.

- December 3: St. Francis Xavier
- December 6: St. Nicholas
- December 7: St. Ambrose
- December 8: Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a holy day of obligation
- December 10: International Human Rights Day
- December 12: Our Lady of Guadalupe
- December 13: St. Lucy
- December 14: St. John of the Cross
- December 23: St. John Kanty

## TRADITIONAL GIFT GIVERS

December 6 is St. Nicholas's Day. It is the first of the gift giving days of the holiday season. Traditionally, the actual gift givers are different in various countries:

**Spain and South America:** The Three Kings

**Italy:** La Befana (a kindly old witch)

**England:** Father Christmas

**France:** Pere Noel (Father Christmas)

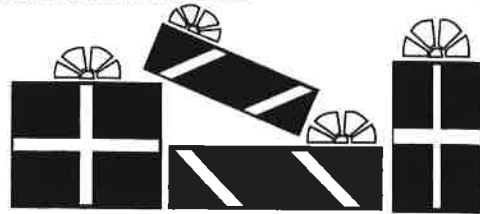
**Russia:** In some parts- Babouschka (a grandmotherly figure). In other parts of Russia, it is Grandfather Frost.

**Germany:** Christkind (angelic messenger from Jesus)

**Scandinavia:** a variety of Christmas gnomes.

One is called Julenisse

**Holland and Belgium:** St. Nicholas



## THE BEST GIFTS TO GIVE:

- To your friend- loyalty;
- To your enemy- forgiveness;
- To your boss- service;
- To your children- a good example;
- To your parents- gratitude and devotion;
- To your spouse- love and faithfulness;
- To all men and women- charity; and,
- To your God- your life.

## FOR A SMILE

On the first day of school, the Kindergarten teacher said, "If anyone has to go to the bathroom, hold up two fingers." A little voice from the back of the room asked, "How will that help?"



A mother was preparing pancakes for breakfast. Her sons, a 5 year-old and a 3 year-old, began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, "Let my brother have the first pancake. I can wait."

The 5 year-old turned to his younger brother and said, "You can be Jesus!"

