**BAMBINELLI SUNDAY**

The third Sunday of Advent is Gaudete Sunday.

Gaudete means rejoice.

* Every year on this day the Pope invites families to bring their own baby Jesus figure from their family crib where he blesses them during the Angelus.
* In the parish you could invite families to bring their baby Jesus figure to Mass (if we can gather) or to have their baby Jesus figure ready at home for Mass on the Webcam where the figure will be blessed.
* Families then take the figure of Jesus and wraps him in Christmas paper.
* On Christmas night after midnight or in the morning this is opened by the family together and placed in the crib.

**Blessing Prayer of the Baby Jesus Figures**

Loving God, you loved us so much

that you sent Jesus your son to be our brother and Saviour.

Bless these images of Jesus,

may they be a sign of your love and presence in our homes.

Lord give your blessing to all who will be with us this Christmas,

especially our family and friends.

Bless those who cannot gather with us this Christmas too

and keep us all safe in your love.

Help us to share the joy of knowing you,

and to give generously to those who have nothing to share this Christmas.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

**PREPARING THE PARISH CRIB(s)**

All of our parishes will have a crib in church, and this year too outside church to draw people into the real message of Christmas.

You could invite some families to help set up this crib(s) this year.

Encourage the families to choose where the figures will be placed.

Make sure the manger remains empty until the first Mass of Christmas is celebrated.

[This year if the Mass is on Webcam you could set up the inside crib differently by making the space in front of the altar the crib area. This way anyone on Webcam can see it. This would mean that the figures would be there with not covering. You could also build up the appearance of these figures over the four weeks of Advent.]

**Family Prayer at the Crib**

Be near me Lord Jesus,

I ask you to stay

close by me forever and love me I pray.

Bless all your dear children

wherever they live,

and keep us all in your love and friendship

as we celebrate your birth together as a family.

**CONNECTING WITH HOME CRIB**

Throughout the season of Christmas if the Mass is on Webcam you can make a point of connecting to the Home Crib in the Family Mass.

If the Crib is in front of the altar move the figures to highlight the feasts.

* The Holy Family can stand alone with the shepherds at a distance. Invite families to re-arrange their crib at home.
* Coming up to Epiphany invite families to begin the journey with the Wise men by placing the figures around the house, move them every day towards the Home Crib.

**PROCESSION TO THE CRIB**

It is a custom to process to the Crib at the beginning of the Christmas Mass.

There can be a procession where the figure of the baby Jesus is carried to the crib and placed in the manger.

If this is a Family Mass, you could invite a family to carry Jesus to the crib.

At the Family Mass you could also invite children to dress as shepherds and join the procession to the crib.

[If you are curtailed to a Webcam Mass, you could send out an invitation to families to dress as shepherds at home.]

**Blessing of the Crib**

Loving God, thank you for giving us this moment to celebrate your birth.

Bless our parish crib and our home crib

which we have prepared to remind us of the birth of Jesus.

As we visit this crib may we be blessed on our journey of faith.

May the presence of the child Jesus

be a blessing for our homes and our families.

As we pray at this crib may we remember

that Jesus was born of Mary and cared for by Joseph.

May we learn from them how to care for each other and for our needy world.

May we like the shepherds go from visiting our crib

to share the Good News with everyone we meet.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

**A GIFT OF A CHRISTMAS DINNER**

Christmas is often a lonely time for a lot of people, this year because of Covid 19 many people feel more isolated than usual.

Families could be encouraged to reach out to those in their street or block of flats who they know are living alone.

They could connect with them before Christmas with a Christmas Card invitation.

This invitation could read as follows:

Dear………………………………..,

We want to make sure you are not left out in the Christmas celebrations.

If you would like us to bring you Christmas dinner on Christmas Day, just let us know by calling us at: (mobile number)

We can chat about the best and safest way to bring you dinner.

All the best,

The ………………………………….. family

**CHRISTMAS GREETINGS in DIFFERENT LANGUAGES**

Our parishes in Dublin Archdiocese are multicultural with parishioners from many nations.

It is important to offer a Happy Christmas to all the language groups of the parish.

You could invite families to prepare a greeting in their own language to display in church throughout the Christmas season.

Here are translations of Happy Christmas:

ARABIC – Miilaad majiid

BOSNIAN – Cestit Bozic

CHINESE – Tsheng dan kuai le

ETHIOPIAN – Melkin Yelidet Beaal

FRENCH – Joyeux Noel

FILIPINO – Maligayang Paskol

GERMAN – Frohliche Weihnachten

HINDI - Krisamas kee badhaee

INDONESIAN – Selamat Hari Natal

IRISH – Nollaig Shona

ITALIAN – Buon Natale

LATIVIAN – Priecigus Ziemassvetkus

MALAYALAM - Santēāṣakaramāya krismas

PORTUGUESE – Feliz Natal

POLISH – Wesolych Swiat

ROMANIAN – Un Craciun ferici

SLOVAK – Vesele vianoce

SWAHILI – Kuwa na Krismasi njema

**CHRISTMAS CANDLES**

There is another custom where the Advent Wreath becomes a Christmas wreath.

[You will need a ring of four candles and a fifth candle in the middle of the ring.]

This prayer moment can happen at home or at the beginning of Masses in the Christmas season.

We light the candle of longing,

may our hopes for all that is good come to pass.

We light the candle of expecting,

may all that was foretold come to pass.

We light the candle of preparing,

may all our clutter be cleared up to make way for God.

We light the candle of bringing,

as Mary let Jesus be born in her, may we welcome his presence among us.

Finally, we light the candle of Christ, the light of the world,

may our homes be places where he can live among us.

[At New Year’s Eve this blessing of the house can be added.]

Bless this house and all it contains.

Deliver this house from all that stains.

Be health to us all and cure all our pains.

Bless every room and every person in it.

**A WALK TO THE PARISH CRIB**

Many families go for walks during the Christmas season.

From Christmas Day to the Feast of the Epiphany you can turn your walk into a visit to parish cribs.

You could spend an afternoon visiting the churches in your local area.

At the crib families can light a candle or write a prayer.

The following prayer could be made available on a **PRAYER CARD:**

Lord Jesus, as we stand before you here at the crib,

our thoughts turn to you,

to Mary and to Joseph on that first Christmas.

You welcomed the visiting shepherds,

May our family receive visitors with a warm welcome and open heart.

You welcomed the wise men,

who brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrhh.

May our family always give you the gifts of our faith, our hope and our love.

Help us to follow you more closely in the coming year.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph pray for us and walk with us. AMEN.