

Holidays seen as time to share family rituals

DAYTON, Ohio (CNS) — Some families always watch "White Christmas" together. Others put up an Advent wreath, cut down their own Christmas tree or take turns reading parts of the Nativity story.

During the holiday season's frantic shop-till-you-drop pace, families need to establish simple, inexpensive traditions that will remain meaningful — and memorable — long after the last gift has been unwrapped, according to Joan McGuinness Wagner, program coordinator in the University of Dayton's Center for the Study of Family Development.

Rituals "help families connect with their pasts," says McGuinness Wagner, who has conducted workshops on family rituals around the country as part of the Catholic Families Project.

"Families today are doubly strapped by a lack of time and money and are inundated with things to do over the holiday season," says McGuinness Wagner, president-elect of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers. "We buy into the guilt trip that we should be doing and buying a lot of things. We need to pick up new ways of celebrating the holidays."

McGuinness Wagner offers these guidelines for creating family traditions:

- Remember why Christmas is celebrated. "Families can make an Advent calendar or read from Scriptures together. This is a way to teach kids to use the Bible."

- Ask your family to name their three favorite Christmas memories. "You will be surprised often by what

children will say. Something that you may have done only once or twice may be their best memory."

- Establish rituals on days other than Dec. 25. "We celebrate Dec. 6, St. Nicholas Day, at our house with hot chocolate and cookies and candlelight."

- Find rituals that fit your family. "If an activity isn't natural to you and your family, it's not going to be meaningful. We started a ritual at our house on Thanksgiving that was such a touching experience, we do it every year. We write down on slips of paper what we're most thankful for, draw them out of a box and read them aloud."

- Admit you can't do it all. "Take it easy on yourself. Don't exhaust yourself by making four kinds of Christmas cookies. For young, married couples, try to include rituals from both sides of the family, but not everything. It's important to establish your own rituals."

- Appreciate your family and create an extended family. "Take time to look at the treasure around your own table. If your family cannot be with you during the holidays, celebrate with friends. Don't sit there and feel sorry for yourself."

For families coping with divorce or the death of a family member, the memory-filled holidays can be the worst time of the year. "Do something you've always done in the past for a sense of continuity, but try something new," suggests McGuinness Wagner. "This is a time when you need a combination of old and new rituals."



Christmas Masses will air on national TV

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Several Christmas Masses will be shown on both cable and broadcast networks Dec. 24 and 25.

Midnight Mass from St. Peter's Basilica in Rome will be shown live from 6 to 8 p.m. Dec. 24 on the Eternal Word Television Network on cable. NBC will show the Mass on a tape delay that night at midnight.

Also live on EWTN will be a solemn Christmas Eve Mass from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. Archbishop Agostino Cacciavillan, U.S. apostolic pronuncio, is the scheduled celebrant and homilist. The Mass will be shown from 10:30 p.m. to midnight Dec. 24.

EWTN will also show on tape delay a Christmas Eve Mass in Spanish and English from the Cathedral of San Fernando in San Antonio. The Mass will be seen from 2:30 to 3:30 a.m. Dec. 25.

The pope's "Urbi et Orbi" ("To the City and To the World") message will be aired on EWTN at 9 a.m. Dec. 25. The Vision Interfaith Satellite Network on cable will air the message at 1 p.m., and EWTN will rerun it at 5 p.m.

A solemn Christmas Day Mass from the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception will be shown on EWTN at noon Dec. 25 and again at 7:30 p.m. Cardinal James A. Hickey of Washington is the scheduled celebrant and homilist.

Notice to readers

As is our custom, the *Catholic Courier* will not publish an issue on Dec. 31, the last Thursday in December. Our next edition will be published on Jan. 7, 1993. Happy Holidays!

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