

# CATHOLIC

MARKETING NETWORK / *Christmas 2018*



*"For behold*

*I bring you  
good tidings of great joy"*

LUKE 2:10



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# Christmas 2018

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CHRISTMAS 2018

*As another year draws to a close* and we enter the Holy Season of Advent and Christmas, I want to take the opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a joyous Christmas season and a blessed and prosperous New Year!

As I write this note to you, I can't help but reflect on what a privilege we share to be so involved in the work of Christ's Church. On a personal level, next year will mark the 30th year since I experienced my own "reversion" experience and was awakened to the beauty and truth of the Catholic Faith. During those three decades, I have been blessed to meet so many wonderful religious and laity who were actively living out their vocation to serve the Church and one another.

During this year's annual gathering in Lancaster, I was approached by more than one individual who remarked that they sensed the event was "anointed" and I had to agree with them. Although our Church is facing difficult times, there was a sense of joy and holy perseverance permeating the gathering. As a group, we operate retail outlets, publishing houses, manufacturing and distribution entities, and other businesses and ministries. All of which are aimed at bringing religious books and other items that hopefully draw souls closer to God and assist them in their own personal faith walk. As Catholics we know the inestimable value of a single soul and this reality helps sustain each of us as we strive to create good businesses as well as good ministries.

Creating something that is a good business and a good ministry is not easy as anyone who has tried to do so will tell you. However, as I spoke to so many participants at our summer show there was little doubt in my mind that we are called to do just that. In other words, we are exactly where God wants us, regardless of what our bank accounts reveal!

It's a great privilege and joy for me personally to "toil in the vineyard" with you and it is my hope that the Catholic Marketing Network can continue to provide support and solidarity to this great effort we share. As another year draws to a close and we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, let us rejoice in the joy of the season and the beautiful and important work God has put before us.

Wishing you a very Merry and Blessed Christmas!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Al Napleton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

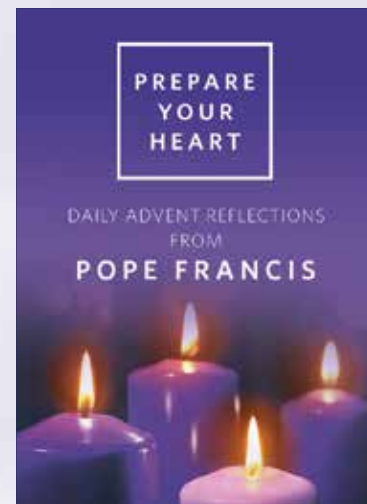
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ALAN NAPLETON



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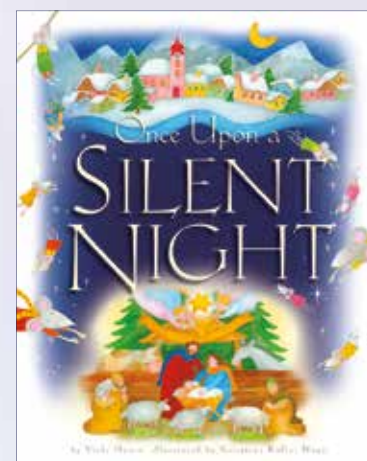
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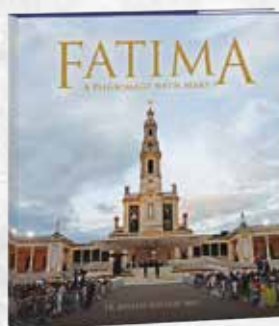
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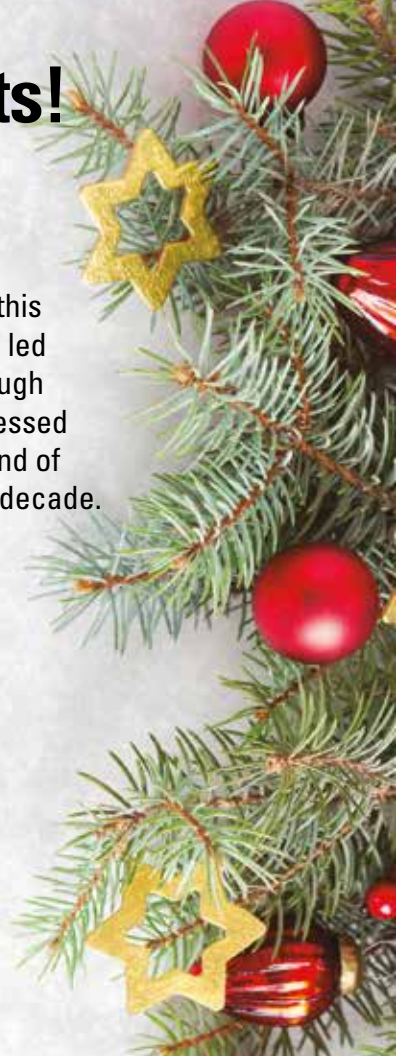
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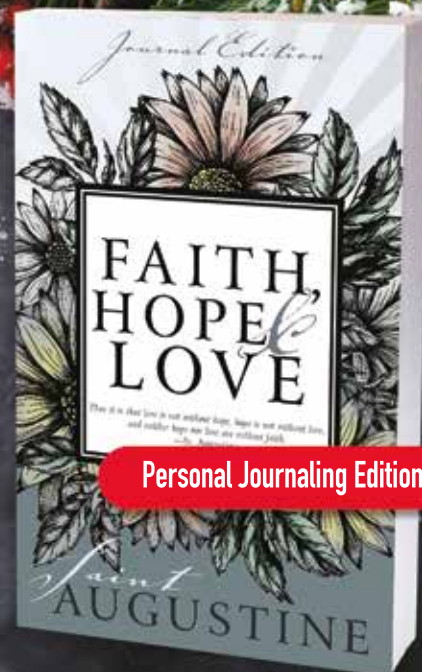
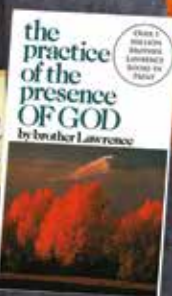
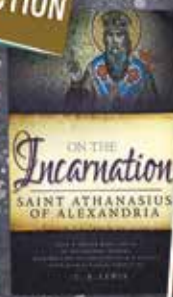
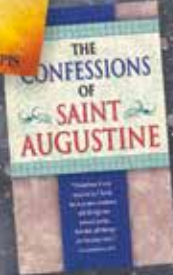
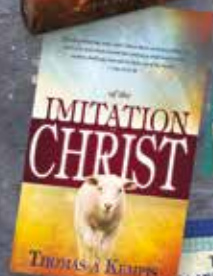
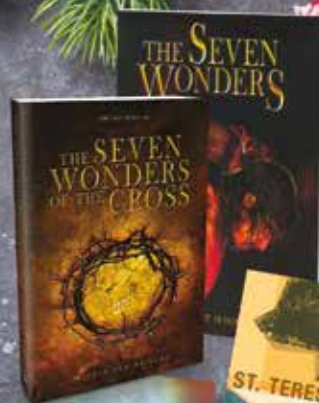


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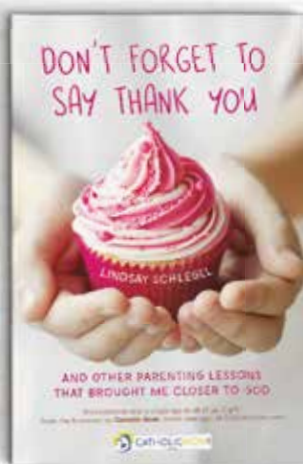
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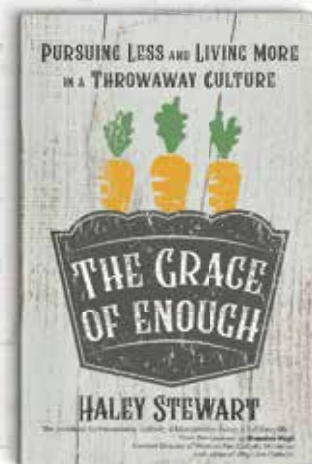
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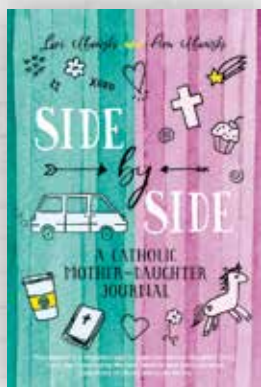
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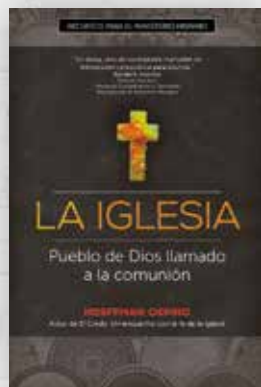
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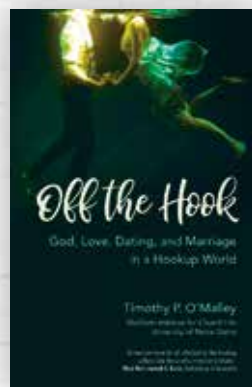
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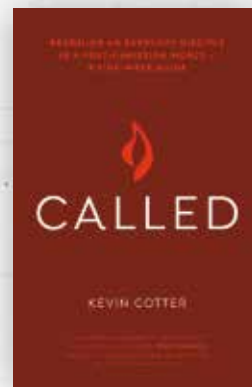
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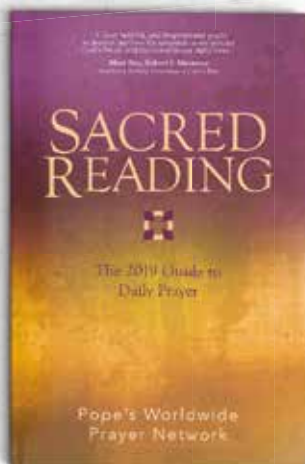
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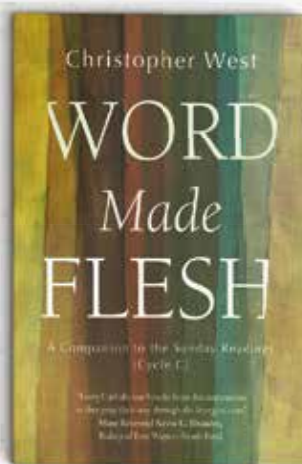
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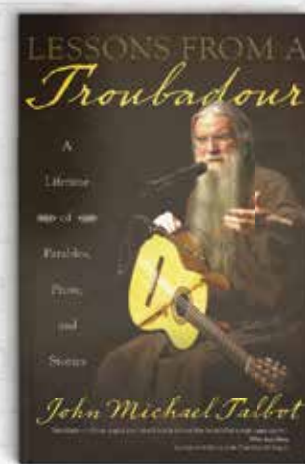
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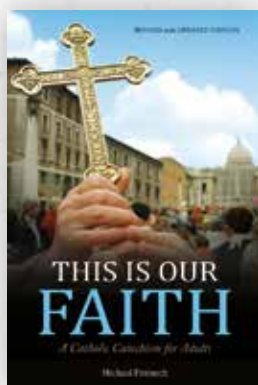
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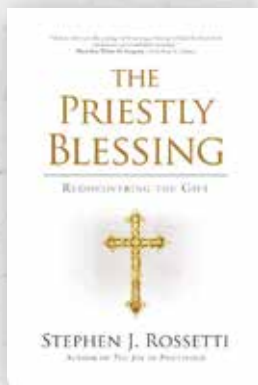
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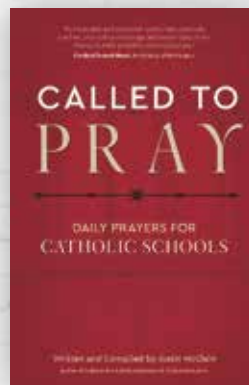
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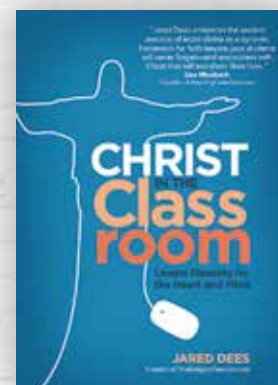
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Painting by Kate Caputo (Visual Grace)

# Wonder & Awe

## Unlocking the Door of Christmas & Encountering Christ's Presence in our Lives

**A**s we approach Christmas this year, let us pray for **time to prepare** and the time to receive the gift and **grace of wonder and awe** as it will fill our thoughts, words and actions as we encounter Christ's presence in our lives. Let us allow St. Francis of Assisi to be our example. He was given the extraordinary **grace of wonder & awe** which allowed him to be drawn in the mystery, mission and life of Christ! This **grace** became the key for St. Francis to unlock doors into the life of Christ, traveling into the Gospels and the Sacramental life of the Catholic Church.

This last fall, I had the blessing of taking a few men from our homeless shelter, St. Anthony's, in the south Bronx to the Bronx Zoo. There is free admission on Wednesdays, so it is a great day to go if you are a Franciscan and have taken a vow of poverty. One problem is that everyone else goes as well on Wednesday's. Battling crowds,

I found myself dispassionately going through the motions of looking at the birds, reptiles, giraffes and other wildlife as I had done this tour many times before. Still wanting to be a good guide for the men, I said a quick prayer for "a fresh pair of eyes" and redirected my attention to the children playing nearby. They were pointing and gazing with jumping with enthusiasm and joyful light-hearted giggles at the animals doing acrobatic tricks. My mood immediately lifted as I watched their spirited expressions. I couldn't help but be reminded once again of the powerful **grace** of being in a state of **wonder and awe**.

Wonder is defined in Webster Dictionary as: *"a feeling of surprise, admiration and awe which is excited by something new or unusual."*

Awe is defined as: *"fear mingled with admiration or reverence; a feeling produced by something majestic and sublime."* Therefore, it is a real grace to pray for!

How can this **grace of wonder & awe** help us as we prepare for Christmas?

Most people probably recognize that Lent is the time of preparation for Easter. Sometimes less focused on, but equally as important, is the Church season of Advent. It is officially and liturgically the preparation time for Christmas. The word Advent comes from the Latin: **Ad venire: to come**. This approaching (or visitation) is the coming of Christ; specifically, the four Sundays before Christmas. The Church enjoys special songs and special liturgies devoted exclusively to the Advent season

Whether it is for a special event, birthday, anniversary or even a family meal, when we carve the **time out to prepare** and then **spend time enjoying** any major celebration is a great gift. This space is where we are able to create lasting memories with our friends and family and enjoy the true fruits of living the gospels as we are all called to do.



I will share with you two stories of inspiration, one from the life of St. Francis of Assisi and one of my own personal experiences that bring together the importance of taking the **time to prepare** and truly open our hearts to experience God's great gift of **grace of wonder and awe**.

St. Francis was from Assisi, a town which lies amid the rolling hills of eastern Italy. He lived during troubled times and as a youth he had dreams of becoming a knight and winning esteem on the battlefield. He went into war, was captured and sent to prison for over a year taking a toll on his health. After his wealthy father was able to pay his ransom, Francis was released. He aspired for the battlefield again, but this time the Lord spoke to Francis and he responded with a noble and generous heart and immediately returned to Assisi. Francis himself always wanting to hear and live more perfectly and he drew his inspiration and strength from the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He wanted the gospels to be the "Rule of Life" for men who would follow after him.

He took the time to take a pilgrimage to the Holy Land where he was able to venerate all of the holy places that Christians had gone for centuries to pay homage to where Jesus had lived, died and rose from the dead. No easy task. Unlike today where one can go there and be back in a few short days, St. Francis would have been gone for six months on his journey.

The place of Bethlehem, Christ's birthplace, made such an impression on Francis that he wanted to recreate the scene in his native Italy so that those who could not go to the Holy Land could be reminded and be filled with both **wonder and awe** at what Jesus had done in all humility.

St. Bonaventure, a follower of St. Francis has given us a complete account of the night of the first live nativity scene:

St. Bonaventure goes on to tell of the extraordinary things that happened that Holy Night in 1223, how there was a devout soldier standing by whose witness and testimony was trustworthy. This soldier saw the infant Christ child asleep in the manger and Francis held him in his arms.

Responding to God's word is the hallmark of any Christian. In a desire to follow the Lord and His Holy Will and many times throughout his life, St. Francis would prove his love by responding to the Lord's calling with a generous heart. Francis would become such a reflection of God's love and magnet to others that over 5,000 men would end up following him during his lifetime - 5,000 bearded men with rough tunics on barefoot or sandals proclaiming the Gospel in all parts of Italy and Europe. And in that year of 1223, St. Francis of Assisi gave to Jesus a great Christmas gift that wove the golden threads of the **grace of wonder & awe** of Christmas season together for many people. His gift continues to impact us today!

As a Franciscan brother for almost twenty years, often I am witness to acts of love and faith in my ministry and when I am mindful, I too, am able to receive the gift of **grace of wonder & awe**. My life as a friar consists of praying with my fellow friars at the friary, wearing a religious habit with a rope and sandals, and going on missions in imitation of St. Francis. We serve the poor in the neighborhood's where we have chosen to live. I have been blessed with opportunities to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land and retrace some of the steps of St. Francis in his hometown of Assisi. In December of 1996, I encountered St. Francis' love for Jesus in the Christmas crib even before I was a Franciscan Friar. It was during the time I was discerning the will of God for my life. I had just finished a semester of classes at Franciscan University of Stuebenville's Austrian Campus. I decided to go to Rome and Assisi for two weeks. This would mean that I would miss being with my family back in Michigan for Christmas. With a bit of sadness and homesickness, I remained steadfast and obedient to the strong calling to spend **time** in these two holy places as I discerned and **prepared** for what the Lord would ask of me.

During those weeks, I was able to visit a small town on an Italian hillside called Greccio, the very place St. Francis recreated the manger scene. I did not know any of Italian language except for "ciao!" and I had taken the bus there alone. I got off the bus and followed signs (all in Italian) to the friary literally built into the cliffs. It looked like a stone bird house clinging to the rocks. Climbing many, many narrow steps and through low doorways, I was able to enter, where countless other pilgrims had gone before me, into the cold stone chapel. Unlike centuries ago, it is now lit by electricity. I prayerfully attended the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with a handful of friars and other faithful during the Advent season. Now, days before Christmas, I leafed through my pilgrim booklet to realize that this was the actual spot that St. Bonaventure had described St. Francis holding the Christ child. Here-Ecce-where the Christ Child memory was not only venerated but also became alive in the arms of St. Francis. The great mystery of the Incarnation as it were re-entered into history through the prayers

*"It happened in the third year before his death, that in order to excite the inhabitants of Greccio to commemorate the nativity of the Infant Jesus with great devotion, St. Francis determined to keep it with all possible solemnity...he prepared a manger, brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the appointed place... the man of God stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant joy being unable to utter Jesus name for the tenderness of His love, He called Him the Babe of Bethlehem."*

of a great saint. What a moment of **grace of the wonder and awe** I was able to experience a true presence of the great gift of Christmas! It is a moment I cherish.

I'm so grateful to the talented artist, Kate Capato, for allowing her images of St. Francis holding the Christ Child to accompany my words about preparing for Christmas during this Advent Season. She gives us three images here to show us that there is a definite preparation that went into her work in laying out her ideas and sketches and filling in with layers of paint and prayers as she painstakingly allowed the details to come to life. Rich symbolism is conveyed here from the city in the background, to our beloved St. Francis lovingly holding the Babe of Bethlehem. The dog in Christian art has always been a sign of fidelity or faithfulness which gives a deep meaning even to the nickname we have all heard of as: "Fido." It is a reminder to be faithful to what the Lord has revealed to us in the Scriptures and Revelation. I encourage you, next time you hold your Bible, imagine holding the WORD like this image. Hold it with the precious thoughts of tender strength with loving attention as Jesus is the WORD made flesh who dwelt among us.

As many readers would remember the popular and saintly priest Fulton J. Sheen. He commented on preparing for Easter and Christmas as a time of prayer and fasting saying:

*"There are two philosophies in life: The fast and then the feast or the feast and then the headache."*

It is a statement with a bit of humor but also a call to live a life of holy virtue. It begs us to ask ourselves, have we truly allowed the **time to prepare** for the great season ahead? With all the hustle and bustle of the holidays, have we taken the **time** to sit quietly with our Lord, meditate on the Gospels, listen to what God is asking of us and then responding to His calling? Have we given up something in order to make room for the great gift of Christ the King? Do we plan on giving something to Jesus this Christmas as a gift such as the gift of our time, our obedience, our open heart?

One author has said: *"Christ came in history, in the sacraments he comes in mystery and we are awaiting him to come in majesty."*

If you limit Christ to history, you limit Christ from coming into your life today – here and now. Surely, our Lord wants His Story to be a part of your story as it was in the life of St. Francis. As you prepare this year for Christmas during this holy time of Advent, I pray that you are truly able to carve out the **time to prepare** and then receive the special **grace of wonder and awe** so that you too can allow "His-story" to enter into your story and transform our world today by His Holy Presence. Jesus, I trust in you. Blessings to all.



*Painting by Kate Capato (Visual Grace)*



**Br. Simon M. Dankoski, CFR** is a member of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal living in the South Bronx. Br. Simon is from a loving Catholic family with four siblings and as a family they lived in Hong Kong, Korea and Brazil. He has his degrees in Philosophy & Theology but most of all he enjoys woodworking. He has been a Franciscan Brother for eighteen years and studied nursing as a friar to care for Fr. Benedict Groeschel and Fr. Andrew Apostoli during their last years of life. He currently works at St. Anthony Shelter for Renewal where thirty homeless men reside.

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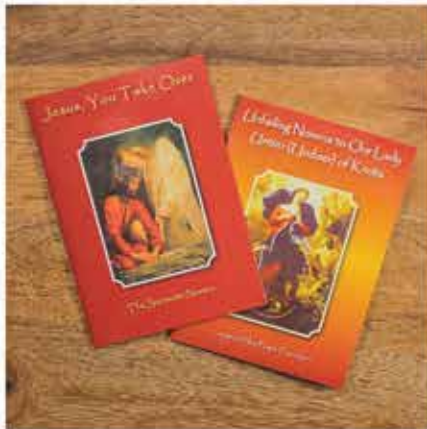
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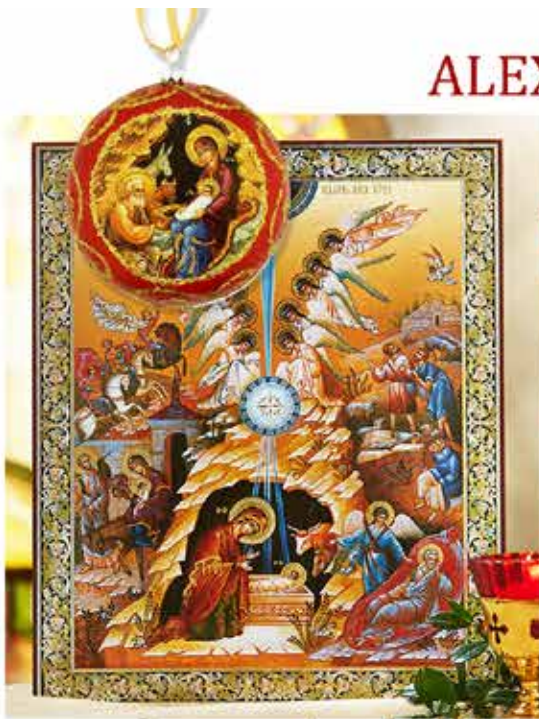
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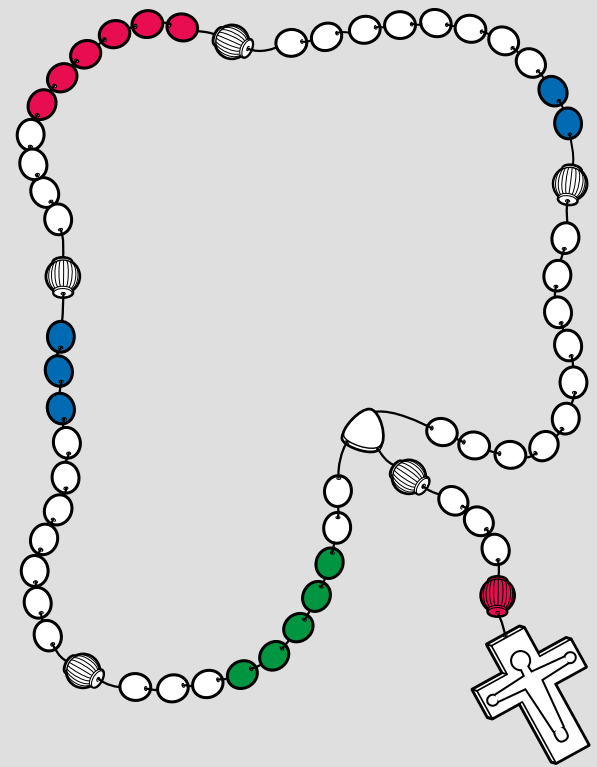
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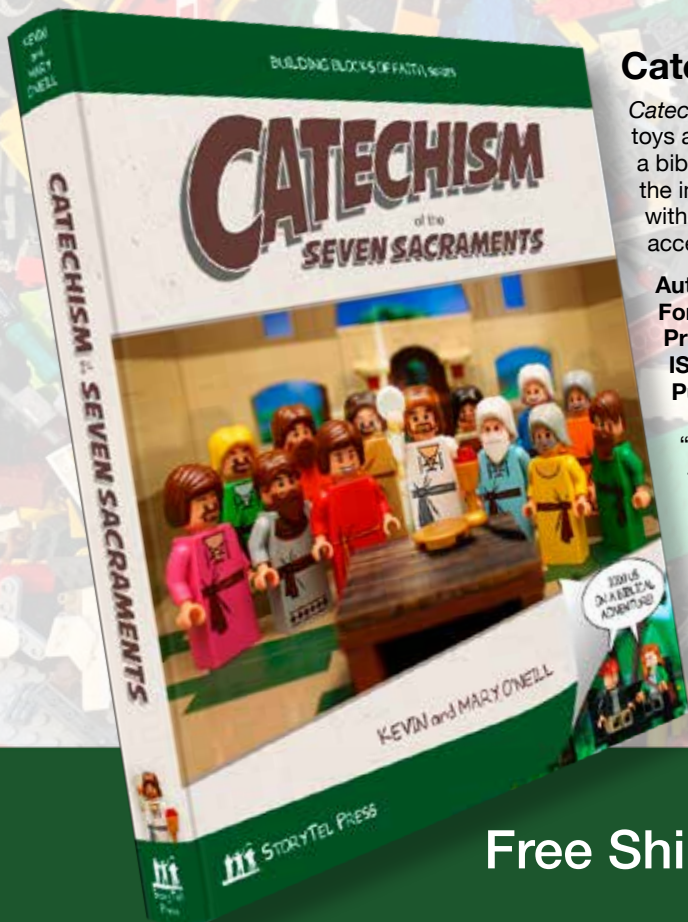
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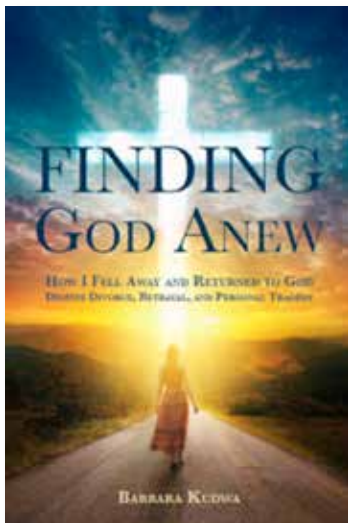


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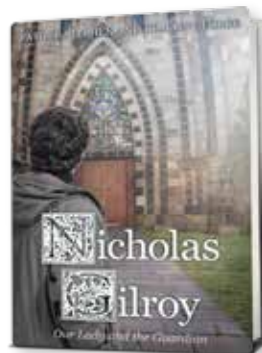


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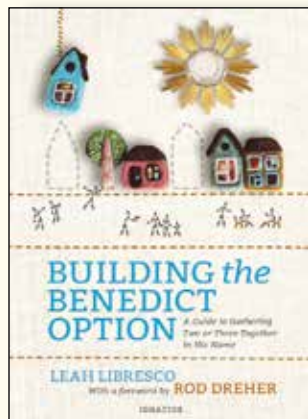


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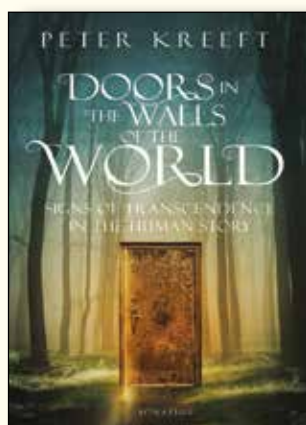
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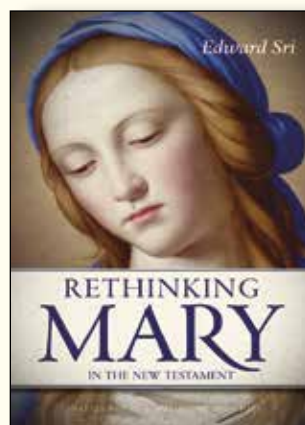
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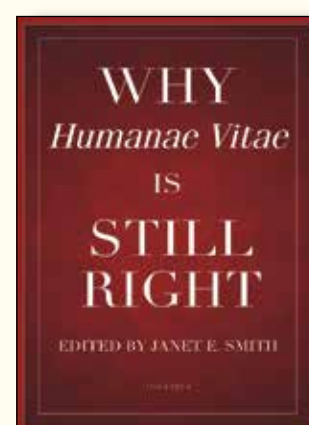
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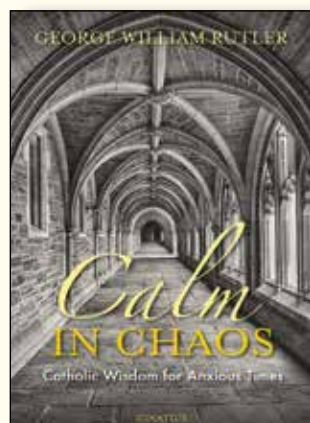
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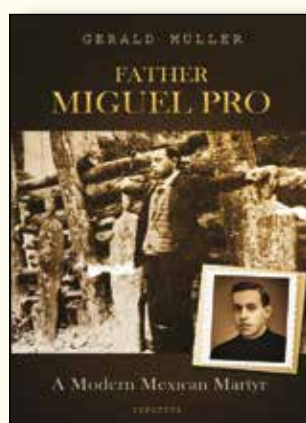
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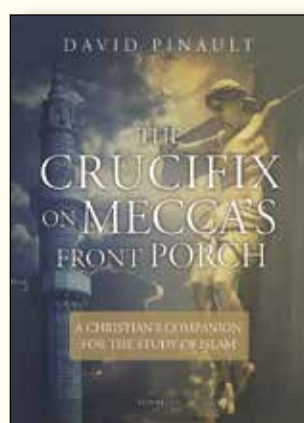
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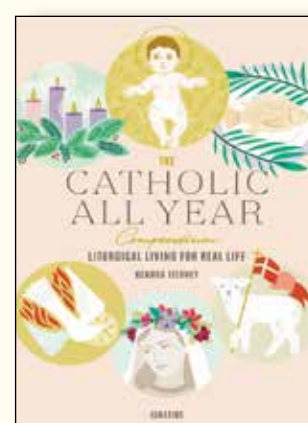
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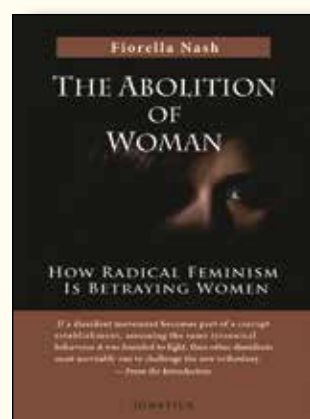
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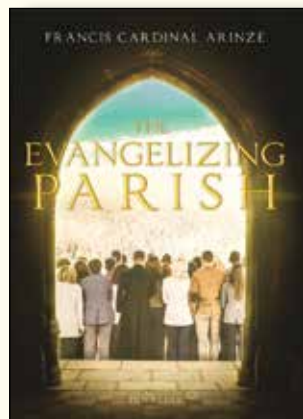
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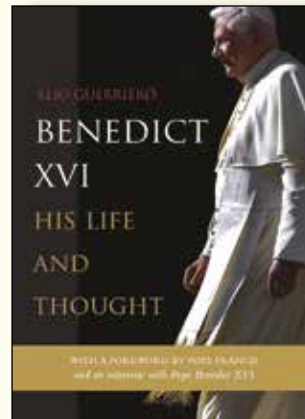
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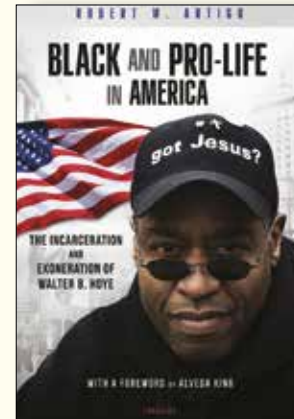
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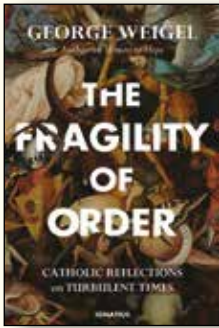
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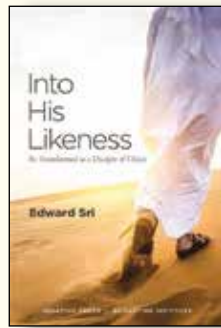
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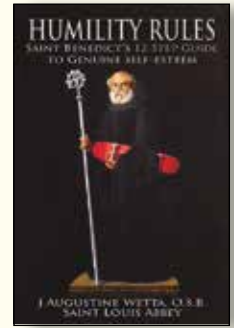
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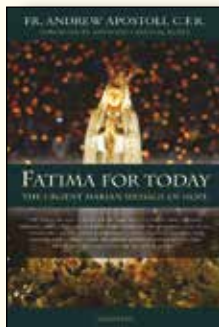
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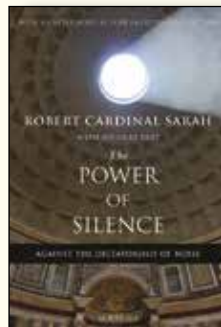
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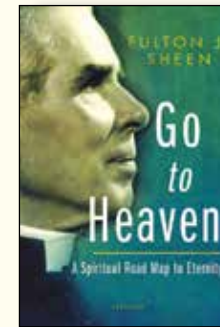
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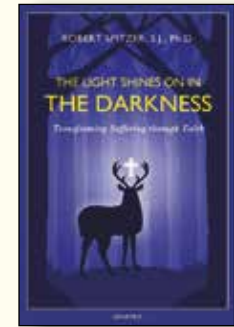
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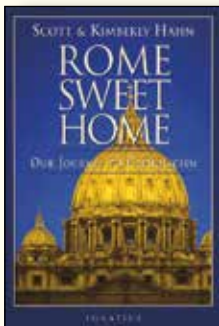
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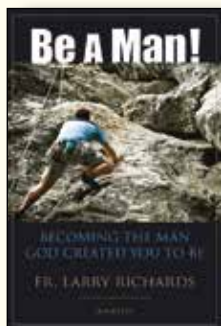
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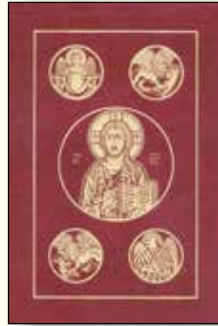
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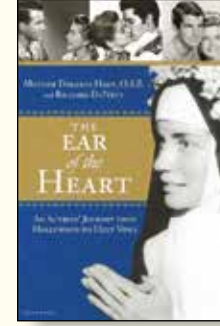
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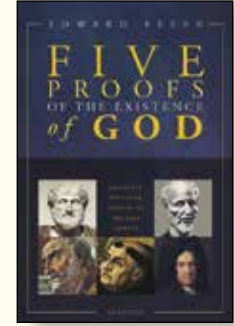
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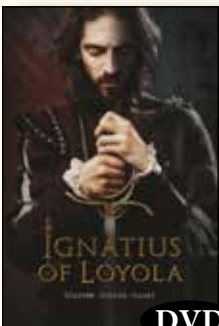
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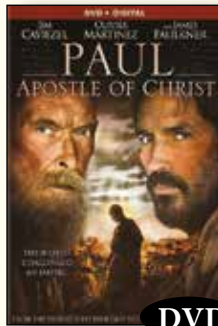
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# Christmas is Coming!

*Hhmmn ... you aren't surprised. Ok. Advent will come first.*

We know that in the secular market, it's almost 100% Christmas, skimming right over Advent. In fact, it's Christmas trees in September (and even August) in many big box stores.

## Where does our faith fit into this?

For our family, Advent was the antidote to the 'give-me's'. If we focused on the Advent Wreath, its Scripture readings with their prophetic messages of a Messiah, and the lighting of the candles as a sign of the 'Light of the World' whose arrival we await, it balanced the childish (and sometimes adult) yearnings for material gifts. Advent calendars and wreaths were a daily reminder of what Christmas is really about.

## How does that translate into our retail lives?

I believe that Catholic and Christian stores should OWN Christmas. Our retail lives are about spreading the good news of Jesus Christ, and Advent and Christmas are our seasons.

## We carry product that centers on Christ.

This is way better than the latest doll, electronic game or newest gadget. Our product does not become obsolete. The question then becomes: how do we communicate our message in our stores and to our customer base?

## First, I think it's difficult to sell what you don't know.

That means, practice Advent yourself. To me, this has 3 parts: Advent Devotional readings, the Advent Calendar and a family Advent Wreath. There is a huge wealth in these practices. Gather it first for your own spiritual well being, and then to be able to share it.

---

## On the retail side, my preparations look like this.

1. Cull through your catalogs, both online and print, to find Advent devotionals that speak to you and at least one that doesn't, but you know it would speak to your spouse.
2. Find several Advent Calendars that have Scripture on them, either inside or on the doors that you open.
3. Order Advent Wreaths in a variety of styles and price points.

---

How many you order depends on what you sold last year and how you intend to market these items this year. Also, know the practices of your local parishes. If they are giving out free devotionals, scale back on devotional books and pamphlets.

In store, we do a prominent display of Advent Calendars, Advent Wreaths and Advent Candles in a variety of sizes that fit the wreaths. We do this in early October and position them near our front door where they are hard to miss. We have about a dozen wreaths in a wide variety of prices,







from less than \$15 to more than \$40. Some are completely set up, while others are simply hanging on hooks on the slot wall. There are stacks of Advent candle sets. Advent Calendars, including some with chocolate behind their doors, hang on hooks. If you come in, you know that we have Advent supplies.

### **What about the person who does not come through our doors?**

We send e-mail blasts talking about Advent. We add Advent information to our promotions that go in our billing letters to churches. We mention Advent in our radio ads.

### **This year we will feature Advent on Facebook.**

Our plan is to have it as a live stream discussing how to use an Advent Wreath. Of course, this will show our Advent display as the background, so viewers see the product that we have in stock.

The approach that has received the best response so far has been the Advent/Christmas Flyer. I believe that it's because it is an 'in-hand' visual.

### **There are many ways to use the flyer.**

- Some stores do direct mail from their customer list.
- We use Advent flyers as newspaper inserts, because it reaches new customers and is less expensive than direct mail. If the insert idea sounds expensive, investigate. Some newspapers will allow you to select a zip code or a particular route. Be bold and negotiate on the rate, instead of accepting the first price quoted. This can reduce the number of flyers needed to a manageable amount, as well as the price of distribution.
- We also ask churches for permission to put the flyers in their vestibule. We do not leave 100's in the vestibule, but rather a dozen or so.

### **Now is the time to plan. Evaluate what you did last year.**

Advent candles are ordered and will ship when the weather cools. Advent calendars are also ordered and are also temperature-dependent because some have chocolate. In our September staff meeting we will begin working on our advertising schedule/ plan for November and December. Even if your budget is miniscule, you still have choices.

1. For less than \$20. a month, using Constant Contact you can do as many e-mails as you wish.

Begin collecting e-mail addresses now. If you are not tech savvy, and I'm not, you probably know someone who is – a son or daughter, grandson or granddaughter, nephew or niece or even a current or past employee. Once they are acquainted with the program, it's about an hour for each mailing/blast.

2. Buy at least the minimum number of Advent flyers to give use as bag stuffers or to give out at a parish event
3. Create your own bag stuffer, advertising an Advent item such as candles that people use every year.
4. Pick a feast during Advent and celebrate with a special 'sale' We have done that with the feast of Guardian Angels having an 'Angel sale' (Willow Tree excluded)

### **PLAN!**

If you have not planned in the past, plan something. Something is better than nothing. We do not have all the answers. Some things were flops but we keep trying.

### **Last but most important PRAY.**

Ask God's direction for your decisions and work.

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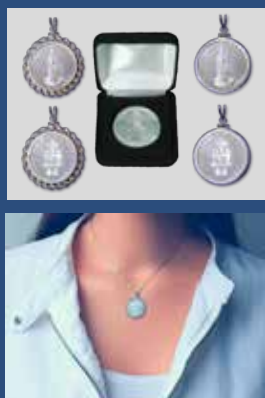
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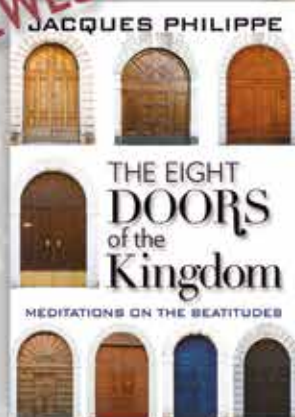
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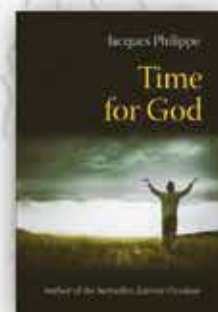
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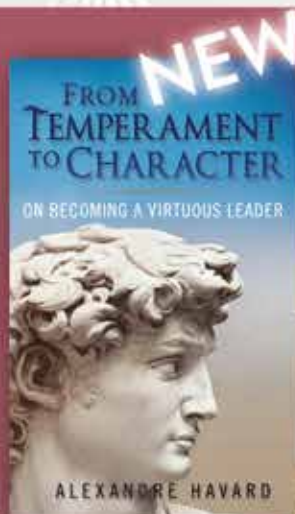
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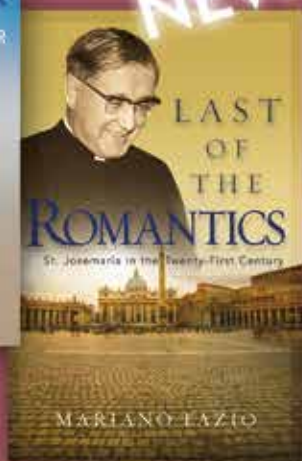
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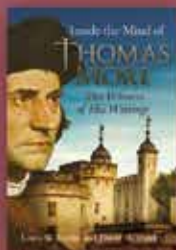
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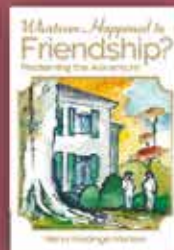
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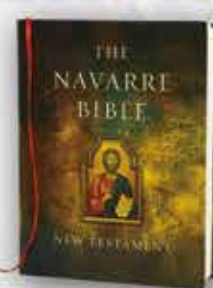
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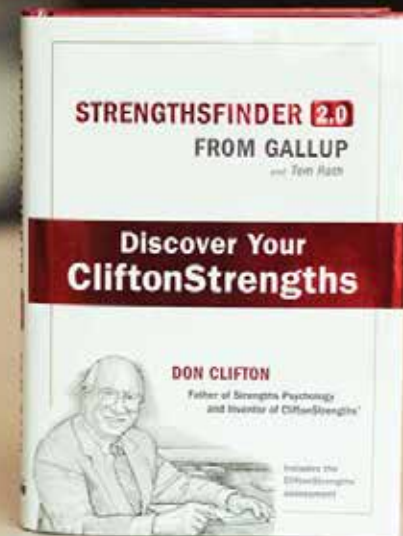
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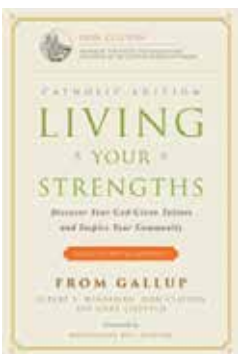
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The Christmas craze is just around the corner, and you are searching for ways to make your store stand out among the crowd and convert Christmas customers into regular patrons. The key to this conversion (and a successful Christmas sales season) lies in Catholic marketing.

Many Catholic businesses and organizations struggle with marketing because the concept seems too focused on sales and financial success. That's why I am passionate about the idea of *Catholic* marketing.

You see, Catholic marketing isn't about self-promotion or gain – it's an invitation to a relationship with Christ.

Think about it this way – your marketing efforts in Catholic marketing are tactics you use for evangelization. People are brought closer to Christ through the products you have to offer. And making money for your business isn't a bad thing – money is a practical need, and it is only

through funding that you are able to continue your mission to bring others to Christ through your store.

One of the most fundamental marketing concepts is defining and identifying by what makes you unique. One unique way to market your store during this season is to complement your Christmas displays by highlighting other saints and Marian feast days that occur during the season. By focusing on complements to the “Christmas craze,” you'll not only stand out from the crowd, but also hopefully convert seasonal clients into regular patrons by showcasing what else you have to offer.







### Consider a Marian focus

Blue might not be the first color that comes to mind during the Christmas season, but there are several Marian feast days that occur just before and after Christmas – Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Solemnity of Mary, etc. Many people tend to think more heavily about the Blessed Mother during the Christmas season anyway, since they are contemplating the nativity scene, and having a promotion or display around these other Marian feast days may encourage a client to further develop their Marian devotion through the products you offer.

### Use hashtags related to the feast days to promote outside of your store

Hashtags on social media can be a great way to get new leads for clients. For example, #OurLadyofGuadalupe has been used 42,798 times on Instagram and #StStephen 14,785 times. And don't forget about #Advent2018 throughout the Advent season!

Hashtags are so valuable because they create mini search engines when used on social media. Oftentimes, people will follow or search on a specific hashtag to learn more, see what others are saying, and even get ideas or buy products. Especially around Christmastime when people are more apt to buy gifts anyway, utilizing hashtags can be valuable for helping others discover your store online.

### Play off of patrons

Hoping to encourage your customers to buy more than just nativity scenes and red and green decorations? Set up a display in your store centered around a particular occupation or interest in correlation to that activity's patron saint. Consider, for example, setting up a display to St. Elizabeth of Hungary, whose feast day is November 17, as the patron saint of bakers, or St. Sebastian, the patron saint of athletes, whose feast is January 20. Displays or website features that focus on this connection to a specific sector of society will help to educate your clients about a particular saint and may also give them ideas for Christmas gifts related to the saints.

### Try to draw on the feast days of nearby parishes

Speaking of playing off of patrons...Are you located near an Immaculate Conception or All Saints Church? Google the feast days of the patron saints of your nearby parishes, and make a calendar of when they fall. Be sure to stock up on related items in advance, and ask the parish if you can advertise in the bulletin or leave flyers in the back of the church with information about these related products, maybe with a coupon for parishioners of that parish. Or offer to donate a patron saint-related product to the parish in exchange for leaving your business card or flyer at the rectory or a thank you in the bulletin. Just another way to capitalize on that exposure about your store in general!

### Pray to St. Homobonus (patron of business people)

Did you know that there is a patron saint of business owners? St. Homobonus was a married merchant in Italy with a deep love for the faith and for taking care of others. He's a great saint to turn to for inspiration and intercession! And his feast day is November 17 – just in time for the busy Christmas season.

The key to remember with Catholic marketing is that it isn't all on you. A friend of mine once said that we have the best marketer on our side, so trust in Him – but also take advantage of the tools He's given us through Catholic marketing to become brand ambassadors for both our businesses and Christ!

### MEET EMILY!

Emily Ricci is the owner and founder of Gloriam Marketing, LLC, a Catholic marketing and creative agency for churches, schools, and Catholic businesses. Gloriam is meant to be a partner in evangelization, implementing modern marketing techniques with a Christ-centered focus. Their services include advertising, social media consulting and management, content development and editing, marketing strategy, web design, and more. You can learn more at [www.gloriammarketing.com](http://www.gloriammarketing.com).



In addition to Gloriam, Emily also works as a content and social media specialist in higher education and previously worked at a church for over 7 years. Her past church titles and responsibilities have included working as a Parish Office secretary, sacristan, Weekend Coordinator (ministry supervisor and event coordinator), youth minister, bulletin writer, coordinator of the baptism program, and Faith Formation teacher and assistant. She loves reading, writing, and spending time with family and is passionate about God, Jane Austen, and the Oxford comma (in that order!).

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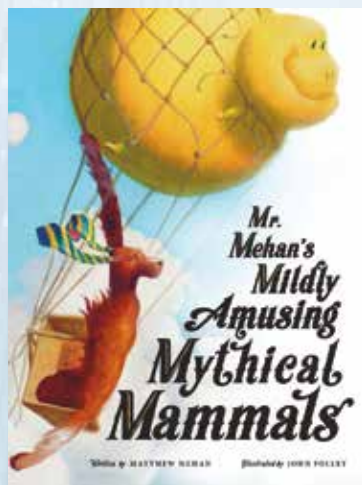
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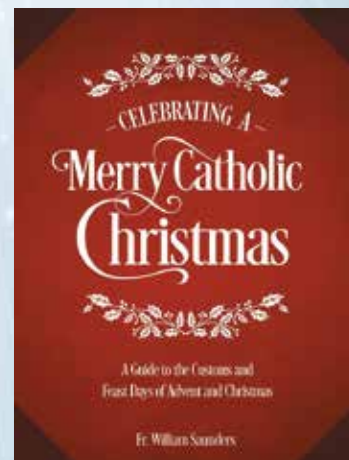
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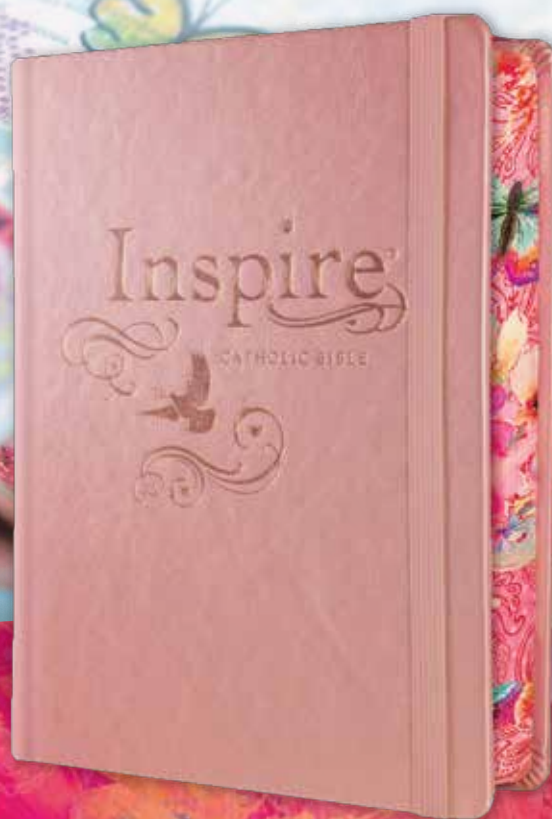
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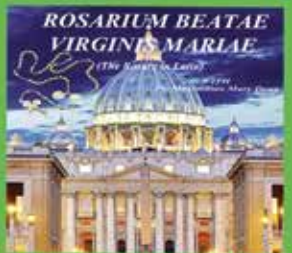
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