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## ***The Manger and the True Spirit of Christmas***

*Beware of "Commercial Contamination"*



*These comments were made by Pope Benedict XVI on Sunday, December 11, 2005 following the noon recitation of the Angelus. They tie together the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the blessing and preparation of family manger scenes, and the true spirit of the season.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

After celebrating the solemnity of Mary's Immaculate Conception, we enter these days in the evocative atmosphere of preparations for this coming holy Christmas. In the present-day consumer society, this period suffers, unfortunately, a sort of commercial "contamination," which runs the risk of altering its authentic spirit, characterized by recollection, sobriety, a joy that is not exterior but profound.

Therefore, it is providential that, as a door of entrance to Christmas, the feast exists of the Mother of Jesus, who better than any one, can guide us to know, love and worship the Son of God made man. Therefore, let us allow her to accompany us; may her sentiments encourage us to predispose ourselves with sincerity of heart and openness of spirit to recognize the Son of God in the Child of Bethlehem, come to earth for our redemption. Let us walk with her in prayer and accept the reiterated invitation addressed to us by the Advent liturgy to remain in expectation, in a vigilant and joyful expectation, as the Lord will not delay: He comes to deliver his people from sin.

Continuing a beautiful and consolidated tradition, in many families the crib begins to be prepared, as if to relive with Mary these days full of trepidation that preceded Jesus' birth. To set up the crib at home can be a simple but effective way of presenting the faith and transmitting it to one's children. The



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manger helps us to contemplate the mystery of God's love who revealed himself in the poverty and simplicity of the Bethlehem cave.

St. Francis of Assisi was so overwhelmed by the mystery of the Incarnation, that he wanted to present it again in Greccio with the living manger, thus becoming the initiator of a long popular tradition which still keeps its value for evangelization today.

The crib can help us, in fact, to understand the secret of the true Christmas, because it speaks of humility and the merciful goodness of Christ, who "though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor" (2 Corinthians 8:9). His poverty enriches those who embrace it and Christmas brings joy and peace to those who, as the shepherds, accept in Bethlehem the words of the angel: "And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). It continues to be a sign also for us, men and women of the 21st century. There is no other Christmas.



As our beloved John Paul II did, in a few moments I will also bless the images of the Child Jesus that the children of Rome will place in the crib in their homes. With this gesture, I want to invoke the Lord's help so that all Christian families will prepare to celebrate with faith the forthcoming Christmas feasts. May Mary help us to enter into the genuine spirit of Christmas.

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## Gifts for Kids that Keep Christ In Christmas

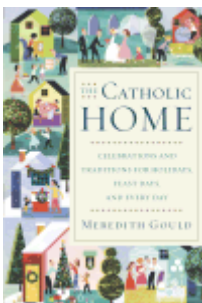
In a world of magic, violence, and phony superheroes we have found a series of videos with phenomenal music, faithful storylines and animation. These are guaranteed to hold attention of kids 5-12 or your bucks back! Bring Mary, the saints and angels to life in the lives of your kids, grandkids, nieces & nephews!

**Let your children grow with saints like: [Nicholas](#), [Bernadette](#), [Patrick](#) and others – come [check these out TODAY!](#)**



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## The Catholic Home - Meredith Gould



Want to really make your family's experience of Advent and the Christmas Season extra special this year? Get a copy of [Meredith Gould's The Catholic Home](#) before Advent begins! This book is a treasure trove of Catholic customs and traditions for all throughout the liturgical year, but is especially invaluable as we approach the Christmas Season. This book is a fun read but very practical as well. It's full of ideas for prayers, devotions, and decorations for liturgical feasts and saints days and even provides recipes for holiday foods from all over the Catholic world!