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**Rejoice always,  
pray without ceasing,  
give thanks  
in all circumstances;  
for this is the will of God  
in Christ Jesus for you.**

## Welcome the Season with Gratitude, Love, and Joy

### A message from the TCDSB Nurturing Our Catholic Community Team

Welcome to our “Nurturing our Families of Faith” newsletter, especially created for this season of Thanksgiving. This newsletter is meant to support the faith journey of students, staff, and their families across The Toronto Catholic District School Board. As we continue to emerge from the difficulties we’ve experienced due to COVID, we pray that you and your families find space for prayer and to be in the presence of God. This is the Season of Creation and Thanksgiving - to marvel at the beauty of the changing colours and the bounty of the autumn harvest, and a time when we gather with our loved ones to thank God for all the goodness in our lives.



St. Teresa of Avila, whose feast day is October 15th, reminds us that:

*“In all created things discern the providence and wisdom of God,  
and in all things give Him thanks.”*

Let us take the time to reflect on all the gifts that God has given us over this past year, to see the blessings we have received despite the obstacles we may have faced, and to look forward to the future with hope and faith.



# Celebrating and Praying During Thanksgiving

This is a wonderful opportunity to gather as a family and to take a rest from our busy schedules. Working together, create a sacred space (e.g. prayer table) in your home with symbols that represent what you are grateful for. In the days leading up to Thanksgiving, add a new symbol every day and offer a prayer of thanks to God. You can either use already existing prayers, or create your own original prayers.



**Explore these websites for prayers you can say together as a family:**



[Thanksgiving Encouraging & Inspiring Prayers](#)

[20 Thanksgiving Prayers to Say Around the Table](#)

[30 Thankful Prayers to Say Right Now](#)

[Xavier University: Prayers for Gratitude and Thanksgiving](#)

## A POSSIBLE FORMAT FOR A FAMILY GATHERING

### ✠ Sign of the Cross

#### 1) Brief Introduction

"During this time of changing seasons, let us reflect on the colours of autumn: Red as a sign of God's love for us, Orange as a sign of God's hope like each new sunrise, Yellow as a sign of God's guiding light, and Gold as a sign of the richness God brings to our lives. Let us be mindful of this as we listen to God's word." or Use your own introduction

#### 2) Scripture Reading & Reflection

Choose one or more scripture verses and/or reflections from the following:

[15 Thanksgiving Bible Verses Daily](#)

[The Power of a Grateful Heart](#)

[Thanksgiving Prayer Reflection](#)  
(for Season of Creation)

#### 3) Prayers of the Faithful

Choose a leader to read the [intercessions](#) and family can respond.

#### 4) Our Father/Hail Mary

#### 5) Closing Prayer

### ✠ Sign of the Cross



## MEDITATION ON GRATITUDE AND JOY

Let yourself sit quietly and at ease. Allow your body to be relaxed and open, your breath natural, your heart easy. Begin the practice of gratitude by feeling how year after year you have cared for your own life. Now let yourself begin to acknowledge all that has supported you in this care:

*With gratitude I remember the people, animals, plants, insects, creatures of the sky and sea, air and water, fire and earth, all whose joyful exertion blesses my life every day.*

*With gratitude I remember the care and labor of a thousand generations of elders and ancestors who came before me.*

*I offer my gratitude for the blessing of this earth I have been given.*

*I offer my gratitude for the measure of health I have been given.*

*I offer my gratitude for the family and friends I have been given.*

*I offer my gratitude for the community I have been given.*

*I offer my gratitude for the teachings and lessons I have been given.*

*I offer my gratitude for the life I have been given.*



Just as we are grateful for our blessings, so we can be grateful for the blessings of others. Now shift your practice to the cultivation of joy. Continue to breathe gently. Bring to mind someone you care about, someone it is easy to rejoice for. Picture them and feel the natural joy you have for their well-being, happiness, and success. With each breath, offer them your grateful, heartfelt wishes:

*May you be joyful.*

*May your happiness increase.*

*May you not be separated from great happiness.*

*May your good fortune and the causes for your joy and happiness increase.*

Sense the sympathetic joy and caring in each phrase. When you feel some degree of natural gratitude for the happiness of this loved one, extend this practice to another person you care about. Recite the same simple phrases that express your heart's intention.

Then gradually open the meditation to other loved ones and benefactors. After the joy for them grows strong, turn back to include yourself. Let the feelings of joy more fully fill your body and mind. Continue repeating the intentions of joy over and over, through whatever resistances and difficulties arise, until you feel stabilized in joy. Next begin to systematically include [all people, even your enemies] until you extend sympathetic joy to all beings everywhere, young and old, near and far.

Practice dwelling in joy until the deliberate effort of practice drops away and the intentions of joy blend into the natural joy of your own wise heart.



# FUN FAMILY ACTIVITIES

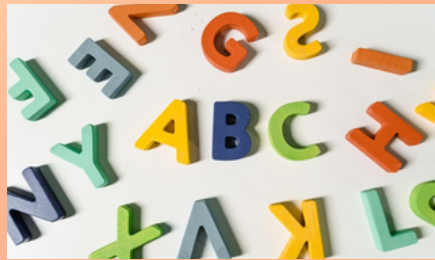
## Mini Pumpkin Hunt

A fun group activity that's perfect for your little ones is a mini pumpkin hunt. You can hide one or more mini pumpkins, indoors or outside, and let the family loose — like an Easter egg hunt with an autumn twist.



## Thankful Alphabet Game

This is a game you can play while eating dinner! All you have to do is have each person share one thing they're thankful for, but the catch is, it has to start with the next letter of the alphabet, starting with A (the next person's response will start with B, and so on). Go around the table until the alphabet's been filled — yes, even X and Z.



## Thankfulness Journal

An activity that can continue even during the year is a Thankfulness Journal. Choose a lined journal (in any design you like) and write down Thanksgiving themed Scriptures or reflections on gratefulness each day in your personal devotional time. Keep the same journal for next year and enjoy looking back on your writings from the past.



Another fun game to play as a family is **Thanksgiving Charades**.

You'll need the following supplies:

*Thanksgiving Charade Words*  
*A cup or bowl to put the words in*  
*A timer (your cell phone works great!)*  
*Paper or poster board and a Sharpie marker (to keep score)*



### For further activities, please see:

[DIY Thanksgiving Crafts](#)

[Bible Story Printables](#)

[The Crafty Classroom](#)

On these sites, you'll find free printable activities for elementary school students, such as:

- Bible verse and "Thankful Turkey" placemats
- Pumpkin Bible verse cards
- "Thank You God" worksheet
- Picture puzzles
- colouring pages; and more!

## WORTH EXPLORING



Christian Meditation – The Prayer of 3 “S’s”



LOYOLA  
PRESS.

## ONLINE / LIVESTREAM MASSES

St. Michael's Cathedral Daily at 12:10 pm EST  
Sunday at 12:00 pm

Salt and Light TV Daily at 6:30 am, 11:00 am, 3:00 pm & 10:30 pm  
(all times EST)

Radio Maria Monday and Thursday  
at 12:30 pm EST

Daily TV Mass Fr. Rob Galea's YouTube Channel  
(Loretto Abbey Chapel)

## GIVING OPPORTUNITIES



## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Visit us at: [Nurturing Our Catholic Community, TCDSB](http://Nurturing Our Catholic Community, TCDSB)

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