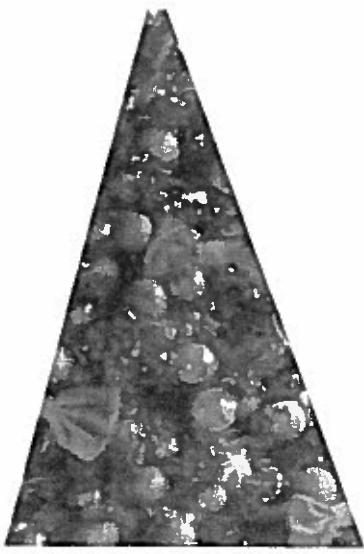


The "NEW" Christmas Tree



Our final suggestion for a family Christmas project is biblical tree decorations. The original use of the "tree" itself began in the middle ages in Germany and was called the "Paradise Tree". It was adorned with apples and used in Advent plays about Adam and Eve which described the "Fall" and the reason for the Redeemer. Some time later, the lighted candles which the German people used to symbolize Christ, the Light of the World, were added to the tree and it has since become a popular custom around the world.

Plan to read and discuss various passages of Scripture (as we did for the Christ Candle) and then choose the gospel and advent figures and symbols from which to make the tree ornaments. Yours will be a tree that tells a story. It will depict the Fall of man, the stories of the Jews who awaited the Messiah and the Redemption, and the Christmas narrative itself.

Collect colorful odds and ends. Odd pieces of styrofoam, ribbon, foil, small boxes in all shapes, and paint, glue and glitter...from which you will make your ornaments. Here are tried and tested ornaments examples. From the Garden of Eden, you can make an apple by painting a styrofoam ball red. Green leaves made from foil or felt can be attached to the ball. To make old Lucifer, the bright yellow serpent, cut a circle of construction paper, with the cut circling inward so that he hangs like a spring. Maybe one of the boys in the family could model and paint the ark. Jacob's ladder can be made out of popsicle sticks. There are stars cut out of paper and sprinkled with glitter. Make one big one for the top of the tree for the star of Bethlehem. There are angels, kings, and all the stable animals which can be cut out of Christmas cards and mounted on stiff cardboard or on thin styrofoam squares or circles.

Colored pipe cleaners can be bent and twisted to make a trumpet or Issac's bundle of kindling wood. Cookies or corn starch clay ornaments can be shaped from cookie cutters. (Be sure to make a little hole at the top to attach a string for hanging the ornament on the tree.) A tiny house made from a box is Our Lady's house at Loretto. And, then there is a rose for the Christmas Rose. A harp for David. You can cut one out of gold foil. There is a gilded (gold spray-painted) cross of twigs for St. John the Baptist, plus any number of objects the children might associate with their patron saints. Some of these items are not legitimate Jesse tree ornaments, but they still bear on the Christmas Story and our Redemption so they do have their place on your tree. Then there are the things from the fields and woods which are beautiful just the way they are or spray-painted or glittered, such as pine cones, cranberry garlands, etc. Also add your traditional and manufactured ornaments. One has not the heart to part with these nor should we, now that we know what a Christmas tree should be.

Blessing of the Home Christmas Tree

Verse: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Response: Who made heaven and earth.

Verse: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with Your Spirit.

Let Us Pray

Holy Lord, almighty Father, Eternal God, in coldness of winter it has pleased you to keep the evergreen tree alive and green while all other trees and plants sleep and are barren. May, it please You now to set aside this, our family Christmas tree, as a sign and reminder to us of Jesus, Whom You sent into the world as our Savior Who leads us out of darkness to life eternal.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, be to us, O great and beautiful Tree, a sign of Christ Who is our Light and Life. Amen

Blessing of the Crib at Home

Reading of the Gospel of Luke

“At that time, the shepherds said to one another; Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this Word that is to come to pass, which the Lord has showed us. And they came with haste, and they found Mary and the Word that had been spoken to them concerning this Child. And all that heard wondered at those things that were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen as it was told unto them.”

Verse: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Response: Who made heaven and earth.

Verse: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with Your Spirit.

Let Us Pray

Bless we beseech You, Almighty God, this crib which we have prepared in honor of the new birth in the flesh of Your only begotten Son, that all who devoutly contemplate in this crib the mystery of His Birth may be filled with the light of His glory.. Who with You lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God world without end. Amen