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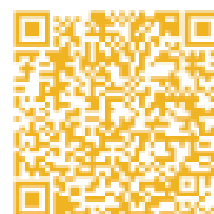
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## December 2024 GIFTS

Nativity icon  
St. Nicholas Purse's Recipe  
A Wealthy Widow's Gift  
God Is with us  
Gifts you can give  
Caught you Listening  
Christmas Greetings  
Saint Salome  
Choir practice, Coloring pages, Activities  
AND MORE!

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Scan the QR code to see the links for the activities

## December Activities Calendar

This month is filled with so many fun and interesting things to do!  
Visit the Activities Index on the ByziKids page at [ByziMom.com](https://www.byzimom.com/byzikids-magazine-extras) for all the links!  
<https://www.byzimom.com/byzikids-magazine-extras>

### December 4

#### Feast of St. Barbara



- Make a Tower Vase for forcing branches and have St. Barbara's Breakfast!
- Get the coloring page and the I Spy in My Little Icon of St. Barbara printables!

### December 8/9

#### The Conception of Anna, Mother of the Theotokos



### December 25

#### Feast of the Nativity; Christ is Born! Glorify Him!



- A Visit from the Kubi: Put on the Ancient Nativity Play with our Printable Script and Puppet Template!
- Get Instructions to make a ByziGirl's Christmas Star Hairstyle!
- Make a gift in honor of the Magi: Wise Men's Winter Balm Recipe
- Perform "Joseph, Son of David; A Nativity Play" by Kh. Sylvia Dorham
- Learn "The Words the Prophets Said" and "Something Startling" Songs by Khouria Sylvia!
- Check out the ByziKids Perler Bead Templates!
- Get all the Christmas Printables!
- Nativity Icon Coloring Page
- Adoration of the Magi Coloring Page
- Nativity Crossword Printable
- God is With Us; Did You Know?
- God is With Us Printable Ornament Set
- Holy Supper Explained
- Holy Supper Matching Game
- Holy Supper Playset Printable
- Holy Supper Lapbook
- Christmas Greeting Printable
- Nativity Troparion Bookmark Printable

### December 6

#### Feast of St. Nicholas



- Make a batch of St. Nicholas' Purses to have with dinner.
- Get all the printables: St. Nicholas Sailors Maze; St. Nicholas Story; St. Nicholas Coloring Page;
- St. Nicholas Word Search; O Kto Kto, Sheet Music (MCI)

### December 12

#### St. Spyridon



- Read about him Meanwhile Back in Byzantium

### December 14

#### St. Nigmatullah



- Story & Meghli Recipe

### December 7

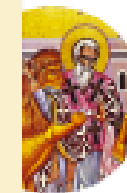
#### Feast of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan



- Make some Honey Medovnick and some great Honey Lip Balm to protect your lips in cold weather!

### December 20

#### Translation of the Relics of St. Ignatius of Antioch



- Bake a Batch of St. Ignatius' Bones



## Giving Gifts

I was thinking of you  
 You are important to me  
 Here is a gift  
 So that you will know that  
 I was thinking of you  
 You are important to me  
 God gives to us  
 So that we will know that  
 He is thinking of us  
 We are important to him  
 Use your gifts  
 So that others will know that  
 You were thinking of them  
 They are important to you  
 So much love  
 That it has to show!



Chorus:

1. I was think - ing of you. You are im - ant to me.  
 2. I was think - ing of you. You are im - ant to me.  
 3. He is think - ing of us. We are im - ant to Him.  
 4. You were think - ing of them. They are im - ant to you.

Verse:

Here is a gift so that you will know that  
 God gives to us so so that we will know that  
 Use your gifts so so that oth - ers know that  
 So much love that it has to show.

This song is based on a pentatonic scale. When played in G-flat major, musically inclined students may enjoy picking out the tune on the piano using only the black keys.

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Scan  
To  
Listen





# KNOW YOUR FAITH

By Lynne Wardach

## God is with us ! God is with us !

*Understand, all you nations, and submit yourselves  
for God is with us!*

*Hear all you distant lands, You mighty ones, submit yourselves,  
for God is with us!*

*If you strengthen yourselves again, again you will be defeated,  
Form a plan, but the Lord will thwart it,  
for God is with us!*

*Whatever word you speak will not stand  
even among yourselves,  
We will not fear what you fear nor shall we be dismayed,  
for God is with us!*

*Hallow the Lord our God and He will be your fear,  
If you trust in Him, He will be your refuge,  
for God is with us!*

*We will hope in Him and by Him will we be saved,  
Here am I with the children God has given me  
for God is with us!*

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,  
Upon you who dwelt in the shadow of death, a light has shone,  
for God is with us!*

*For a child is born to us; a son is given to us,  
Upon His shoulder dominion rests, Of His peace, there is no end,  
for God is with us!*

*They call Him Angel of Great Counsel, Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God, Master, Prince of Peace,  
Father of the age to come,  
for God is with us!*

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
now and ever and forever. Amen...for God is with us!*

*God is with us! God is with us!  
Understand, all you nations, and submit yourselves  
for God is with us!*



When you attend Compline this Christmas Eve, listen for this hymn. It is known as the Song of the Prophet Isaiah because its verses are taken from the book of Isaiah, chapters 8 and 9 in which God spoke to the prophet shortly before the birth of his own son, centuries before the coming of the Son of God, the Baby Jesus.

Because the Israelites had not lived up to the covenant they established with Him, God told Isaiah that He would no longer hold back the might of their dreaded enemy. Soon the Assyrians would be allowed to overtake them in battle. But not all of the Israelites needed to fear! Those Israelites who had established a friendship with God had given Him the gifts of their obedience and allegiance and in return, God would grant them the gift of protection!

**Luke 6:38** "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Because Christmas is a time for giving gifts, let's take a moment to consider this event a little more closely. How does this gift from God apply to us? We know that every event in the Old Testament was recorded there as a foreshadowing of the events that would happen in the New Testament, which in turn, would foreshadow the events of our own day! There are many people in our world today who do not choose to honor God. They withhold their gift of obedience to him and for this reason, God is not able to return their generosity with the gifts of His protection and grace! Because they haven't lived up to their own covenant with God, He must allow society to be overtaken by its enemies too. It is for this reason that we might see some scary things happening in the world. But this should not frighten us as believers!

**1 Corinthians 2:12** We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

What did God tell the prophet, Isaiah? Those of us who offer Him gifts of love will fare just like the faithful Israelites of the Old Testament and can be assured of the wonderful gifts of His love and protection in return!

**Romans 11:29** For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable.

But what kind of gifts does God want from us?

**Matthew 25:40** "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

**2 Corinthians 9:6-7** Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

So remember to do lots of good deeds for others this Christmas Season, and do so with a generous and cheerful heart!

And remember that God is with us!  
God really is with us!

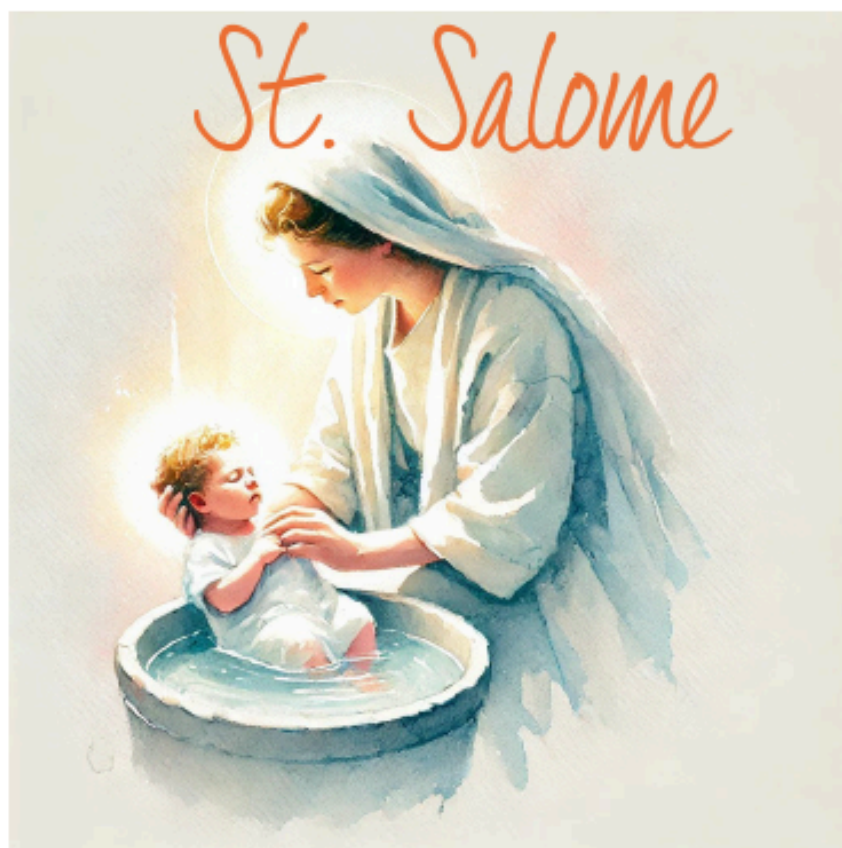
For Printable Ornaments to coordinate with this lesson, visit the Activities Index on the [ByziKids](http://ByziKids.com) Page at [ByziMom.com](http://ByziMom.com)!





# Once Upon a SAINT

by Rebecca O'Loughlin



## Mid-wife and Myrrh-Bearer

My dearest children, in the days just before Jesus was born, homes in Judea were built in such a way that animals lived on the ground level in a kind of cave, and the people lived above them in a house built on top. The home for people consisted of one large family room for cooking, eating, and sleeping, and there was a smaller room that the family would use as a guest lodging when visitors came. People in those days remembered that taking care of a guest was like taking care of an angel of God. You never knew when an angel or even Elijah might come knocking on your door, and they might come in the disguise of someone you least expect.

Caesar Augustus commanded a census of the land. So

Joseph took Mary (who was pregnant with Jesus) on their donkey and traveled over 80 miles from Nazareth by the Sea of Galilee (where Mary was from) to go to Joseph's own home town of Bethlehem in Judea. Bethlehem is where Joseph was born, so he needed to register there for the census. A lot of people were visiting and there was no room in the guest room, so Mary and Joseph had to stay with the animals in the cave.

Not far from Bethlehem is another little town called Bethsaida, which is also in Judea. In Bethsaida lived one of Mary's relatives, a midwife named Salome. Salome lived with her husband Zebedee and their young son

James, who Zebedee was training to be a fisherman (later they had another son named John, but he is not born yet in this story).

One cold day there was a knock on the door.

James opened the door. One of Joseph's relatives was outside, breathless.

"Mary of Nazareth is going to have her baby tonight. The other midwife is already on her way, but Mary is really hoping for Salome to come and help."

James smiled, showing off a gap in his teeth where he had lost his very first tooth only the day before.

"I will tell my eema," he replied.

Salome was kneading bread. "Eema!" James told his mother, "Mary is about to have a baby, and they want you in Bethlehem!"

"A baby?" Salome replied, she smiled at her young son. Then her face grew serious. "But Joseph and Mary have not been married long. I had best go see. Perhaps Mary is having her baby too soon and the child will die. James, you will need to cook the bread for your father's supper tonight. I may be gone for some time. Pray for the little child."

Salome kissed James on the head, gathered her midwifery things (such as clean cloth to wrap the baby in, herbs, and a knife to cut the umbilical cord) and went on her way to Bethlehem. It was already dusk, and with the evening came a bitter cold. She had six miles to go, but she walked fast and trusted that with a first baby it would take Mary some time to deliver.

Salome arrived in Bethlehem. The other midwife stepped out of the cave where all the animals were. She hugged Salome tightly, tears pouring down her cheeks. "Salome, Salome, I will tell you an amazing thing, which I have seen. A virgin has given birth to a child. This is naturally impossible! Isaiah's prophecy has come true! The Messiah is here!"

Salome laughed. "Impossible! Are you telling me that Joseph is not the father of Mary's baby? That she had a baby miraculously and by the Breath of God? I will need proof of this!"

Salome went into the cave, ready to rebuke Mary for the ridiculous tale, but no sooner had she touched Mary when her hand withered up just like a grape withers up into a raisin.

Salome cried out "woe to me, because of my sin! I have doubted God and His Word, that a virgin would bear a Son! Ah Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner! How am I to

help women give birth with only one hand?"

One of the angels who was there for Jesus' birth saw that Salome truly felt sorry for doubting God, and he spoke to her: "Salome, touch baby Jesus, and you will be healed."

Salome reached out to hold baby Jesus. Salome's hand was healed when she touched His soft baby skin. She rocked the sweet baby in her arms. This was the very first miracle that Jesus brought about, and He was less than an hour old!

"Thanks be to God!" cried Salome, "I have seen the Messiah today."

Salome stayed with Mary and helped her with baby Jesus for several weeks (James and Zebedee were quite used to taking care of themselves since Salome was often gone helping mothers and babies). Can you imagine a better Christmas gift than being allowed to serve the Messiah and His mother in their time of need?

The angel spoke once more to Salome: "be sure not to say anything to anyone about the miracle that has taken place here."

Salome replied, "ok, but I don't like to keep secrets from my husband!"

"You may tell Zebedee, because after all you are made one. But it is not Jesus' time to be known as the promised Messiah in public just yet."

Salome waited until Christ was a grown man, and then she became one of Jesus' followers. Her sons became Jesus' Apostles. St. Mark wrote that Salome was at Jesus' Crucifixion, and she was also one of the Myrrh-bearers at His tomb, so she is one of the only people who gave Jesus a gift both at His birth and His death! Both gifts involved herbs, herbs for a healthy birth and herbs for the dead. Hyssop was probably one of those herbs as it was used for cleansing and purifying. You can drink hyssop tea during winter months to help with respiratory illness too.

Did you ever hear this story about St. Salome the Myrrh-Bearer before? I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. You can find the real story in the Protoevangelium of St. James.

As we are contemplating gifts, one wonderful way to honor Salome around the birth of Christ is to ask a birthing center what supplies they need. In the Book of Matthew Jesus says: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me" (Matthew 25:40). Imagine bringing diapers for Baby Jesus!



# I SPY IN MY LITTLE ICON



By Kim Fritzges

## Nativity Icon



Icon used by permission of Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. Photo courtesy of Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai.

This icon of the Nativity of Our Lord is from St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, Egypt. It is a Coptic wax encaustic icon from the 7th or 16th century, scholars are undecided on the exact time frame of this icon. Wax encaustic is beeswax mixed with earth pigments (finely ground up rocks and minerals), to make colored wax encaustic paints from which the early iconographers used to create their icons.

There is much activity happening in this icon. In the center we see the infant Jesus and the Theotokos inside a cave. Jesus is lying in an ornate crib unlike the typical hay manger we see in icons. His mother is reclining next to him on a red mattress or blanket. A star shines over the entrance to the cave descending from a dome, which represents Heaven. To the right are the three Magi. Also known as the three wise men or the three kings. Above are four angels, two on each side, one which is pointing down to one of the Magi. There is a donkey

and an ox behind the crib, do you see their tongues are out as if kissing Jesus or warming him with their breath?

Underneath Jesus is a shepherd playing a flute-like instrument with his sheep around him. Below on the left are the three horses belonging to the three Magi. Next we see Joseph. Tradition tells us he is pondering the virgin birth after Satan has put doubts in his mind. The old man in the far right is believed to represent Satan. Between Joseph and the old man we see the two midwives washing Jesus in a basin. Do you see the similar design on the crib, basin, and the chair one of the midwives is sitting on?

Let's look at the three Magi and the gifts they hold in their hands that they will give to Jesus. If you look closely at the Magi, you will see one is older with gray hair and beard, one appears to be middle aged with brown hair and a beard, and one is a young man with no beard at all. Their names are Balthasar, Melchior, and Caspar (or Gaspar as he is sometimes called). Their gifts are gold (a gift for a king, a precious metal), frankincense (represents God as priests in the temple burn frankincense as an offering to God), and myrrh (a healing and anointing oil).

They seem like strange gifts to give a baby, however, they were very useful. The gold was valuable as money to provide for lodging, food, clothing, and travel. The frankincense could be used to make an offering at the Temple, and the myrrh is a healing herb when steeped in oil for anointing injuries.

My daughter used to tape a piece of paper with a ribbon bow on her bedroom door each year with her gift to Jesus written on it. Each year she would change it. When she was younger it would be gifts such as obeying her parents, being consistent with her daily prayers, cleaning up her toys without being asked, and taking good care of her pets. As she grew older she would give the gift of her time to others helping elderly neighbors clean homes, volunteering at the local pro life center, and soup kitchen. There are many different ways to give gifts to Jesus everyday, what will you give him this year?

The Nativity of Our Lord is celebrated December 25th and followers of the Old Calendar celebrate Nativity on January 7th.

Luke 2: 10-14 (KJV)

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."





Based on the mosaic of the Nativity at The Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Philadelphia, PA  
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# MEANWHILE, BACK IN BYZANTIUM

by Kathryn Reetzke

## A Wealthy Widow's Gift

There is a story about a wealthy widow who was important to the suffering Byzantine Empire in the 10th Century. The widow Danielis traveled from Patras, in modern day Western Greece, to Constantinople and gave most of her wealth to the new Emperor Basil I (seen in the first manuscript image). Emperor Basil I came to rule in 867 AD, after the sudden death of Emperor Michael III who was an impious and unpopular king. Emperor Basil I, known as the "second Justinian," returned the empire to Eastern Christian practices and revived the economy.

The widow Danielis is recorded as bestowing gifts of land (80 land grants), money, and slaves to both Emperor Basil I and his son Emperor Leo VI (The Wise). Emperor Leo VI was so wise in fact, that he freed all 3,000 slaves given to him so that they could settle in Italy. In this manuscript, we see the importance of wealthy Byzantines bestowing gifts according to what they had, especially upon righteous leaders. Emperor Leo VI used these gifts to grant freedom and security to his empire.

I am sure you know the story of the poor widow who had one mite (coin of little value) in the Gospels and who generously gave her coin to the Temple. Each of us has different gifts, and they aren't always related to physical things like the example of the wealthy widow. Some of us have the gift of music and can sing in services. Others have talents for helping the poor, making things for the lonely, or feeding the hungry with our cooking skills.

May we use our gifts to support the ministries within the church, especially during this season of the Nativity!



Widow Danielis being carried to Constantinople to make offerings to Emperor Basil I.



Manuscript of Widow Danielis offering gifts to Emperor Leo VI, from History of John Stylitzes 1250 AD, Public Access image.



# St. Nicholas's Purses



## St. Nicholas

is known for tossing bags of gold down the chimney and for calming the storms for fishermen.

Serve these little bags of gold coins along with some baked fish and start a conversation with your family about the great deeds of St. Nicholas on his special day!



## Ingredients

- Zest and juice of one orange (or lemon)
- 1 tsp grated, fresh ginger
- 4 Tbsp honey or maple syrup
- 3 cups baby carrots, cut into coins
- ½ cup water
- Dash salt & black pepper to taste
- ½ pound of prepared phyllo dough
- Optional: 2 Tbsp chopped fresh dill

\*\*Serves 8 people

## Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Zest and juice one orange and combine both with 2 Tbsp of the honey and ginger in a small mixing bowl and set aside.
3. Place diced carrots and 10 long scallions into a saucepan with ½ cup of water and dash of salt and cook until the carrots are just tender and the water has evaporated. Remove the scallions and set them in cold water to use as ties later on.
4. Add the juice mixture to the carrots in the saucepan and stir to coat. Continue to cook for a minute to form a glaze on the carrot coins, and remove from heat and season with salt & pepper.
5. Thin the remaining 2 Tbsp of honey with 2 Tbsp of water and set aside.
6. Open the package of phyllo and, working quickly, cut the stack of dough in half, width-wise. Stack six halves for each purse, place a large spoonful of carrot coins in the center, then gather the edge of the dough at the top and twist to form a little purse.
7. Place each purse onto a parchment-lined baking sheet and brush with the remaining honey mixture. Bake for 15 minutes until browned. Remove from the oven and place each purse onto a serving platter, then tie each one around the top with a blanched slice of leek or scallion.

For more recipes like this one, check out *Cooking Connections* on the gift shop page at [ByziMom.com](http://ByziMom.com)!

# Gifts



## Across

4. It is more blessed to give than to \_\_\_\_ (Acts 20:35)
5. Ask, and it will be \_\_\_\_ to you (Matthew 7:7)
7. yet another gift from the Magi
8. Jesus was born here
11. For God so loved the \_\_\_\_, that he gave his only Son (John 3:16)
12. The angels told the \_\_\_\_ in the fields the good news of Jesus' birth

## Down

1. Which saint is known as a gift-giver?
2. another gift from the Magi
3. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the \_\_\_\_ (Luke 12:32)
6. God loves a \_\_\_\_ giver (2 Corinthians 9:7)
9. Every good gift and every \_\_\_\_ gift is from above (James 1:17)
10. a gift from the Magi

