

Last-Minute Christmas Gift Guide 2020

The remaining days of Advent are few. The celebration of Jesus' birthday is almost here! The Register offers more Christmas gifts for everyone on your list. We hope that these gift ideas will ease your shopping schedule and allow ample time to prepare your heart and home for the coming of Christ. To order: EWTNRC.com or (800) 854-6316 (unless otherwise noted). (Prices subject to change.)



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Festive Finds From EWTN

1. CHILDREN'S WOODEN BUILDABLE NATIVITY KIT
This 11-piece two-dimensional Nativity set is made of wood and is hand-painted in bright colors; imported from Italy. Warning: This set contains small parts that could be a choking hazard; not for children under 4 years of age. Item: 51078, \$22.95.

2. THREE MAGI 500-PIECE GLITTER PUZZLE
This puzzle with bright, sparkly glitter features a beautiful image of the Three Magi by artist Dona Gelsinger. Measures 21 inches wide x 15 inches high when finished. Item: 31990, \$12.95.

3. LIGHTED HOLY FAMILY PORCELAIN ORNAMENT
This round porcelain ornament illuminates the Holy Family with a small LED light at the top. Beautifully crafted from the House of Fontanini, each ornament is hand-painted and measures 3 1/4 inches wide x 4 1/4 inches high x 1 3/4 inches deep. (Requires three LR44 batteries, which are included and can be replaced.) Item: 56388, \$16.50.

4. RED AND GREEN CHRISTMAS ROSARY
This beautiful and festive Christmas rosary is made with red crystal Hail Mary beads and green double-capped crystal Our Father beads. The centerpiece features a silhouette cut medal of the Nativity. Item: P416R, \$20.

5. HOLY FAMILY VINTAGE WOOD PLAQUE
This vintage wall plaque features the beautiful Italian artwork of Fratelli Bonella. The wood plaque measures 7 1/2 inches wide x 9 inches high and comes with a hook on the back for hanging. Imported from Italy. Item: 48805, \$11.50.

6. HOLY FAMILY LIGHTED SWIRL GLITTER GLOBE
This perpetual-motion glitter dome features a 5-inch globe painted with a dark-blue night sky filled with stars and a cut-out silhouette of the Nativity stable with animals and angels. The globe sits on a silver base and is filled with silver confetti that swirls continuously and reflects the light when the switch is turned on. (Requires three AA batteries; not included.) Measures approximately 5 3/4 inches high. Item: 13237, \$35.

7. 'JOY TO THE WORLD' CHRISTMAS SERVING TRAY
Made of sturdy, lightweight wood, this festive serving tray features a Christmas tree in the center created using the words: "Joy to the World" in a fancy green scrolling font and "The Lord Is Come" in gold as the "trunk." Tray measures 18 inches long x 12 inches wide x 1 3/4 inches deep. Item: ST205, \$20.

8. 'JOY' CHRISTMAS NATIVITY CROSS
This devotional Christmas decoration is designed to look like a rustic cross carved out of a tree with bark around the edges, the word "Joy" cut out in the cross-beam, and Joseph, Mary and Baby Jesus in the front. At the very top is a large gold Star of Bethlehem. Made of resin and hand-painted, it measures 12 inches high x 7 1/4 inches wide, with a keyhole hook on the back for hanging. Item: 66086, \$30.

9. 'TO US A CHILD IS GIVEN' STABLE SCENE
This festive Nativity piece features two stable animals keeping watch over Baby Jesus lying in a manger bowered by a canopy of holly leaves and pinecones. Just beneath the Christ Child are the words: "To us a Child is given" (Isaiah 9:6). Made of a resin-stone mix, the scene measures 2 3/4 inches wide x 8 inches high x 1 3/4 inches deep. Item: 63241, \$19.

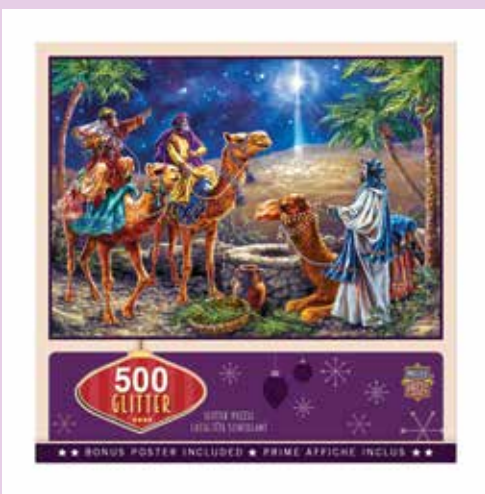
10. 'SILENT NIGHT' TEA TOWEL
This decorative white flour-sack tea towel features the beginning line of the popular Christmas carol from the early 1800s: "Silent night, holy night." Made of 100% cotton; it measures 28 inches x 29 inches when open and approximately 8 inches wide x 14 inches high when folded to feature the design. Flour-sack towels are super absorbent and lint free; made in the U.S. Item: TTQ4, \$10.

11. CHRISTMAS MUG
On the front of the mug, in fancy script, is written: "Oh come let us adore Him." The mug holds 14 ounces; microwave- and dishwasher-safe. Item: MG133, \$12.

Good Viewing

FATIMA MOVIE
Fatima is a powerful and uplifting feature film that tells the dramatic true story of the apparitions of the Mother of God in 1917 to three shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal. Starring Harvey Keitel, Gorin Visnjic, Joaquim de Almeida, Sonia Braga, Stephanie Gil, and Lucia Moniz, the film has been endorsed by the Vatican and the Fatima Shrine and includes an original song by Andrea Bocelli. Bonus features include eight "Behind the Scenes" featurettes and a special piece highlighting Bocelli and his inspiring song. 113 minutes. Item: 7292D, \$22.95.

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Creating a Catholic Home

The Mercantile's Products Are for the Generations

BY PATTI ARMSTRONG

Carrie Gress describes herself as the “least crafty person I know,” so creating candles for her online store, The Mercantile, is an irony with the stamp of the Holy Spirit. It began with candles and has grown to include 20 products.

This wife, mother, author and speaker with a doctorate in philosophy chooses beautiful products that attract women to the heart of the home and deeper into the faith. Her two most recent co-authored books especially draw on the universal language of home as a place of nurturing and love: *Theology of Home: Finding the Eternal in the Everyday* and *Theology of Home: The Spiritual Art of Homemaking* (both available from EWTN Religious Catalogue).

When Gress created the *Theology of Home* online magazine, having a store was a way to support it. The idea of selling candles began after she received one as a gift as part of a fundraising effort to raise money for rescue dogs.

“It occurred to me that we [Catholics] have all those things in spades,” she said.

“We have beautiful scents, we have a beautiful mission, and we have Our Lady.”

She added, “People love candles. I looked at how we could pull this back in a way that draws us into prayer and also something very beautiful that can be a gift.”

After contacting local candle makers and finding that no one could or would make the high-quality soy candles with Our Lady’s Star of the Sea logo she envisioned, she and her husband, Joe, began researching what it would take to make them.

“Joe does a lot of the mechanics and scientific stuff and pours the wax,” Gress explained.

“I do the cleaning up and boxing and shipping.”

The oldest four of their five children, who are 8 months and 6, 8, 9 and 11 years old, help out, making it a family business (and thereby indicating why they do not wholesale).

“We can’t add a night shift,” Gress said, explaining that Joe also works full time outside of the home.

The candles include “Guadalupe,” with a rose foundation mixed with Mexican oranges, and “Baptism,” inspired by the ancient chrism called the “holy anointing oil of God” used for the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and priestly ordinations. Gress recommends having the candles blessed so that they become sacramentals. As the website for The Mercantile, TOHmercantile.com, explains, “Few things transform a room like a lit candle, sparking light, warmth and life. There is a reason why even in our age of electricity, candles maintain an important place in our daily lives and worship. Stella Maris & Co. hand-poured candles bring both of these elements together through the riches of Catholicism’s two millennia of beautiful symbols, scents and sacramentals.”

“WE HAVE BEAUTIFUL
SCENTS, WE HAVE A
BEAUTIFUL MISSION, AND
WE HAVE OUR LADY.”
— CARRIE GRESS ON HOW
THE CHURCH INSPIRED HER
PRODUCT LINE

Customer responses confirm that Gress has found a niche for her products.

A 90-year-old customer who lights a candle for evening prayers told Gress, “I feel so much less lonely. The candle makes me feel like God is really present.”

Another customer shared that she bought a candle for a relative who was very angry at the Church. “The next time she went to the relative’s home, she was surprised to see the candle with an image of Mary behind it,” Gress said. “Another customer who was struggling with infertility said the candle was a gift she could give at baptisms that didn’t make her want to cry.”

Gress’ grandmother once asked Gress what she wanted to be when she grew up. “A customer,” she said shyly. While she was living in Poland, France and

HOME OFFERINGS. Products at The Mercantile include rosaries, candles and charcuterie boards. Courtesy of Theology of Home/The Mercantile

Rome before having children, Gress was fascinated with quaint shops such as a 600-year-old apothecary shop that sold soaps and candles.

“I love to hear the history and story behind products; how people have kept the traditions alive and how they are using them to pass the faith down,” Gress said.

By way of example, she referenced a sterling-silver rosary that had been her husband’s great-grandmother’s and which gives her a sense of praying with the generations.

This generational outlook inspires her shop’s offerings.

“We are looking at older things and how to put them in the marketplace so that they are contemporary and compelling,” Gress explained.

Some new additions include charcuterie boards, travel candles, sterling rosaries, goat’s milk soap and sacred art.

“All these things I’m working on fit together in a way I never anticipated,” Gress said. “This is how you see the Holy Spirit coming out.”

She said that even her doctorate in philosophy plays a role. “I realize the intellectual side is important, but I have also come to see how incarnational women are,” Gress said. “We are also tactile and visual.”

According to Gress, it’s a matter of using her degree to think outside the box to reach women, using treasures to enrich one’s faith by bringing the spiritual to the level of the material.

Patti Armstrong writes from North Dakota.

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Christmas Desserts
CHOCOLATE CAKE SURPRISE

Ingredients
Serves 8
8 oz. Dark chocolate
1/2 cup Butter
1 Orange, zested
4 Eggs
3/4 cup Powdered sugar
3/4 cup Flour
Butter for greasing

Preparation
Cut the chocolate into coarse rubes using a double boiler, gently melt the chocolate and butter and combine with the orange and. Whisk the eggs and place in the chocolate mixture, then add the powdered sugar and flour and mix gently but thoroughly. Place the mixture in the fridge for at least 4 hours.
Preheat oven to 325°. Coat 1/2 cup ramekins with butter and then dust them with flour. Carefully fill the molds with the chocolate mixture, place them on a baking sheet, and bake for about 12-14 minutes. Be careful not to overcook or you will lose the liquid center.
Serve right away on individual dessert plates.

Christmas Dinner at the Vatican

The Vatican Christmas Cookbook shares with the world the glorious spirit of joy and feasting that characterizes Christmastime at the Vatican.

Acclaimed chef and former Swiss Guard David Geisser presents more than 100 original recipes that have been prepared and served at the Vatican during the Advent and Christmas seasons for more than 1,000 years, offering a deeply historical and uniquely Catholic way of celebrating the holidays in your home each year.

A marvelous cooking manual and so much more, *The Vatican Christmas Cookbook* includes stunning behind-the-scenes photographs of the Vatican that elevate this collection of sublime recipes to a work of art.

Readers will enjoy engaging stories on the history of Christmas at the Vatican, how popes have celebrated the Nativity, and the story of *De Re Culinaria* — the oldest cookbook ever published.

Best of all, readers will have a wealth of magnificent Christmas dinner recipes at their fingertips.

From roast lamb to Cornish game hens, German potato salad



THE VATICAN CHRISTMAS COOKBOOK
By David Geisser, Thomas Kelly
Sophia Institute Press, 2020
192 pages, \$34.95
Item: 3057
To order: EWTNRC.com or
(800) 854-6316

to beef risotto, lemon sugar cookies to dark Toblerone mousse, each is sure to wow and delight family and friends.

For all who love to bake, braise, broil and brown; share meals with loved ones; and marinate in the wonders and grandeur of the Vatican, the Swiss Guard is pleased to offer this seasonal culinary masterpiece.

Enjoy!

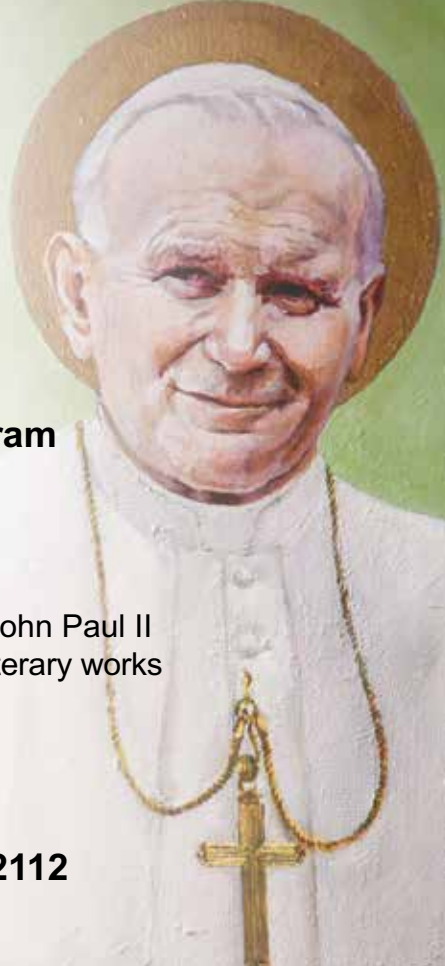
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Christmas 2020 Children’s Book Picks

BY KERRY CRAWFORD AND PATRICIA A. CRAWFORD

The Grumpy Old Ox
Written by **Anthony DeStefano**
Illustrated by **Richard Cowdrey**
Sophia Institute Press, 2020
36 pages, \$16.95
The sight of the innkeeper’s prideful ox has dimmed, and his heart has shrunk. Cantankerous and mean, he shelters in the stable (“The stable was dark / but he didn’t mind. / He stayed there alone, / just bitter and blind.”). His bitterness gives way to curiosity and, then, compassion when a poor couple arrives and the young woman gives birth.
The old ox reaches deep into himself and gives from what he has. (“He looked at the woman / in ox-talk he said: / ‘Take my straw manger / for your baby’s bed’”). Through the special grace of Christmas, the once-grumpy old ox is transformed.
Ages 8-12. Online at [EWTNRC.com](#)

or call (800) 854-6316; Item: 1787.

The Tiny Star
Written by **Arthur Ginolfi**
Illustrated by **Pat Schories**
Good Books, 2019
32 pages, \$14.99
Poor Starlet! The smallest star in the sky, no one can see her twinkle. “How big or small you are is not important,” the wise, old moon tells her. “Someday, somewhere, someone will see you.” Years pass. Suddenly, Starlet finds herself tumbling through the darkness. Landing on the roof of a small stable, Starlet hears a baby crying and peeks to see how she might help. As Starlet’s rays shine on the newborn, something amazing happens! Ages 3-6.

The Gifts of the Animals: A Christmas Tale
Written by **Carole Gerber**
Illustrated by **Yumi Shimokawara**
Familius, 2019
32 pages, \$17.99
“The gentle beasts of sky and

earth / prepare their stable for Christ’s birth.” So begins this beloved story of the humble gifts offered by the animals. There is a quiet beauty to the rhyme of this story as well as its illustrations. The tale of the animals surrounds the gentle story of when Love came down to earth and was embraced (“Mary counts His tiny toes / and wraps the Child in swaddling clothes.”) Ages 3-8.

The Shepherd’s Story
Written by **Jimmy Dunne**
Illustrated by **Ivan Kravets**
Loyola, 2019
32 pages, \$19.95
Take Clement Moore’s famous poem; keep the rhythm; stir in its touchstone phrases; change the narrator; situate it in Judea; and tell a new but ancient story. “’Twas the very first Christmas, when all through the hills, / the towns of Judea were perfectly still,” a young shepherd boy recalls; and, later, “When what to my wondering eyes should appear, a glorious angel say-

ing, ‘Nothing to fear ...’” Cheerful illustrations accompany this upbeat, hope-filled tale. Ages 5-11.

The Gospel Told by the Animals
Written by **Bénédicte Delelis**
Illustrated by **Éric Puybaret**
Ignatius, 2018
32 pages, \$14.99
Animal narrators share the good news of Jesus in this collection of 12 stories. “A Faithful Dog” and “A Thoughtful Ox” are ideal for Christmas. Readers follow the dog and his master, the shepherd, in search of a baby in a manger. There, the old ox, surprised by the birth of a newborn, remembers, “I breathed on him gently to warm him ... born in my poor little stable.” Ages 5 and up.

Baby’s First Nativity
Illustrated by **Nomar Perez**
Little Bee Books, 2019
16 pages, \$6.99
This colorful board book introduces the birth of Jesus in the simplest, age-appropriate way for the

youngest of readers (or listeners!).
On each sturdy page, a bold, bright picture with just a word or two will acquaint little ones with those who were there in Bethlehem. Readers will meet Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus, along with angels, shepherds and kings. The stable, manger and animals also have a role to play. Ages baby to 3.

ABC Get to Know the Saints With Me!
Written by **Caroline Perkins**
Illustrated by **Valerie Delgado**
EWTN Publishing, 2020
56 pages, \$17.95
This delightful alphabet book serves up the saints in a fun way. Saints who are well-known (for example, John Paul II) and lesser known (Xantippa) — as well as a saint just right for the Christmas season (Nicholas) — are introduced to young readers. The simple rhyming text (“Aa is for Anthony for when things are lost. / Bb is for Benedict fighting evil at all cost.”) cheerfully draws kids’

attention, and the full-page illustration for each saint sustains it. Children of today are frequently shown side by side with these holy men and women who encourage them to become saints, too. Ages 4-10. Online at [EWTNRC.com](#) or call (800) 854-6316; Item: 81012.

God the Father and the Best Day Ever
Written by **Gracie Jagla**
Illustrated by **Jacob Popcak**
OSV Kids, 2020
32 pages, \$16.95
It’s a tall order to trace salvation history, but this book gives it a go — in joyful rhyme, no less. Paired with bold illustrations, it tells of the profound love of the Father since the beginning of time. (“He looked on his people / And promised with love, / I’ll join you below / Then you’ll join me above!”). Ages 5-8.
The Crawford Sisters write from Pittsburgh. Books are available at Amazon, unless otherwise noted.

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Discovering (Secret) History

BY JOSEPH PRONECHEN

The team of Grzegorz Górny and Janusz Rosikon has done it again. They have followed in the footsteps of their last four books, including *Fatima Mysteries* and *Witnesses to Mystery*, about relics of Christ’s passion and death, with another lavishly illustrated book, this time taking readers into the *Vatican Secret Archives*.

These archives are contained on shelves that, if lined end to end, would stretch 53 miles. Do all contain “secrets”? Well, no. In the official Latin words used, *secretum* means “private” or “personal,” since the archives were meant for the use of the popes. This was not a lending library. But now that the archives are open, in a sense, they correct many misconceptions and downright lies fabricated against the Church — and believed — along the centuries.

Górny the writer and Rosikon the photographer uncover and help solve

VATICAN SECRET ARCHIVES
Unknown Pages of Church History
By Grzegorz Górny and Janusz Rosikon
Ignatius Press, 2020
370 pages; \$34.95
Item: 3180
To order: [EWTNRC.com](#) or (800) 854-6316

Take the trial of Galileo, which is seen in a whole new light after St. John Paul II opened all the documents in the Vatican Secret Archives dealing with Galileo and his trial for clerical and secular scientific researchers to pore over.

Much of the “legend” about his treatment has been debunked.

These archives show Galileo, according to his own remembrances, was treated kindly by Pope Paul V. All he was asked to do was to present his findings at that point as a theory, not as proven fact, since he was unable to offer proof. He agreed but did not follow through. He did have disputes with people over this, but often due to his own hotheaded temperament. When he came to Rome for trial, he “took up residence in a five-room apartment, with a view of the Vatican Gardens and a servant at his disposal, all at the Holy See’s expense,” the authors relate. Galileo was never put in prison, but spent a

CONTINUES ON PAGE B5

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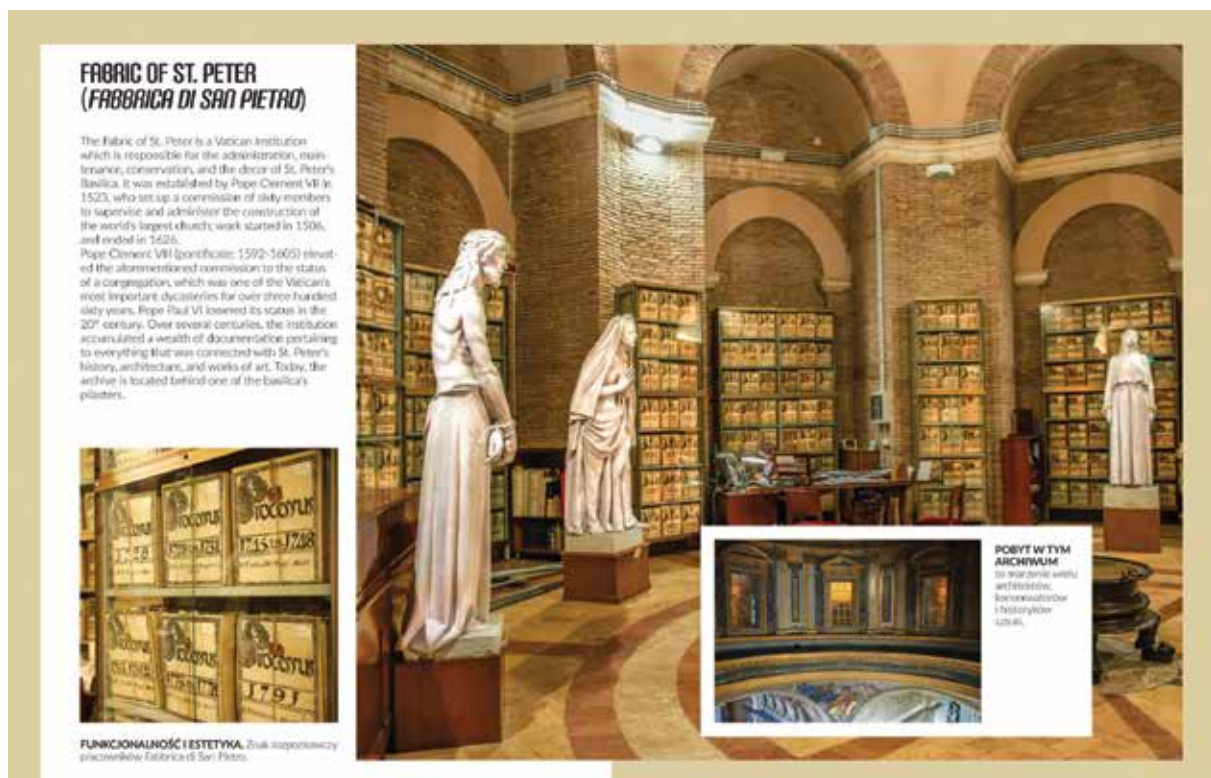
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Secret

CONTINUING PAGE B4 STORY

three-year house arrest. Scholars and dignitaries visited him, and he could carry on his research and writings. He was not imprisoned.

"The second part of his punishment was a weekly recital of the Penitential Psalms for three years, which he continued later on his own free will," the authors write. "Nobody questioned Galileo's faith or his religious convictions, neither during the trial or before nor after; he stressed throughout his life that he was a faithful son of the Catholic Church."

The authors address both the Roman and Spanish Inquisitions, giving most of the chapter's weight to the former and making it clear the latter was state-run and totally unconnected to Rome. Górny and Rosikon recount how, after John Paul II had all the archives' 4,500 documents on the Inquisition released, the "secrets" revealed that secular authorities and public opinion caused the harm that was later blamed on the Church.

On the other hand, the duo tells readers, "The majority of the trials conducted by the inquisitors ended in acquittals, admonishments, or Church penances." In the worst area of rampant heresy, only 1% ended in death sentences. Surprisingly, it was the heretics and their methods that, in a sense, prompted St. Dominic to found a new order with a preaching



IGNATIUS PRESS, COURTESY CARMEL COMMUNICATIONS

mission. He was given the Rosary by the Blessed Mother, which proved "to be extraordinarily effective during missions among the Cathars [a heretical group active in the 12th-14th centuries, which taught a form of dualism, the erroneous belief in two gods, one good and one evil]. Since then, it has been universally recognized in the Catholic Church that Mary is the best slayer of heresy, and the Rosary has become the most-used Catholic spiritual weapon."

The authors, who had access to the Vatican archives, also traveled to where some events occurred, meeting with experts who further shed light on the events chronicled in the archives, detailing here the Crusades and there the story of the Church doing missionary work in Mexico.

Regarding Our Lady of Guadalupe, readers see photos of the Nican

Mopohua Manuscript discovered in the 1980s that detailed the story of St. Juan Diego from someone who knew him and a cover shot of the 1548 *Codex Escalada*, discovered in 1995, that also tells the story of Juan Diego.

Rosikon's photos accompany other pictures, artwork, illustrations and documents brimming with interest and color — hundreds of them bring the history to life visually.

One poignant picture is of a monstrance, complete with golden rays, made of wood, cardboard and paper, and used by the chaplain to the insurgent Vendée army as the Catholics of the Vendée region were the target of genocide by the French Revolutionaries in the late 18th century.

Overall, this book sets the historical record straight.

Joseph Pronechen is a Register staff writer.

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Cross Catholic Outreach’s Water Projects Provide Safe Options in Poor Communities

In recent years, water scarcity has been identified as one of the most critical problems poor families face in developing countries, and the Catholic missionaries serving in those nations have become more and more involved in the effort to find solutions.

While approaches to providing safe water have varied by location and situation, the concerted effort to save lives and restore hope has been a major success story for the Church. It should also be a source of pride for those who donated generously to fund the work.

“This has been an incredible mission to provide safe water. While some water is typically available in every area, the problem is contamination,” explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, one of the leading Catholic charities involved in solving the water crisis. “For example, we’re working on a major project in Nicaragua now [see story on opposite page] where people are getting sick because they have no other option but to collect water from shallow wells or rivers contaminated with human and animal waste, bacteria, and parasites. They use those terrible sources because they must have water to survive, but every time they drink or offer a cup to their children, they risk illness... even death.”

According to Cavnar, infants and young children are at greatest risk of dying because their vomiting and

bouts of diarrhea can lead to rapid dehydration, triggering serious medical issues. Fortunately, local clergy have become alert to these signs of trouble and have been quick to seek solutions.

“I remember one case where a visiting priest saw a child’s coffin carried by a funeral procession. He spoke with local families and discovered it was one of many infant deaths they had experienced that year. When he discovered contaminated water was the cause, he contacted us for help, and with the support of our donors, we were able to address the problem and get clean, safe water flowing in the village again,” Cavnar said. “In that case, the solution was to cap a nearby spring and pipe the water into the area. Everyone praised God for the lives that were saved.”

The water project Cross Catholic Outreach is organizing in Nicaragua will be engineered differently, but Cavnar believes it will have the same dramatic impact.

“With the support of Catholic donors, we will use a professional rig to drill three 300-foot wells. It’s the best way to ensure we hit an adequate supply of sweet water,” Cavnar said. “Then, an electric pump will be installed. It will draw the water into a large holding tank with an added filtration system. The final stage of the project will involve the installation of PVC pipes to carry

the water to nearby villages and a local school. The plan is to have water taps inside and outside the homes. With this plan, the families will have 24-hour access to safe water, and will get as much safe water as they need. There will also be water for gardens and crops.”

Water projects like this have become extremely popular with Cross Catholic Outreach’s donors, according to Cavnar.

“I think there are three things that appeal to them. They understand the importance of water and rightly view their contribution as a lifesaving gift. Second, they value the selfless efforts of our Catholic missionaries overseas and want to support their efforts. Last but not least, they know they have been blessed to have safe water at their own fingertips, and to thank God, they want to help others in need.”

Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach water programs and other outreaches to the poor can contribute through the ministry brochure inserted in this issue or send tax-deductible gifts to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01543, PO Box 97168, Washington DC 20090-7168. The ministry has a special need for partners willing to make gifts on a monthly basis. Use the inserted brochure to become a Mission Partner or write “Monthly Mission Partner” on mailed checks to be contacted about setting up those arrangements.



Donor-funded water projects are transforming communities and restoring hope, and Cross Catholic Outreach hopes to expand these efforts even more this year.

Unique Christmas Catalog Created To Bless Donors — *and the World’s Poor*

If you are like most people, your mailbox has been choked with Christmas catalogs this year. In fact, their arrival has almost become a sign of the season, like the appearance of house lights and department store decorations.

This Advent and Christmas season, Cross Catholic Outreach intends to offer a catalog too — but theirs is a very different offering with a very different purpose. It has been designed to bless both givers and receivers by using the holiday gift-giving tradition to help the world’s poorest families.

Rather than offer gizmos, gadgets, neck ties and jewelry, the Cross Catholic Christmas Catalog is giving Catholics with a concern for the poor an opportunity to share the blessings in their lives with needy families by sponsoring practical and urgently needed items like medicines, milk powder, seeds for farming, access to safe water or materials for roof repairs. Of course, it also offers blessings for children, including toys and sports equipment, so individuals can choose to sponsor both practical items suitable for families and gifts

to bring children joy.

“Like most Christmas catalogs, ours offers lots of items so donors can choose to give something very specific. That said, they can also make a general gift to address the poor’s greatest needs,” explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, the Catholic relief and development ministry offering this program. “When donors choose to give to Greatest Need, they provide us and the Catholic missions we serve with the freedom to address any urgent need. The priests and religious

sisters we support really appreciate that flexibility. It’s the best way to empower their work among the poor.”

This unique Christmas catalog is easy to access. Readers will find a link for it at the ministry’s website (www.CrossCatholic.org) or they can reach it directly entering the web address: CrossCatholic.org/Christmas.

“Our hope is that everyone will be blessed by the experience,” Cavnar said. “It’s the wonderful way for us to celebrate the birth of our merciful Lord!”

American Catholics Are Blessing the Poor in Developing Countries by Addressing Their Urgent Need for Safe Water

Before embarking on his long walk to school, 9-year-old Jahzeel Vega has a critical chore to undertake. He must take an old bucket to his family’s hand-dug well and carefully lower it on a rope, hoping to collect enough water there for his family’s daily needs. During the rainy season, he should be able to draw out three buckets full — enough for drinking and bathing that day — but during dry spells, he may not be that lucky. If the well is empty, another water source will need to be found, possibly much farther away.

water. It makes them sick, but they drink it anyway because there is no alternative yet,” explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, a respected Catholic ministry known for its programs to help the poor in developing countries. “You can imagine how that makes a mother like Francisca feel. Water is essential to her family’s survival — but each time they drink, they risk getting sick.”

In this case, Cavnar has learned, the shallow well may be particularly dangerous because it is located near

Francisca Vega told them. She added that her neighbors in the village of La Danta Aserradores share her hardships and desperately want to find a solution to the water problem.

“We as parents have dreams for our children: to see that they have a better condition than ours,” she said. “We want them to have better health, to enjoy a decent and dignified life.”

Francisca’s husband, Jairo, also suffers from a serious health problem — kidney failure — but his condition is caused by having too little water to drink. He and other field laborers can easily fall prey to dehydration while toiling under the scorching Nicaraguan sun.

“To alleviate his kidney problems, Jairo would need to drink more of the contaminated water, and that’s obviously not a viable solution,” Cavnar said. “No, the solution to all of these terrible hardships must involve outside intervention. The Church needs to get involved, and safe water needs to be made available to the poor. We and our U.S. donors are prepared to support that effort. If we all come together to solve this problem, Francisca’s village can get the water system it needs to supply families with safe, abundant water. We need to ensure that happens.”

To achieve a solution like this, Cross Catholic Outreach typically works with Catholic leaders already serving in the area. It is a cost-effective approach that allows more of a donor’s gift to be used on the project itself, according to Cavnar.

“In this kind of partnership, the local mission’s staff becomes our ground support team,” he explained. “They organize local families to join in the work too, so we can usually keep the expenses on the project very low. Our intent is to use this approach to build a new water system for Francisca’s village [see the related feature story above]. If we can get the help of Catholic donors in the U.S. to fund this effort, it will finally change the lives of the people in this Nicaraguan



community. Jahzeel Vega will be able to draw water from a convenient tap, his mother won’t need to fear for her family’s health, and his father will be able to recover from his illness because they will have an abundant source of

water.”

According to Cavnar, safe water is underground and ready to be tapped.

“This is our opportunity to bless the poor with a gift that will transform lives and have a lasting impact,” he said.



As Jahzeel’s mother, Francisca, watches the boy, she probably feels a sense of dread. That’s because she knows something the boy does not. While the water he is drawing up is critical to the family, it is also unsafe. Unseen bacteria and parasites taint virtually all the water sources in this area, but the families living in Chinandega, Nicaragua, must drink what they can collect — *because they have no other choice*.

“Many of these Nicaraguan villages only have access to contaminated

filthy latrines. These pit latrines leak pollutants into the water table. Animal waste, pesticides and even saltwater seeping in from the coast may also be a part of the problem. To learn how it might help, Cross Catholic Outreach’s staff spoke to local families and local ministry leaders. They concluded the unsafe water is having a dire impact on youngest children, including Jahzeel Vega’s 3-year-old sister, Emelyn.

“Emelyn has often been sick from drinking that water. She gets sick with vomiting, diarrhea and parasites,”

How to Help

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach’s effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01543, PO Box 97168, Washington DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

If you identify an aid project, 100% of the donation will be restricted to be used for that specific project. However, if more is raised for the project than needed, funds will be redirected to other urgent needs in the ministry.