

Seasonal Family Ritual: The Christmas Crèche

Blessing of the Family Christmas Crèche

The unpacking and setup of the family crèche is a terrific family tradition that allows children to actively participate while absorbing the important themes of the Christmas story. Families have different traditions regarding their manger scenes. Some families bring them out on the first Sunday of Advent and hide the Baby Jesus until Christmas morning. Other families bring them out on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning. Whichever is your tradition, you can easily turn your family's set-up of the Christmas crèche or manger into a ritual that the children will want to repeat year after year.

Unpack the Crèche

- Gather with family members. Together choose Christmas songs that tell the Christmas story to either sing or play in the background.
- Carefully unpack the family's Christmas crèche from its box. Let the children check to make sure all of the pieces are there. (If your family has more than one crèche, use one with durable pieces that you are comfortable allowing young children to handle.)

Tell the Christmas Story

- Tell the Christmas story as the children set up the manger scene. You can do this by reading aloud from Scripture, (see Luke 2:1-7), from a children's Bible, from a children's Christmas storybook, or by together singing a song such as 'Away in the Manger.'
- As you are reading, telling, or singing the story, the children can place the animals, and people in and around the manger.

Bless the Crèche

- Gather around the crèche. Let the children tell about what they see, and arrange (and rearrange!) the sheep, cattle, shepherds, angels, Mary, Joseph, manger, wise men, star, and so forth.
- Ask the children to hold their hands in blessing over the manger scene and to pray by repeating each line after you:

God of Mary and Joseph
God of shepherds and animals ...
God of stars and angels ...
Bless us today...
Bless our family crèche (or manger)...
(Join hands ...)
Fill our home with joy ...
Fill our home with love ...
Fill our home with peace ...

Thank you for our family ...
Thank you for sending Baby Jesus ...
Help us to always love one another.

Amen.

- Conclude the blessing by singing your family's favorite Christmas carol and sharing favorite Christmas treats.