

A photograph of three children sitting on a carpeted floor around a nativity scene. The scene is set under a decorated Christmas tree with lights and ornaments. A small nativity icon is placed on a wooden base. The children are looking at the icon with interest. The text 'BYZ#KIDS' is overlaid on the top part of the image in a colorful, stylized font.

BYZ#KIDS

December 2024 GIFTS

Nativity Icon
St. Nicholas Purses 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!

Crist is Born! Glorify Him!

Dear ByziParents,

I realize I'm a bit early with the Nativity greeting, but I just couldn't help myself! The holiday spirit has overtaken me! We've started decorating bit by bit since the beginning of the Nativity fast, and made plans for the holiday meals and gifts...but perhaps not in the usual, commercial way.

Yes, it is very traditional to give gifts at Christmas time, in honor of the gifts given by the Magi to the Child Jesus, and St. Nicholas himself does just that, and exhorts us to do the same! He is known to have said,

"The giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic His giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves."

But what to give? HOW to give? In answer to this dilemma, my sisters and I agreed years ago, when our families were quite young, that our gifts to each other at Christmas time would not be commercially bought, but would be handmade! This meant that each of our families took time to think of a little something special to begin crafting together once the weather got a bit colder. We spent much time and talent on these precious little treasures and many of them grace our homes even now, many Christmases later.

Yes, it would have been easier to just buy Grandpa a new tie, purchase a new teapot for Aunt Kristina, or grab up the latest battery-operated toy for the cousins on Black Friday, but these presents would ultimately be broken, outgrown, and long forgotten. The gifts that our families made together, however, caused us to create precious memories that will last beyond this world. Creating and giving such gifts from the heart caused us to learn how to mimic God's giving of His good and perfect gifts, lovingly created for all of us and to understand His love for the world more intently.

In this issue, we hope to gift your little ones with the opportunity to create some wonderful little expressions of love and generosity to be given away this Christmas season so that they can know the joy of imitating the goodness of God as well.

Enjoy the issue!

Lynne



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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.”

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!

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.

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 dwell 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!*



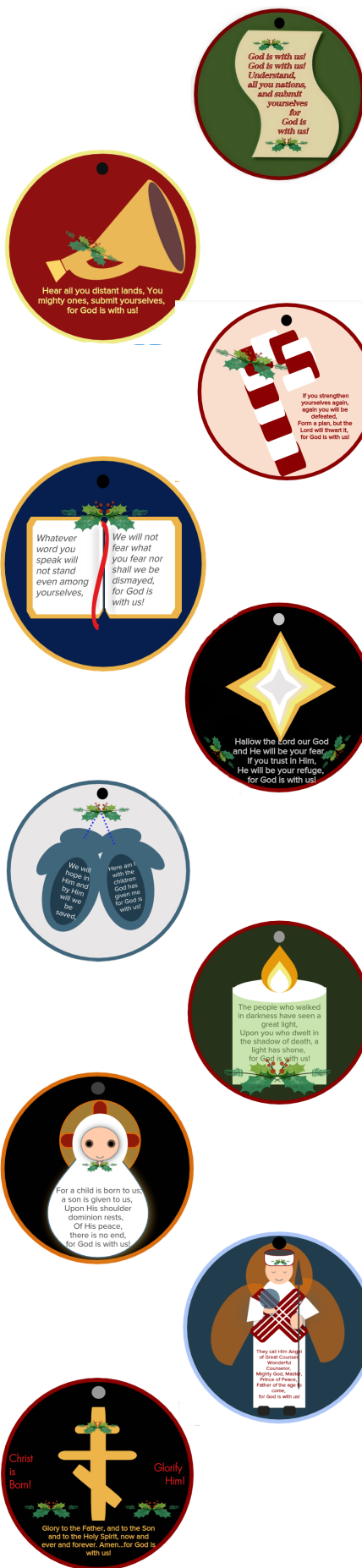
When you attend Compline this Christmas Eve, listen for this hymn. It is known as the Song of the Prophet Isaiah because its verses are taken from the book of Isaiah, chapters 8 and 9 in which God spoke to the prophet shortly before the birth of his own son, centuries before the coming of the Son of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

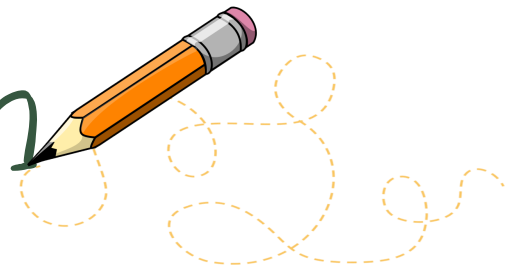
So remember to do lots of good deeds for others this Christmas Season, and do so with a generous and cheerful heart!

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!



a classroom connection



As we come to the end of another year, we can give thanks to God for the many gifts He has given us. Gifts from God are not always tangible things- often they are new friendships, beautiful experiences in nature, or other happy memories we have created with our family and loved ones. This year, your

ByziClassroom can incorporate thankfulness for gifts received from God with your Christmas tree decorating and end of the year party.

First, gather and watch a slideshow of all the events you have done together over the past 12 months- crafts, field trips, dress up and lessons learned. Then, each child is provided with a print out of small images that represent each of the activities; perhaps an icon for a tableau that you did together or a teapot for a special tea time you celebrated. Each child will choose their favorite activities from the list and cut them out. Next, these images are rolled and then gently placed inside a clear ornament. The colorful images make the ornaments look very pretty and are a tangible lesson in just how full of blessings our year has been! God has given us so many gifts to be thankful for!

Once the ornaments are filled, place the topper on the ornament and attach ribbon or yarn so that it can be hung on the Christmast tree. These ornaments can be used to decorate the tree in the parish hall or taken home to be enjoyed by the families!



Sense-Ability

Let us be attentive to God's Creation

When God created us, He made us both body and soul, meaning we are both physical and spiritual beings. We are not like angels that are just spirits. For this reason, when we use our bodies to help us learn, our spirits are changed as well! Have you played with a sensory bin before?

A sensory bin is a small tub or table filled with items that you can touch, smell, taste or make noise with. They typically include items that are all about a particular theme. When we use our senses to help us learn something, it helps our brain to recall the information better.

As we approach the Nativity of Our Lord, our littlest children may need help remembering that the most important gift we receive is Jesus! By setting up a simple play setting around the story of the Nativity, we can help our children to refocus and remember the real reason for the season. Many of us have a nativity scene on display, but it is important to also have a nativity scene that is accessible for our children to play with. Plastic or wooden sets are available from many vendors online; they are a worthy investment in our children's faith formation!

When introducing the nativity set to the children, adding a sensory element will help to make the interaction even more fun. Fill a tray or sensory bin with Chex cereal (regular or gluten free) for a "hay" floor and arrange the nativity pieces in the hay. Read the nativity story to your child, allowing them to act out the parts with the dolls in front of them. Once the story is complete, you might ask questions such as, "How do you think Mother Mary was feeling?" or "What do you think the shepherds said to their family and friends after meeting baby Jesus?" Of course, leave plenty of time for free play to crunch and scoop the cereal as well. The shepherds can push a path through the cereal from their "hill" to the baby Jesus or perhaps the animals are hungry and need their feed troughs filled!

If you would like to add a little academic learning into the experience for older children, this is easy to do as well!

- 1) Create patterns with the cereal and people. For example, lay out the following pieces: chex, chex, person, chex, chex, person... then ask your child to continue the pattern.
- 2) Practice a bit of addition or subtraction! For example, if I give you 5 pieces of chex, and your sister eats 2 of them, how many are left?
- 3) Practice sorting. How many animals do you see? How many people
- 4) Practice describing words. Place baby Jesus *inside, outside, on top or underneath* the stable structure, asking your child to tell you where baby Jesus is.



Gifts YOU Can Give!

All from

Cinnamon Salt Dough !



Ingredients

- 1 cup ground cinnamon
- 1 cup salt
- 1 cup flour (maybe a few Tbsp more as needed!)
- 1 cup water

Instructions

1. Preheat your oven to 250 degrees.
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine your flour, salt, and cinnamon and stir to combine.
3. Add the water a little at a time and mix until a workable dough forms. Knead until smooth, adding more flour a Tablespoon at a time until the dough is not sticky.
4. Roll it out to the desired thickness with a rolling pin or use your hands to make the desired shape.
5. Once you have shaped your creations, place them onto a parchment-lined baking sheet and have an adult help you bake them in your preheated oven for two to three hours (depending on the thickness of your creation) OR in your air fryer. Set it at 90 degrees for 45 minutes to 1 hour until completely dry.

Now that you have made your Cinnamon Salt Dough, there are several things you can make with it! Each gift idea has a corresponding Gift Tag with just the right words! Just fill out "TO:" and "FROM:" and you're all set to give a special gift to a special person this Christmas!

Hand-Print Dish

Roll out the dough to a quarter-inch thickness and use a pencil to trace around your hand. Now, use a dull knife to cut out your hand. Etch the name of the person you're making the dish for onto the palm of your hand. Place it onto a parchment-lined baking sheet, draped, name side down over an oven-proof bowl covered in aluminum foil, and bake until dry. This will make the dish shape!

Gift Card: *Isaiah 49:15-16: I will not forget you. See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;*

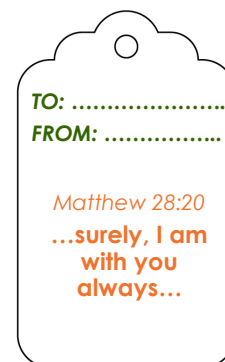
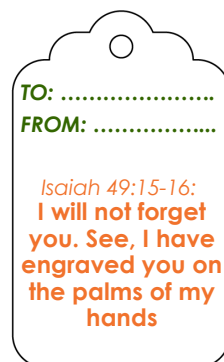
Deuteronomy 16:17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you.

God has given us so very many gifts! It's good of us to try to be like Him this Christmas season and give something precious to those we love. But what can we give? We have some ideas for you!

Picture Frame Ornament

Use a cookie cutter on thickly rolled dough. Press upside-down water bottle cap into the dough to form a circular well. Use the cap to trace around a photo of your face, then cut it out and glue it into the well once the ornament has been baked. Before baking, use a pencil to make decorative indentations in the frame of the photo, and use a drinking straw to make a hole in the top of the ornament for hanging.

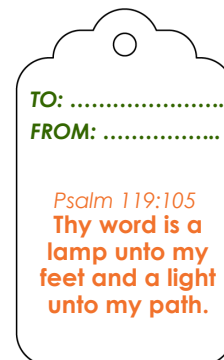
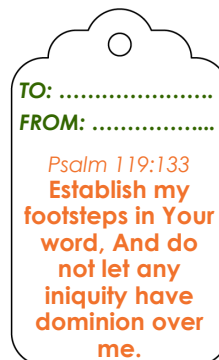
Gift Tag Verse: *Matthew 28:20...surely, I am with you always...*



Baby's footprint ornament

Roll out the dough rather thickly and use a cookie cutter to make a round or oblong shape. Press it to the baby's foot or hand and use a straw to make a hole in the top for hanging. You may opt to use a pencil to trace the child's name and the year into your ornament before it is dried.

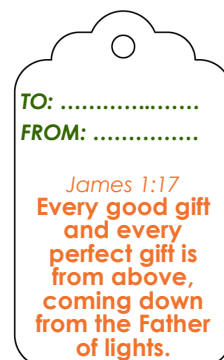
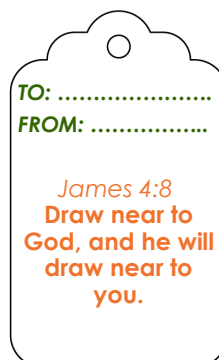
Gift Tag Verse: *Psalm 119:133 Establish my footsteps in Your word, And do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.*



Votive Candle Holder

Take a ball of dough and press a votive candle into it to form a deep well before baking. Be sure to remove the candle and set it aside to put it into place once your candle holder is out of the oven and cooled completely. While it is still wet, you may press beads, jewels, medals, your baptismal cross, or other objects into the dough as a decoration.

Gift Tag Verse: *Psalm 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*



Refrigerator Magnet

Roll out the dough to a quarter of an inch thickness and use cookie cutters to make the desired shape. Place it on the baking sheet, taking care to keep an area of your shape perfectly flat. Once it is baked and cooled, place a magnet on the flat side. You can decorate it with acrylic paint if you like.

Gift Tag Verse: *James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.*

Jewelry Dish

Take a ball of dough and poke a hole in it with your finger...not too deep! Now keep shaping it until it resembles a wide, but shallow, bowl. You can decorate it by drawing shapes in the dough with a dull pencil or plastic knife. You can even press objects into the dough to leave decorative imprints!

Gift Tag Verse: *James 1:17. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.*



Caught You Listening

Khouria Sylvia Dorham

DECEMBER 1, 2024

Gospel: Luke 18: 35-43

Jesus likes it when we keep on asking for what we need. In today's Gospel, the blind beggar will not allow the opportunity to talk to Jesus pass him by. Even when told to be quiet, he kept on trying to get Jesus' attention. "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asks him. Solve the code to figure out what the blind beggar asks Jesus.



12 15 18 4 / 12 5 20 13 5 18 5 3 5 9 22 5 13 25 19 9 7 8 20

A=1 B= O=15 C=3 P= D= Q= E=5 R= F= S= G= T= H= U=21 I=9 V= J= W=23 K=11 X= L=12 Y=25 M=13 Z=

DECEMBER 8, 2004

Gospel: Luke 13: 10-17

Fill in the blanks

- Jesus was _____ in the synagogue on the Sabbath.
- A woman was _____ over and could not straighten up.
- This infirmity had afflicted her for _____ years.
- Jesus _____ the woman.
- The synagogue ruler was _____.
- He did not want Jesus to heal on the _____.
- The people _____ when they saw what Jesus did.

Word Bank:

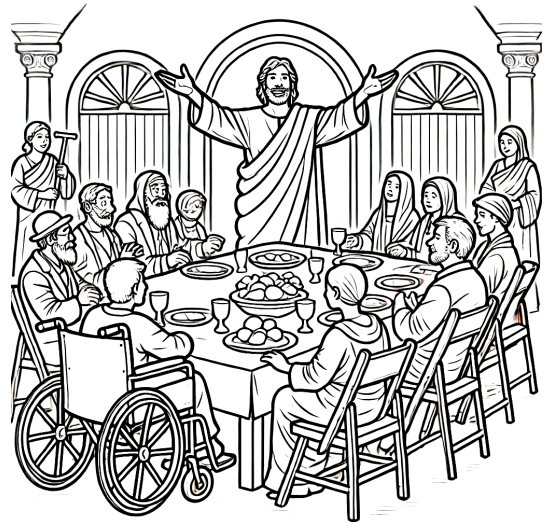
running 40 rejoiced healed eating 12 sleeping
teaching rich bent Sabbath 9 tall happy angry 18



DECEMBER 15, 2024

○ Gospel: Luke 14: 16-25

- What did the man give?
- Who was invited?
- When it was ready, what did the servants do?
- What did the invited guests do?
- How did the man react?
- Who did the servants gather?
- Was the room filled?
- Where did the servants gather next?
- How many of the invited guests ate at the banquet?



DECEMBER 22, 2024

○ Gospel: Matthew 1: 1-25

- Three women are listed between Abraham and David. Who are they?
- Who was David's great-grandson?
- Who was Solomon's mother?
- Who is listed as king just before the Babylonian captivity?
- How many generations from Abraham to David?
- How many generations from David to Jesus?



DECEMBER 29, 2024

○ Gospel: Matthew 2: 13-23

Today's Gospel reading tells us the story of Joseph leading his family to safety and the horrible things that can happen when our leaders are only interested in themselves.

Find the letters in the portion of the Gospel written below that spell out the virtue Joseph teaches us.

"Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt,'"

- First word, fourth letter: _____
- First word, first letter: _____
- Last word, first letter: _____
- Sixth word, last letter: _____
- Tenth word, first letter: _____
- Third word, fourth letter: _____
- Third word, second letter: _____
- Eighteenth word, first letter: _____
- Ninth word, fourth letter: _____



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

from the Eastern Churches!

Everyone around the world welcomes the newborn Savior! Here is our traditional Christmas greeting in some of the languages spoken by people in our Eastern Christian Churches. Practice these before Christmas so you can proclaim Jesus' birth to the world!

Troparion:

Your birth, O Christ our God, has shed upon the world the light of knowledge.

For through it, those who worshipped the stars have learned from a star to worship you, the Sun of Justice, and to know you, the Dawn from on High.

Glory to you, O Lord!



English :

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Rusyn:

Christos Rozdajetsja! Slaviti Jeho!

Ukrainian:

Khrystos Razhdajetsia! - Slavite Yoho!

Greek:

Christos Gennata! Doxasete!

Arabic:

Wulida Almaseehu! Fa Majjidooh!

Coptic:

Pikhristos emparoukh! Khen oumethmi!

Amharic: (Ethiopian Orthodox):

Kristos tewelido! Esti enaqerbaw!

Syriac:

Mshiho Ethyled! Shabohuyh!



THE JESSE TREE

The Nativity Fast is only a few weeks away!

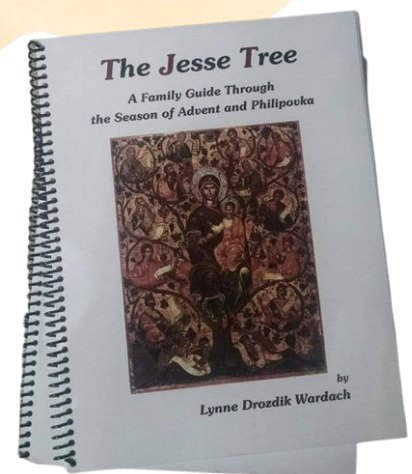
Prepare for the coming of the Savior with...

A Family Guide Through the Season of Advent and Philipovka

Includes 40 daily scripture accounts, a guided discussion for each day, as well as instructions for a simple commemorative ornament. A complete craft supply list is also provided in the appendix.

Make memories while you make ornaments!

Available in print or as a digital download on the Gift Shop page at ByziMom.com

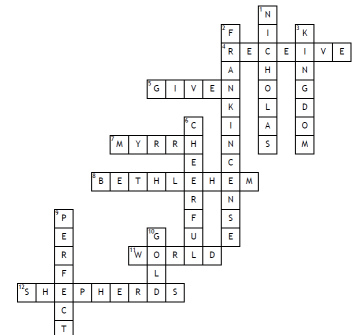


Gifts



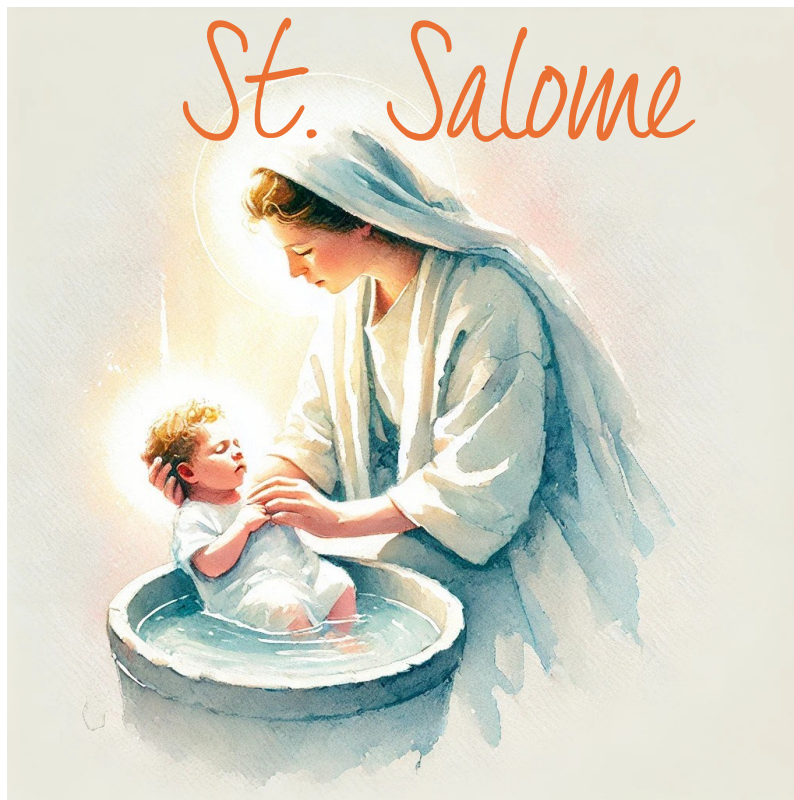
- Across**
- It is more blessed to give than to ____ (Acts 20:35)
 - Ask, and it will be ____ to you (Matthew 7:7)
 - yet another gift from the Magi
 - Jesus was born here
 - For God so loved the ____, that he gave his only Son (John 3:16)
 - The angels told the ____ in the fields the good news of Jesus'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

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



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!

CHOIR PRACTICE



By Sylvia Dorham

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!



Chord progression: G \flat B D \flat G \flat

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.

Chord progression: B D \flat D \flat G \flat

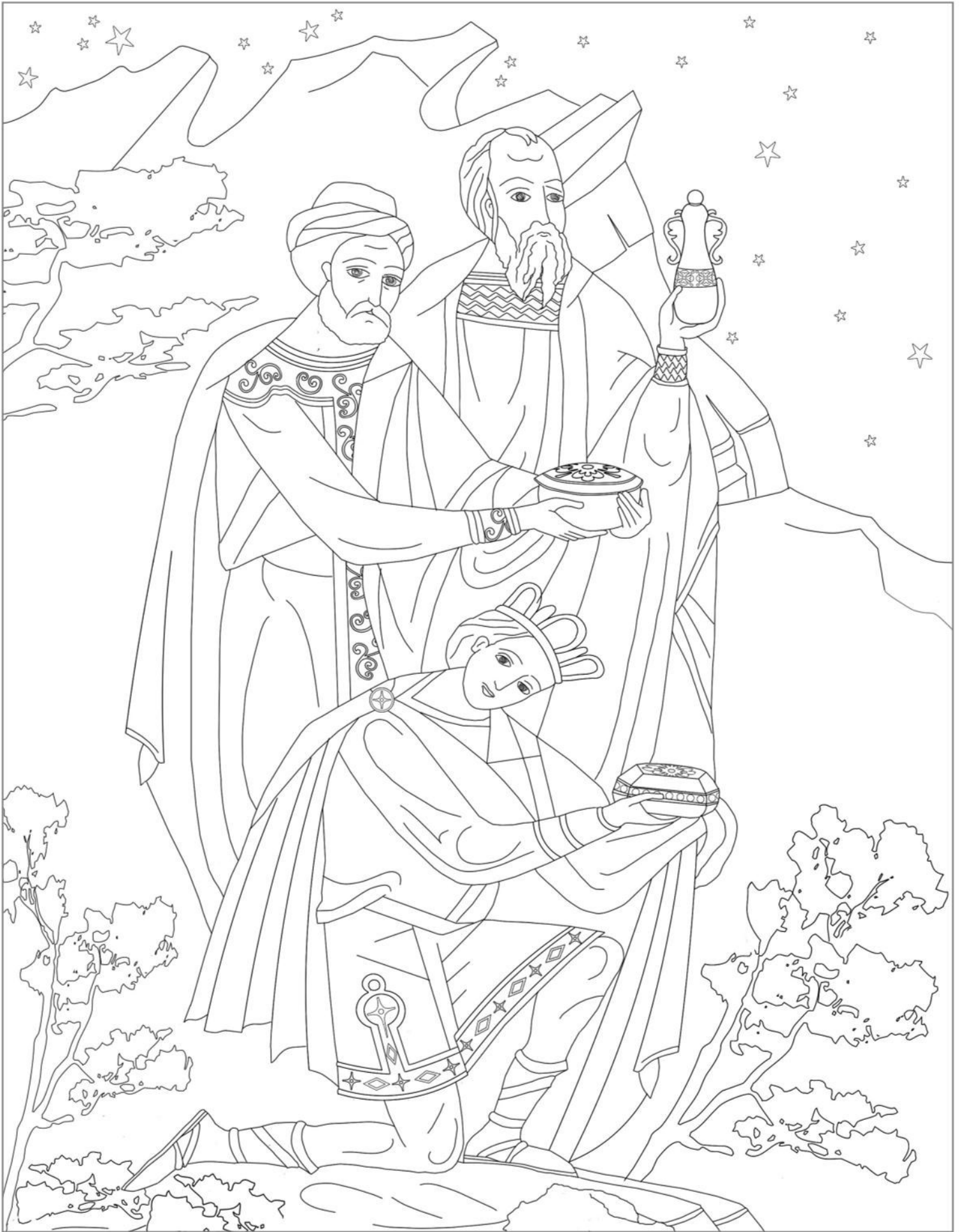
3 Here is a gift so that you will know that
 God gives to us so that we will know that
 Use your gifts so that oth - ers know that
 So much love that it has to show.

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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Based on the mosaic of the Nativity at The Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Philadelphia, PA
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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 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!



December 12

St. Spyridon



- Read about him Meanwhile Back in Byzantium

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 14

St. Nimatullah



- 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

- 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