

The background of the entire page is a photograph of two lit purple candles. The candles are placed on a decorative arrangement of greenery, including eucalyptus leaves and small purple flowers. A plaid ribbon is tied around the base of the candles. The scene is lit with a warm, soft glow from the candle flames.

Enhance your family prayer with  
**FAMILY ROSARY**

# *The Miracle of Christmas: Abiding Faith in the Unseen World*

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THE FAMILY THAT PRAYS TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER



# WELCOME TO OUR FAMILY

Pope Francis once said, "Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem. May we let ourselves be drawn by the light of God made man." Help prepare your family for the coming of Christ by praying together each day. Don't worry, it doesn't have to be perfect! Take comfort in knowing there is no one "correct" way of doing it.

It's a busy time of year for everyone, but it's especially important to slow down long enough to prepare your hearts and minds for Jesus. Take a moment to breathe in the great anticipation.

As the Church transitions into a new season, know that we're joining you and your family in prayer. We promise to be with you, growing in faith, every step of the way. May God continue to bless you and your family.

## A LITTLE HISTORY

Father Patrick Peyton, C.S.C. began his ministry in 1942 with the goal of building **family unity** through daily prayer of the Rosary. Inspired by his own father who had a deep devotion to family prayer, praying the Rosary became the foundation for the life of Father Peyton (1909-92).

We at Family Rosary are ever so grateful Father Peyton's family instilled in him the importance of **family prayer**. Now it can be part of your family's tradition so you can fulfill the vision that "The Family That Prays Together Stays Together," the slogan coined by Father Patrick Peyton, C.S.C., so many years ago.



“LET US NOT RESIST WHEN CHRIST COMES TO CHANGE OUR LIVES, BUT TO BE READY TO LET OURSELVES BE VISITED BY HIM, THE AWAITED AND WELCOME GUEST, EVEN IF IT DISTURBS OUR PLANS.

POPE FRANCIS”



# THE MIRACLE OF CHRISTMAS: ABIDING FAITH IN THE UNSEEN WORLD



Christmas reminds me of my father. It's what made him happiest, followed closely by slow, deliberate summertime puttering at my family's Carolina beach cottage.

My dad loved to tinker. While the Christmas season didn't offer much room for that in the traditional sense (he wasn't one for spackling and painting in 30-degree temps), he still found a way. His model trains needed attention; his favorite stories needed reading aloud. After hours of frustrated engineering and dusting, he would select a book, gather us by the tree, and treat us to an animated performance while the Lionel chugged earnestly in the background.

Some years it was *The Cajun Night Before Christmas*. Others, he read Luke, chapter 2. But one Christmas, Dad chose a letter from an 8-year-old girl. It was a request for information from Francis Pharcellus Church, the editor of the *New York Sun*:

Dear Editor—

I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, "If you see it in *The Sun*, it's so." Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?  
Virginia O'Hanlon

He lowered his voice; leaned forward in his chair. My sister and I listened, clinging to his every word.

"Virginia," he read, "your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge."

I was old enough to know that Santa wasn't real, at least not in the secular sense. Still, something about the editor's response, brought to life through a voice I loved, sparked a fire.

“Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy...Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see...Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.”

Over the course of my life, my father gave me two great gifts. The first was his living example of the gift of faith, the ability to embrace and cling to the “unseen and unseeable” in our skeptical world. In my father’s eyes, Church’s response to little Virginia was neither a testament to the existence of the magical nor an argument in support of a childhood folktale. To him, Church spoke to the reality of our God most high, whose very nature and existence our human limitations can only begin to understand. I myself did not understand this until my father gave me his second gift, a miraculous occurrence that took place a decade after his Christmas-season death.

My father died on December 23, 2005. His final months were long and arduous. He was insightful and witty to the end, and I view our conversations over those final months as the cement that holds together the structure of my faith.

In the days following Dad’s burial, my mother handed me his Knights of Columbus Rosary. Take it. He would have wanted you and Dan to have it.

I took it. In my grief I set it aside, then promptly forgot where I set it. For ten years that Rosary remained hidden, locked away in a nebulous no-man’s-land of mourning. Until my son’s first birthday, when in between cake and presents I took a moment to myself upstairs.

There on my vanity lay those dull black beads, their surfaces made shiny with repeated use. It had not been there that morning. No one had been in my room in the interim. And yet there it was, in full view, carefully laid out as though someone had just used it in prayer. I picked the beads up and turned them over in my hands. They were warm and smelled faintly of chrism.

I closed my eyes. I heard my father’s voice:

“The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see...Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world...[T]here is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.”

There is nothing else real and abiding. Only the love of a father for his daughter; only the love of the Father for his children.

Only the birth of a babe on Christmas morning, the miracle of the unseen and unseeable world.

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## GOING DEEPER

Take some time this week to reflect on the second Joyful Mystery, the Visitation. Zechariah refused to believe in the message God sent him. He was struck dumb and deaf and lived in isolation with Elizabeth until the birth of John the Baptist. Mary believed God's message, and because she bore the Son of God within her, the very sound of her voice brought joy to Elizabeth and her unborn infant. Mary expressed joy within her when she sang, "My spirit finds joy in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46).

Christ assures us that he has revealed his message of perfect love so that we, his disciples, "might have joy and our joy might be complete" (John 15:11). Clearly, faith which unites us to God and neighbor in acts of selfless love, is the true source of lasting joy. Christ has proclaimed the truth; Mary's life has exemplified it, our own experience confirms it.

Brainstorm some ways you and your family can express the joy of the coming of Christ.

## A WORD FROM FATHER WILLY RAYMOND, C.S.C.

*Last night, in this first week of Advent, three of my brother priests and I discussed a small book by Myles Connolly released in 1928 called "Mr. Blue." We met as planned in our chapel and after our discussion prayed Compline for Advent. A beautiful evening in preparation for Christmas.*

*Myles Connolly moved from Boston to Hollywood and became a major influence on the great film director Frank Capra, director of one of the Christmas season's perennial popular films, "It's a Wonderful Life."*

*Here is a quote from "Mr. Blue" about the power and beauty of film as an art form of our age: "If you want to reach the masses you can reach them through pictures. These new children can be bent and molded as they sit in the dark enrapt before the magic of the mobile screen. There in the dark they can be lifted out of their daily servitude. There they can be raised high above their stone and steel environment. There they can be brought to the high places and shown the deeps beyond the high horizon. There they can be taught to be superior to the great magnificent monsters that are their creations. There they can be taught to love this terrible new civilization, because there they can be taught to look upon it as their child and not as their master. Here then is a mission for any agency. Here is a destiny for an art second to none in history. For it is given to the motion picture to save the soul of a civilization."*



**GINNY KOCHIS** CatholicMom.com Contributor

Ginny Kochis is a wife, homeschooling mom, and writing teacher from Northern Virginia. She writes about faith, motherhood, homeschooling and literacy on her blog, Not So Formulaic.



# BRINGING FAMILIES TOGETHER IN PRAYER

We hope the time you've spent reflecting with this material has been enriching. Continue to pray with your family every day, wherever you are.

For additional online resources for family prayer including a Prayer Petition Page and our World at Prayer Blog, please visit our website at [www.FamilyRosary.org](http://www.FamilyRosary.org).

This e-book and all our resources represent a culmination of Father Peyton's passion for family unity through prayer. We hope our services will enhance your family's prayer life particularly remembering Father Peyton's famous words, "*The Family That Prays Together Stays Together.*"

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