

Merry Christmas

December 26, 2003. Are we a day late wishing you a Merry Christmas? We don't think so because The Christmas Season, by church standards, extends from December 25 through January 5 with Epiphany being celebrated on January 6.

The Baker family traditional Christmas celebration begins on December 24 with Christmas Eve mass and a family meal. Because our children are older, sleeping in Christmas morning has replaced being awakened too early by squeals of excited children announcing Santa Claus has been here. Christmas Day for us is a family time of cooking together and sharing a special meal. Christmas gifts seem to be more about seeing the joy of the receiver than on what is received.

We know other families who have eliminated gift giving between the family members and instead reach out to those who are less fortunate on Christmas Day. The "reaching out" we have heard about varies from showing appreciation by dropping off homemade goodies to police offices, fire stations and hospitals to visiting shut-ins at hospitals or helping at the food banks to feed the homeless.

Christmas Day is meant to commemorate the birth of Jesus. December 25 is the accepted date for this celebration. Researching the date got more detailed than we had expected and being simple people we were satisfied knowing it has been contested throughout the years and accepting the chosen date. The twelve days of Christmas likewise have an interesting history. If you want to do the research there are excellent sites you can reach by typing Advent, Christmas or Epiphany in your favorite search engine.

For several years a favorite Marriage Encounter Family tradition is to celebrate Epiphany with a "gift-of-self" gift exchange. The "gift-of-self" might be some home made delicacy, an offer to provide child care so a couple can have a weekend get-away, or a special home cooked meal. The gift exchange is organized differently by different groups. The gist is each gift provider draws a number to decide in what order each will choose and open a gift. The couple or priest drawing number "1" chooses first and each successive number has the option to choose and un-opened gift or takes one of the already opened gifts. This has been a fun annual event that seems to extend into the year as some of the gifts are best celebrated months after the Epiphany party.

If you are willing to share your favorite family and/or Marriage Encounter Community Christmas traditions please send the details to editors@ematrimony.org