



Celebrating the sacraments

*...and gift ideas to commemorate baptisms,
First Communions, and confirmations*

by Lori Hadacek Chaplin

We celebrate birthdays and wedding anniversaries, but why do we neglect other important anniversaries in the lives of Catholics? Our baptism is the most transformative moment in our lives; our souls are left with an indelible spiritual mark, making us the adopted sons and daughters of God. In confirmation our souls receive the completion of baptismal grace and another mark: the seal of the Holy Spirit. Our Catholic faith invites us to celebrate and commemorate those days so we never forget the life-changing gifts we have been given in the sacraments.

PHOTO: JASON DOY / ISTOCK, IMVP64 / THINK-STOCK, THOMAS NORTH CUT / THINKSTOCK

Baptism day deserves cake

Do you know the date of your baptism? Popular Catholic author George Weigel posed this question—or rather, challenge—in his syndicated column for *First Things* called “Owning Our Baptism.” Since baptism is the most significant day in the life of a Christian and equally as important as a birthday—arguably *more* important—why don’t we celebrate it?

Weigel, who wrote a two-volume biography of St. John Paul II called *Witness to Hope* and *The End and The Beginning*, recalls a story that shows the weight the Holy Father gave to the sacrament of baptism. In his first papal pilgrimage to Poland in 1979, “the 264th Bishop of Rome went straight to the chapel that housed the baptismal font and venerated the place where he had been ‘born again’ in 1920.”

Several years later, CBS reporters discovered the significance of this act. While in Rome filming *48 Hours Inside the Vatican*, they had an opportunity to meet and talk with Pope John Paul II. One reporter asked the Holy Father, “What was the most important day of your life?” You can imagine the reporter’s surprise when Pope John Paul replied, “The most important day of my life was the day of my baptism.”

Weigel writes, “As John Paul understood it, the most important day of his life was not the day on which he was ordained a priest, consecrated a bishop, or elected pope. The most important day of his life was the day of his

baptism. Everything else flowed from that, like the waters in Ezekiel’s vision, flowing from the restored Temple to renew the face of the earth.”

Following the example of St. John Paul II, Catholics should “take out the file where they keep the ‘Catholic stuff,’ look up the date of their baptism on their baptismal certificate, memorize it—and then celebrate that day in some special way every year hence,” Weigel suggests.

Weigel told *Catholic Digest* how he likes to celebrate his baptism: “I simply try and remember, in my prayer on April 29 (Mass and Office) to give thanks for the gift of baptism, to remember my parents and the priest who baptized me, and to perhaps indulge in a second bourbon before dinner.”

As for my own baptism, I had to track the date down by making a few calls to my old parishes. On September 22, after Mass, I will be having a fat slice of fudgy, mint chocolate cake to celebrate.





James Nachtgall's confirmation, 2009.

Cruce Signati ring—A reminder of confirmation

In the spring of 2009 confirmation was a frequent topic of discussion for the Nachtgalls. Robert and Tracy Nachtgall's oldest son James, then 13, was preparing for the sacrament by attending youth group and studying confirmation prep materials at home.

"The booklet we'd bought was thorough, and he was learning all the 'necessary' material, but I was bothered by what I forecast as a 'once and done sacrament. ...' As someone involved in baptism preparation, I was keenly aware of the disconnect people often have or develop toward particular sacraments. We all do it: from Eucharist on Sunday to remembering wedding vows or simply avoiding the confessional for decades. For these sacraments, we need regular visual reminders that will hopefully serve to reorient us periodically, if only for a brief few moments," says Robert.

Recalling his own confirmation, Robert says he remembers the party afterward and the rosary and Bible he received as gifts, but not much else. Consequently he desired a more personal experience for his son. "I wanted him to have something he'd remember and hopefully draw from down the road."

He and his wife discussed getting James a chastity ring. "The age was appropriate, but the occasion was about far more than one of discipline, and such a ring was a little too commonplace and expected among kids."

However, a different type of ring that would have meaning for lifetime seemed ideal—a ring that drew on a boy's natural desire for honor and nobility. The Nachtgalls designed what they call a "Cruce Signati"—a simple band of sterling silver engraved with the words *Cruce Signati*, which means "cross bearer." With the ring, the Nachtgalls included a beautiful letter of explanation:

Centuries ago, when men of courage embarked upon a crusade to recapture the Holy Land, they were frequently labeled *Cruce Signati*, or "Cross Bearer." It was a mark of both honor and responsibility,



and for most of them, it represented a turning point in their life.

The task at hand today is not retaking land, shrine, or church, but rather reclaiming for God what is rightly his—namely the souls of his children. Confirmation is an awakening of the Spirit within you to boldly set out into the world on a crusade no less significant

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE RING

- The circular shape represents eternity and is designed to remind you of the desire and commitment to spend it with God.
- Silver represents the inherent value in your faith. Though its appearance can tarnish, a forgiving heart and spirit of humility provide the polish needed to restore its luster.
- The font is a Roman type written in Latin. It serves as a reminder of the faith you've inherited and the heritage of truth it represents within the Catholic Church.
- The ring is a size seven and the band is seven millimeters in width. Both represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Learn them, and like all gifts freely given, come to appreciate and treasure them.
- The words *Cruce Signati* are written with 12 letters representing the 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit. Learn these as well, and cultivate them so that you may taste God in all good things.
- The inscription is done on the outside of the band as a reminder . . . that your faith is to be worn for all to see.



Joseph Nachtgall at his confirmation party, 2014.

and with no less consequence than those glorious battles of old with metal-clad warriors in a sea of bristling spears. . . .

In accepting and carrying this ring, you are committing to a way of life confirmed in the sacrament you've received. We trust it will serve as a reminder to your commitment before God and hope you will always remember the love and pride with which it was given."

James told *Catholic Digest* that he proudly wears the ring on a chain around his neck. He says, "Armed with this reminder of my confirmation, I am emboldened to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to others, through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God the Father."

In 2014 the Nachtgalls also gave their younger son, Joseph, a *Cruce Signati* ring for his confirmation.

BAPTISM



CHILD'S FIRST ROSARY WITH OLIVE WOOD CROSS

This beautiful rosary is made of painted wooden beads and adorned with a hand-carved cross, made from olive wood from the Holy Land. Available in a variety of different colors and custom colors and recommended for ages three and older. \$20 from [Etsy.com/shop/BCInspirations](https://www.etsy.com/shop/BCInspirations)

PERSONALIZED PARTY FAVORS

Yvonne's Candy Bar Boutique creates lovely candy bar party favors that can be personalized for baptism, First Communion, or confirmation celebrations. Underneath the personalized label is a sealed Hershey's candy bar. Labels can also be purchased separately. \$2.39—\$3.75 from [Etsy.com/shop/CandyBarBoutique](https://www.etsy.com/shop/CandyBarBoutique).



FRESHWATER PEARL BRACELET

This freshwater pearl bracelet, handmade in Texas, can be personalized with a child's initial and birthstone. Suitable for either baptism or for First Communion because there is a range of sizes offered. \$30 from [Etsy.com/shop/JensBeadBox](https://www.etsy.com/shop/JensBeadBox)



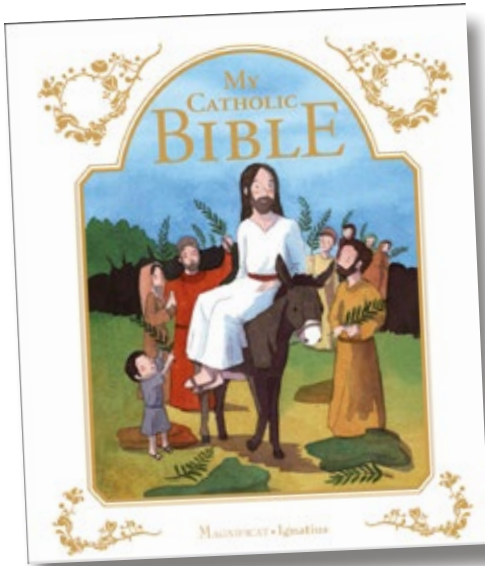
SEW YOUR OWN CATHOLIC DOLL KIT

Choose from Immaculate Heart of Mary, Jesus, or St. Thérèse of Lisieux fabric doll kits designed by Jennifer Flippen from St. Anne Studio. Each doll comes gift-wrapped and includes sewing instructions (stuffing not included). "Simple enough for young sewers to hand-stitch," says Flippen. Approximately 9 3/4" tall. \$12 from [Etsy.com/shop/SaintAnneStudio](https://www.etsy.com/shop/SaintAnneStudio)

BLESS THIS CHILD BEAR

New from Holy Bears is the "Bless This Child Bear," available in pink or blue. \$10 (9" long) from [HolyBears.net](https://www.holybears.net)





FIRST COMMUNION

MY CATHOLIC BIBLE

My Catholic Bible includes pivotal stories from the Old and New Testaments, and each gilded page is beautifully illustrated with vibrant watercolors. To better understand the stories, historical and cultural information is included. Comes in a gift box. \$29.95 (hard-cover) from Ignatius.com or 800-651-1531.

A MISSAL FOR CHILDREN

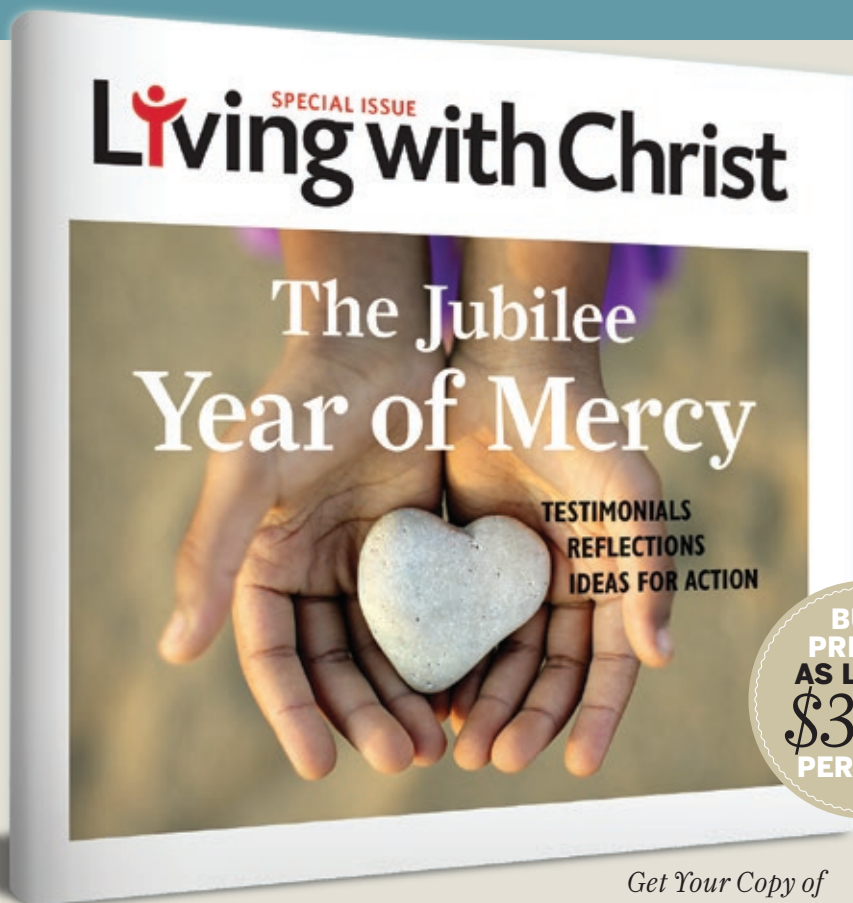
A Missal for Children is a keepsake that can accompany a child to Mass for years to come. This illustrated book contains the prayers of the Mass with explanations of each of the prayers, an examination of conscience, and prayers every Catholic should learn. What a great way to help a child become more involved in the Mass! \$14.99 from Ignatius.com or 800-651-1531.



GODDAUGHTER NECKLACE

An ideal gift goddaughter gift for First Communion (or confirmation), this delicate sterling silver, cable chain necklace with cross and pearl is handmade in Nebraska. Comes packaged in a gift box. \$25 from Etsy.com/shop/HandmadeByRememberMe.

CELEBRATE THE JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY!



**BULK
PRICING
AS LOW AS
\$3.50
PER COPY**

Filled with thoughtful reflections, powerful faith stories and ideas for action, this commemorative issue for *The Jubilee Year of Mercy* is your must-have guide for praying and celebrating this important year of faith.

*Get Your Copy of
LIVING WITH CHRIST
The Jubilee Year of Mercy!*

**Call today to order
this special issue!**

1-800-321-0411

PLEASE REFER TO PROMOTION CODE **LYM16P-CSA**



1-9 copies	\$5.95 each
10-49 copies	\$4.95 each
50-99 copies	\$4.25 each
100+ copies	\$3.50 each

plus tax (if applicable) and shipping



Living with Christ is published by Bayard, Inc.

➔ VISIT US AT LIVINGWITHCHRIST.US



MISSIONARY OF CHARITY DOLL

The latest Sister Softy doll is a Missionary of Charity doll, created in honor of Mother Teresa's canonization (slated for September 2016). She stands 14" tall and is soft and huggable. \$28 from Maximilian-Media.com.

FOR PARENTS AND FIRST COMMUNION TEACHERS

Would you like to add another layer to your child's—or First Communion students'—understanding the Eucharist? In *Physics for First Communion*, Anthony Rizzi, PhD, from the Institute for Advanced Physics, uses science to help parents and their children to understand the Eucharist, what happens at consecration, and more. On the DVD, Rizzi does this by teaching his six-year-old daughter about the nature of the Eucharist in a clear and accessible way. \$35 from IAPWeb.org or 225-667-0244

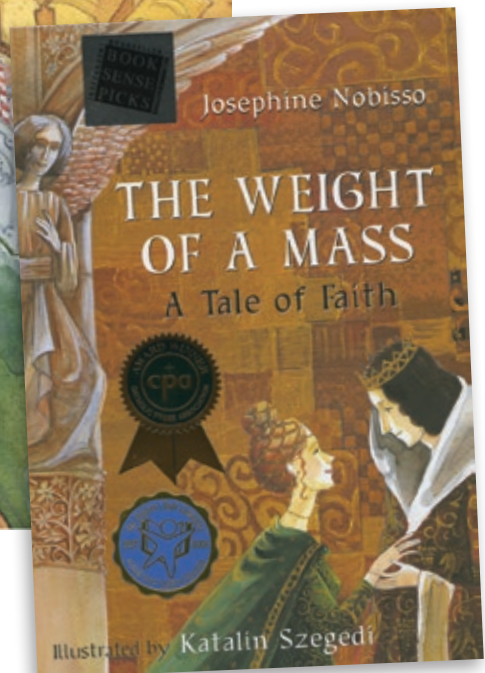


A hush fell over the crowd. The baker leaned over the counter. "You propose to hear for me?" he challenged the old woman. "A pile of your coins!" the widow whispered. "Then let the baker shot back. "She asked in the name of God to read!" the baker exclaimed.

THE WEIGHT OF A MASS

Possibly the most beautiful storybook ever written about the Mass is Josephine Nobisso's award-winning book, *The Weight of a Mass*. Although this is not a new title, it is worth mentioning because of its masterful illustrations (Katalin Szegedi) and storytelling. In the story, which is based on a true miracle, a poor, elderly woman enters a bakery that sells sumptuous-looking pastries, but all she asks for is a crust of bread. She has no money, so she tells the baker that she'll offer a Mass for him in exchange for the crust. The baker taunts her by writing "One Mass" on

tiny piece of paper. He puts the paper on one side of the scale and begins putting dainties on the other side. Soon, to his dismay, he sees that no matter how many baked goods he piles on one side of the scale, the wisp of paper saying "One Mass" outweighs them. Also available in Spanish. \$17.95, from GingerbreadBooks.com.



CONFIRMATION

THREE ROSARY CASES

If you have more than one confirmation to attend, these steel-plated rosary tins adorned with holy images are perfect. Made by a Catholic mom from Wisconsin. \$25 from [Etsy.com/shop/TwoHeartedRanch](https://www.etsy.com/shop/TwoHeartedRanch).

LIVING WITH CHRIST

Give a subscription to *Living with Christ* to help enrich the daily spiritual life of a confirmand. This monthly magazine features the complete Order of the Mass, including all four Eucharistic Prayers. There are also Scripture readings from the official liturgical calendar of the U.S. bishops, reflections on the daily reading, articles, a sacred art meditation, and much more. \$23.99 (one-year subscription) from LivingWithChrist.us or 800-214-3386.



Living with Christ
MARCH 2016
THE WORD OF GOD, DAILY PRAYER & THE BREAD OF LIFE • \$3.95



ILLUMINATE OUR HEARTS, WE PRAY, WITH THE SPLENDOR OF YOUR GRACE. ✦ Prayer After Communion, March 6

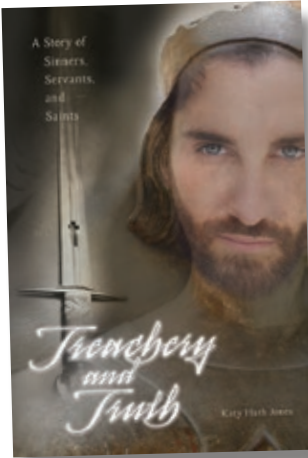
TINY SAINTS CHARMS

Perfect for key chains or clipping on purses or backpacks, TinySaints' charms are cute enough to collect. There are more than 60 different saints to choose from, so chances are your child or grandchild's confirmation saint is among them. \$4.50 from DayWind.com or 800-635-9581.

MEN'S ROSARY WRAP BRACELET

This expandable hematite and copper-plated five-decade rosary bracelet makes it possible for a man to pray discreetly anytime. Handcrafted by Our Lady Beads in Southern California. \$25 from Etsy.com/shop/OurLadyBeads.





TREACHERY AND TRUTH

Treachery and Truth by Katy Huth Jones will captivate anyone who loves adventure and stories about saints. This fast-paced historical novel about young Good King Wenceslaus is told through the eyes of his servant Poidevin. Occurring in Bohemia during the 10th century, we see how dangerous a time this was for Christians. Good King Wenceslaus, who was first known as Duke Vaclav, has many foes, including his own pagan mother, Duchess Dragomira, and his traitorous brother. Through his love of Christ and peaceful ways, he was able to bring peace to his war-torn country. This is a young adult novel, but it's also a great read-aloud story for grade school-age children. \$10.95 from Store.Pauline.org.

ANOTHER WAY TO PRAY

More parish choirs are including chant—in sung prayer exclusively for worship—in the liturgy, so there's a need for Catholics to learn chant technique and correct Latin pronunciation. This is now possible from the comfort of one's home with the *Treasury of the Church Gregorian Chant DVD*. On this four-DVD set, Fr. Eduard Perrone, pastor of Detroit's Assumption Grotto Parish, uses a lecture style to teach all the rules of chant. \$59.95 (DVD & Book) from BirettaBooks.com or 800-345-6665.



RUGGED ROSARIES

Military-inspired rosaries made out of paracord are tough and masculine, so any young man making his confirmation would feel proud to receive one of these Rugged Rosaries, which are hand-crafted in the USA. Each comes with a burlap carry pouch and includes instructions on how to say the Rosary. 10% off discount code: DIGEST10. \$39.99 from CordBands.com.



ONE GLORIOUS DRESS

by Pamela Dillon

Milestones that mark our existence on this earth either change our outward circumstances or change the way we feel inside. Those milestones include weddings and confessions of faith. For the Zucco family and their many descendants, those two special occasions are bound together by one glorious dress.

That dress is made of off-white cotton with intricate embroidery and delicate lace borders. The matching veil repeats the embroidery patterns of the dress. Adalina Bracco wore the dress when she married Antonio Zucco on April 29, 1919, at Sacred Heart Church in Jeannette, Pennsylvania. Petite Adalina was only 14 years old at the time.

By 1928 the family had grown to seven, and Adalina and the children went to the foothills of the Alps in Italy to visit the Antonio's family in Frassene. It turned out to be a much longer stay than initially planned, as Antonio had lost his job as a coal miner during the Depression and had stayed in the U.S. where he hoped to find work in Scranton. It would be six years before he could afford to bring his family back home.

The embroidered dress was shortened and worn a second time when Adalina and Antonio's only daughter, Gloria, came into the Church at the Nativity of Mary Church in Fonzaso, Italy.

"I was six months old when we went to Italy. Right after my seventh birthday, we returned to the U.S.," said Gloria (Zucco) Mulholland, who now lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. "I think it's great that this dress is so special for our family."

When Adalina Zucco passed away, Mulholland had her mother's belongings packed and put into storage. In 1934 that glorious dress was folded and



Rewards you with a fixed income and supports our mission to serve the poorest of God's people.



CONTACT US

1 - 800 - 461 - 3064

annuity@uscsvd.org

www.annuitiesvd.org

Divine Word Gift Annuity
(SVD Funds, Inc.)

PO Box 6067

1985 Waukegan Road
Techny, IL 60082-6067



Cami Mercuri, 7, wore her great great grandmother's dress for her First Communion.

placed into a cedar chest, where it stayed for the next half-century, until 1984.

"We were looking through a big box and found the dress," said Mulholland's daughter, Linda Fischbach of Dayton, Ohio. "I replaced the top in the back where it had worn down. I also made a cotton underskirt for it so my daughter could wear it."

Although the family tradition had skipped a generation, the dress was put into service again for Molly Mercuri. Her First Communion took place at Our Lady of Mercy Church in north Dayton the same year the dress was found, 1984.

"It made me feel good to have a dress that was passed down from my great-grandmother," said Mercuri. "To wear an older dress that is a tradition in my family, not just a new one bought at the store, made it more special and memorable."

Recently, it was time for Mercuri's daughter, Cami, to carry on the tradition.

She wore the dress and veil on May 3, 2015, at St. Anthony Church in Dayton.

"I liked how it was my great-great-grandmother's dress, almost 100 years old," said Cami, who attends St. Anthony School. "It's kind of soft, and it looks pretty."

Afterward the family had a celebration at Grandma Linda's house, with spiritual gifts for Cami, and lots of gnocchi, spaghetti, and pizzelles for everyone.

"I remember that my grandmother was a very spiritual person. Faith was very much a part of our Italian heritage," said Fischbach. "The fact that her dress survived all these years is amazing, and to be able to pass it down through multiple generations means a lot." 



Adalina Bracco married Antonio Zucco on April 29, 1919 at Sacred Heart Church in Jeannette, Pennsylvania.