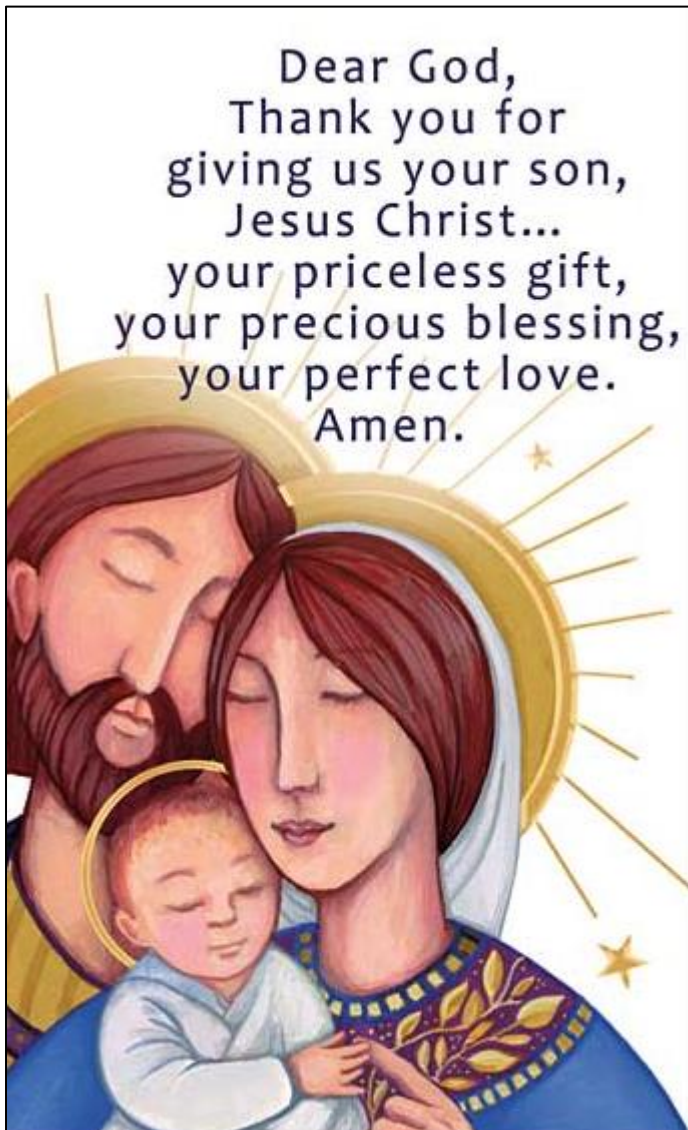


KEEPING A REAL FOCUS.



The December holidays mean that millions of people all over the world will head out to malls, department stores, and shops to purchase gifts. In our world, the shopping frenzy started on "Black Friday," the day after Thanksgiving, followed by "Small Business Saturday" for those choosing to buy only from independent businesses, and "Cyber Monday" for shopping online.

And so we pray this news . . .

Dear Lord of the Dance
and Creator of this Wonderworld,
help us to bring our spiritual life alive
as we expend our time, our energy,
and our money on shopping.

Many of us derive great pleasure
from this activity, and we give thanks
for this break in our routines so

we can purchase gifts that
will make others happy.

We also are grateful for the chance
to mix with friends and strangers
during the holiday season.

We ask you to shower your peace
and love on all those we
meet in the stores.

Give us the patience we need
in the face of long lines, pushy
customers, or missing clerks.
Keep us from being angry with them
and help us understand the stress
they are experiencing.

We know that for some of us,
shopping presents extra challenges.
We pray for restraint and thrift in these
hard times. Tame our wanting minds
that are too greedy for more
and too attached to things.
Show us instead how we can
share with the needy.

Guide us to a bench or a chair where
we can watch our fellow shoppers,
remembering all we have in common
with others in this one world.
May we look with compassion upon
those who seem exhausted and
at the end of their rope.
May we rejoice in the happiness of
others who have found just what
they were looking for.

May our shopping excursions also be
times for playfulness and reverie as
the lights, sights, and festive music
bring up fond memories of other
holidays and other excursions.

Finally, Lord of All, remind us that
even shopping is a spiritual practice,
a way for us to connect through
gratitude with You,
a way for us to connect through
generosity with others,
and a way for us to connect through
making choices from our hearts
with our deepest and truest selves.

Amen.