

## FAITH'S EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBER

*Then we will never turn away from you;  
give us life and we will call on your name. —Psalm 80:18*



When we fill out forms at the doctor's office, at school, or at work, we are typically asked to list an "emergency contact number." It is a moment of decision in which we name the person we most trust to be available for us in a crisis. Every parent knows the sound of a crying child calling their name in the middle of the night after a nightmare or during the day after falling in the yard. It is both a distressing and comforting sound. Upon hearing it, we know that our child is in trouble, but we also gratefully realize that our children instinctively look to us to be their "emergency contact" in their hour of need. God's children are the same way. When we fill out our internal registration form of faith, we choose God for our emergency contact. In our times of trouble, we then call upon the Lord's name in prayer.

**Activity:** Make a list of all the people who have helped your family in times of need. Tie that list with a ribbon and put it under your tree, for such people are the real gifts of Christmas.

*Prayer: Lord of presence and power, we do not fear when we are in trouble, for you are Emmanuel, "God with us."*

## THE TRUE RECIPE FOR HAPPINESS

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances,  
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.  
—1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*



The third Sunday of Advent used to be called *Gaudete Sunday*, for "gaudete" is the Latin word for "rejoice." True joy, however, is not so easy to find. Some people who would appear to have all the ingredients for happiness—wealth, fame, and power—do not seem happy at all. On this day of rejoicing, it is worth pondering the true nature of rejoicing. If we imagined happiness as a recipe, like baking a cake or a favorite dish, what would be the essential ingredients? Then, how would we combine those ingredients and in what amounts? Finally, how would we bake that recipe and serve it? St. Paul bids us to "rejoice always" and Jesus comes so that "your joy may be complete." Advent is a time to follow and proclaim the Lord's ancient recipe for "Joy to the World."

**Activity:** Write a recipe for happiness on an index card. Include ingredients, measurements, and cooking and serving instructions. Keep the recipe on your refrigerator or on your tree this week.

*Prayer: Joyful God, we pray that your joy may be in us. May we rejoice at your coming and serve your recipe for happiness to all.*