

CHRISTMAS

DAILY PRAYER

For the mystery of the birth of the Savior:
Glory to God!

For the gospel of justice and peace:
Glory to God!

For the grace to live each day as a disciple:
Glory to God in the highest!



EPIPHANY HOUSE BLESSING

Materials: a piece of chalk and a small container of holy water. Gather with family members, friends, and perhaps some neighbors at the front door.

Leader: In the (+) name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We sign this doorway with four crosses and the numerals of the new year.

[20 + C + M + B + 13]

Let us pray: May Christ bless this house!
ALL: Amen!

Each room of the house is sprinkled with holy water.

Living room:

Where two or three are gathered in your name, Lord, you are present. Bless this room, O Lord.
ALL: Amen!

Kitchen:

Give us this day our daily bread.
Bless this room, O Lord.
ALL: Amen!

Dining room:

Prepare us for the heavenly banquet.
Bless this room, O Lord.
ALL: Amen!

Bedrooms:

Stay with us Lord, when night has come.
Bless this room, O Lord.
ALL: Amen!

Bathroom:

Cleanse us from all sin. Bless this room, O Lord.
ALL: Amen!

All return to the front door to pray together.

Leader: Let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father . . .

The leader sprinkles all present with holy water.

Bless this household through all days to come,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, forever and ever.
ALL: Amen!

HOUSEHOLD TABLE PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

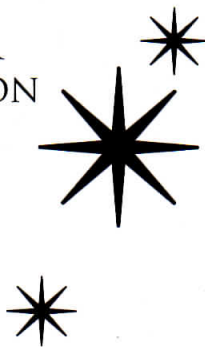
Come, let us adore!

We celebrate your birth, O Christ.
May this meal strengthen us
to be light for others.
Come, let us adore!

We hear the voice of the herald angels.
May the food of this table nourish us
to proclaim peace on earth.
Come, let us adore!

We behold your humble birth.
May this be a time of grace,
leading us to serve others.
Come, let us adore!

The Lord has come to us,
the Word of God in our human flesh!
Bless this meal, bless our lives,
bless these joyful Christmas days. Amen.



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CHRISTMAS

A SEASON FOR JUSTICE

CONGO CHALLENGE: FOOD OR SCHOOL?

Jolie has a problem. The bag of flour outside her mud shack is sitting in the sun and nobody is buying it. She walked four hours down the road and back and paid about \$8 for the sack. But even if it sold, the five-cent profit on each cup she sells doesn't go far.



Jolie, center, prepares cassava leaves for dinner. She was forced to leave school many times because she couldn't pay school fees. Photo by Lane Hartill/CRS

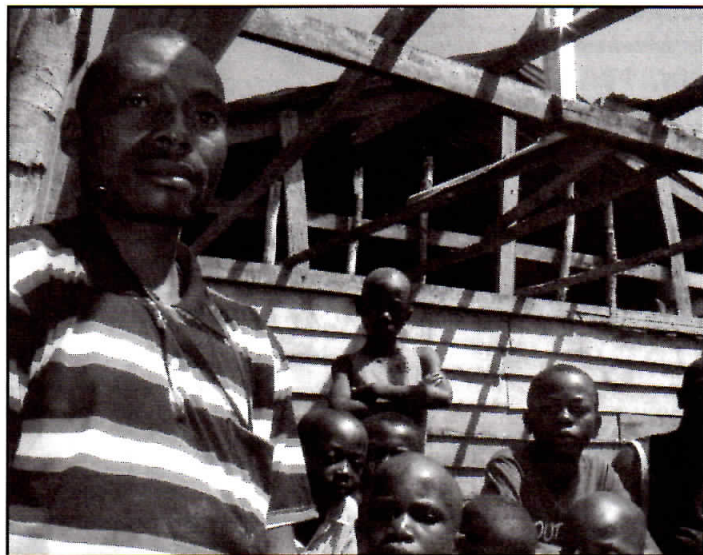
"If people don't buy," Jolie says with a shrug, "we don't eat."

Or pay her school fees. And that's Jolie's other problem: The principal at her junior high kicked her out of school because she is behind a few months in tuition. It happened in 2002, 2004, and 2007.

Jolie's life mirrors that of hundreds of thousands of young people across the

Democratic Republic of the Congo who can't pay school fees.

The deplorable conditions in Congo's schools have led Catholic Relief Services, along with several other international



Students at the Ndjingala primary school with principal Kennedy Ndjadako-Vita. CRS joined other international humanitarian agencies to urge the Congolese government to double its education budget to 16 percent of its national budget. Photo by Lane Hartill/CRS

humanitarian organizations, to urge the Congolese government to double its education spending to 16 percent of its national budget.

PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST IN VIETNAM

In rural Vietnam, children with disabilities struggle with more than physical challenges. Their parents and teachers often don't know how to care for them.

"There's still a belief that a child with disabilities is what parents have to pay for bad things they did in a past life," says Mai Vu,



My Hoang, left, visits with CRS project officer Mai Vu, right. My's health is improving with food and physical therapy provided through CRS' Children First program. Photo by Laura Sheahen/CRS

project officer for Catholic Relief Services in Vietnam. "Some parents even hide their children."

Catholic Relief Services reaches out to parents who need help raising their children with disabilities. CRS customizes support to families based on their children's needs.

Think, a petite girl in the Que Son area of Vietnam, is in constant pain because of severe arthritis. Yet she is determined to get an education, though, and especially loves language and drawing classes. "I'm proud that she does well in school, even when she's in pain," says her father, a carpenter. "Even when it rains, she wants to go to school. She doesn't want to skip class."



CRS project officer Mai Vu, right, with Think Truong, left. A CRS-supported volunteer taught Think's family physical therapy techniques that help increase her mobility. "After the exercises I feel better and can walk farther," says Think who has severe arthritis. Photo by Laura Sheahen/CRS



Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. The agency provides assistance to people in need in nearly 100 countries, without regard to race, religion or nationality. For more information, please visit www.crs.org or www.crsespanol.org.