

HAVE A FAVORITE CHRISTMAS MOVIE?

An offering from the  AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE and  ignatius press



FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

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As we continue to journey through Advent and prepare for Christmas, FORMED is delighted to introduce the Amen app, the Augustine Institute's free Catholic prayer app that provides *lectio divina* meditations, daily Mass readings, Rosary and other devotional prayers, children's content, and much more. This is a wonderful resource for your parishioners to "have in hand" to develop a consistent spiritual routine during these liturgical seasons. In addition, for Advent, be sure to tune in to Dr. Michael Barber's *True Meaning of Christmas* video series, in which he explains the different traditions associated with this holy season. We also recommend you listen to *Come, Lord Jesus*, an audiobook of meditations on waiting and preparing for the Lord written by a cloistered Poor Clare nun from New Mexico. This season is also an invitation to reflect on Christ's humility manifest in his Eucharistic Presence. To aid in this meditation, watch *Lectio: Eucharist: Discovering the Mass in the Bible*, a series by Dr. Brant Pitre where he examines the roots of the Eucharist in the Scriptures. For wholesome entertainment for the family gatherings, we recommend a movie called *Mary of Nazareth* and the movie *Joseph of Nazareth: The Story of the Man Closest to Christ*. This latter movie especially is a great way to close out the Year of Saint Joseph. The team at FORMED hopes you enjoy these resources, and please be assured of our prayers for you!

It's a common scene around the dinner table as Christmas approaches. Having polished up mental lists of must-see holiday movies, everyone eagerly nominates his or her favorite. Mom loves *White Christmas*. Dad can quote whole chunks of dialogue from *A Christmas Story*. The kids engage in a spirited debate over the relative merits of *Elf* versus *Home Alone*, while a lone voice pipes up with a persistent plea to watch *Polar Express*.

And while all of the movies have cinematic merit and many even contain heartwarming lessons about the value of family bonds, communication, acceptance, or innocence, something is missing.

The best preparation for the birth of the Christ child is to contemplate Jesus' coming into the world and to prepare a place for him within our hearts.

To enrich the Advent season, FORMED suggests viewing two excellent films—one about Jesus' mother and one devoted to his foster father.

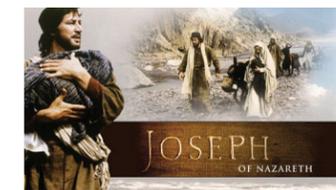


Mary of Nazareth

This 2012 epic motion picture portrays Mary's life from her childhood through Jesus' Resurrection. The film vividly

captures Mary's profound faith and trust in God, her compassion and concern for others, and the deep love that she shared with her son, Jesus. The movie underscores her unique role in God's plan for our redemption, the suffering she endured in Jesus' Passion and Death, and her joy at his Resurrection.

This two-hour, 41-minute movie was made for an adult audience and contains scenes of violence from the time. Please preview the film before watching it with children.



Joseph of Nazareth

This 2000 movie marked the first feature film on the story of St. Joseph. From trusting in God's messengers

regarding the circumstances of Mary's pregnancy to the moment of his own death, the audience sees Joseph grapple with the profound mysteries of the miraculous conception, the Virgin Birth, and the Incarnation of the Son of God, as well as the challenges of protecting and raising Jesus amid the threats on his life from the moment of his birth and beyond.

This one-hour, 36-minute movie contains scenes that might not be suitable for all audiences. Please preview the film before watching it with children.

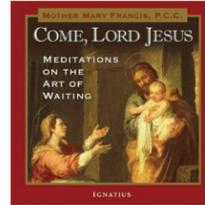
HIGHLIGHTS ON FORMED

Each liturgical year begins with waiting. We anticipate Jesus' birth and prepare for his Second Coming. FORMED invites you to share these resources for the season and the journey with your parishioners.

Come, Lord Jesus

In *Come, Lord Jesus*, an audiobook of meditations on waiting for the Lord, Mother Mary Francis encourages us to master the arts of actively preparing for Jesus' coming and patiently waiting for his arrival.

The abbess of a Poor Clare monastery and accomplished spiritual writer, Mother Mary Francis challenges us to persevere in overcoming our faults and keeping our eyes on the Lord, who has called us to himself and who will complete the work of sanctification he has begun.



Metanoia: A Journey with Christ into Conversion

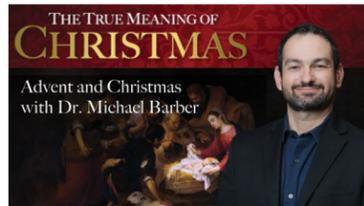
The first words of the first Gospel to be written are Jesus' invitation to *metanoia*—to repent, to change, to be converted. And so our journey begins.

The 10 episodes of this series explore the areas of our lives that need conversion, including topics such as “Who Is Jesus?” and “What Must We Do to Inherit Eternal Life?” Beautifully

filmed on location in the Holy Land, *Metanoia* features preaching from Fr. Dave Pivonka, as well as personal testimonies from men and women, young and old, religious and lay, whose stories inspire us to seek to encounter Jesus and the new life to which he constantly invites us.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR

In December and throughout Advent and the Christmas season, encourage your parishioners to enrich their faith and devotion with these resources on formed.org:



Dr. Michael Barber's video series on his book The True Meaning of Christmas

Beginning the first weekend of Advent and continuing through Epiphany, Dr. Michael Barber offers a video series on the Scripture stories of Jesus' birth and on the deeper religious significance of Christmas trees, lights, and Santa Claus, taken from his book *The True Meaning of Christmas*.



Lectio: Eucharist; Discovering the Mass in the Bible

If Christmas is not possible without Christ and his Eucharist, then the Christmas season is the ideal time to reflect on Christ coming as a baby and his coming in the humble forms of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist. In *Lectio: Eucharist; Discovering the Mass in the Bible*, acclaimed author and teacher Dr. Brant Pitre digs down to the biblical roots of the Eucharist.



The Chris Stefanick Show

Each Monday at 7:00 P.M. (ET), renowned Catholic evangelist Chris Stefanick and his guests welcome viewers to dive heart and soul into what it means to be a Catholic and to live life to the full. Each half-hour episode streams live on formed.org, allowing viewers to post their comments and questions.

The peace which surpasses all understanding. *Now easier to reach.*



The journey from his background in marketing and strategy for start-up wineries in the Napa Valley to the opportunity to help launch the **Amen** app for the Augustine Institute has left Eddie Trask a little breathless.

“It happened so quickly; I’m still in shock,” Trask said.

Trask reverted to his Catholic faith just two years ago and said that after the birth of his fifth child in May, he was “on fire to do something Catholic.”

A friend told him that he should submit a resume to the Augustine Institute, where he was already enrolled in graduate courses in theology. Soon after he submitted his resume, he received a phone call. Would Trask be interested in helping to launch **Amen**, an app that delivers Catholic Scripture, prayers, wisdom, meditations, and stories to anyone with an iOS or Android device?

He *was* interested and joined the Augustine Institute at the beginning of August.

“It’s been an absolute blessing,” Trask said.

Trask describes **Amen** as the audio complement to FORMED but with unique content as well, including daily Mass readings, meditations, and sleep stories. And the beauty of **Amen**, Trask said, is that anyone can download the app for free.

One month after **Amen's** launch, Trask called the response “exceptional.” The app had already been downloaded 75,000 times and had garnered 2,000 five-star reviews.

When the members of the **Amen** team began reading the app’s online reviews, “a number of us got tears in our eyes,” Trask said.

“I needed a way to journal daily on the Scriptures of the day and be able to access them whenever I want. This app is an answer to that prayer! Thank you!” one reviewer wrote.

“It is a wonderful app!” another commented. “I like the flexibility in being able to create a timeframe that works for you. I use it daily and share the app and some of the items in the app [with] all of my religious education families every week.”

Trask is working on helping parishes share **Amen** with their congregations. The Augustine Institute has created a flyer, bulletin ads, and social media posts that parishes can use.

With **Amen**, Trask said, it is possible to “remove barriers to prayer through simple pieces of audio content.”



Amen™