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THIS ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

CATECHESIS AND THE PERFECT GIFT

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The joyful season of Christmas is a great time for us to deepen the community bonds between our families in faith formation and engage the whole community with creative catechesis. How might we re-introduce our parishioners to the joy of Christ's birth and engage them in the evangelizing life of the parish?

Here are some ideas that you may want to consider this Advent Season and beyond:

- **Prime time** – The season of advent is a prime opportunity for catechetical instruction on the meaning of Christmas. This is a time to reflect, in a more intentional way, on the journey we each need to embark on in preparation for the coming of our Lord on Christmas – preparation grounded in embodied by prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

- **Take some time to explain** the Nativity Scene, the Giving Tree, and the Advent Wreath. Advertise the vocabulary of the faith: Incarnation, Liturgical Season, Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy etc.

- **Give 'em a call** – Catechetical leaders and pastors have a special opportunity for a personal invitation with families in Religious Education. Give each family a call and invite them to your parish's Christmas celebrations.

- **Parents are catechists too** – Send home activities/handouts for the family to do at home that include an educational component. From an explanation of the advent wreath, to the meaning behind adding hay to the nativity scene each week, each project will empower the parents to serve as master catechists to their children during this advent season.

- **Share a survey with your families** inquiring about the types of activities they would like to see and take part in during the Advent / Christmas season. Ask them what they would like to learn about, what events would they be interested in, what are their ways of celebrating Christmas? Use this in your planning to respond to the needs of the parish.

- **Christmas party?** Make it a meaningful party! – Include a moment catechetical instruction as a kickoff to the Christmas party. This moment, whether done through a short presentation or reflection, will provide a deeper understanding to the parish and families on what exactly it is they have gathered to celebrate.

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Engage catechumens/candidates in RCIA

- **Start a book club!** Those involved in the RCIA process are in a special time as they are hungry to learn more about the beauties of the faith. Take this time to feed that hunger with a Christmas book club. Note – this book club should be exciting, filled with time for faith sharing, and fellowship.

- Invite the catechumens/candidates to **personal reflection** during advent by introducing them to a devotional. At a time in which they are developing their prayer habits, this serves as a great resource for both their spiritual growth and their understanding of the traditions during advent. When presenting the devotional, take a moment to teach on the different forms of prayer within the Church.

- Do you have an **advent penance service?** Provide a special invitation to your candidates to take part while teaching the catechumens of the importance of purification and spiritual preparation during this time. This provides a great catechetical moment as all are instructed on the importance of this sacrament and its special significance during the advent season.

- Are there any **community service** opportunities planned in your parish? Get the catechumens/candidates involved! Many times we miss the importance of almsgiving during the advent season. Remedy that by sponsoring a soup kitchen, a homeless food run, a visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor. For ideas on how to get the groups involved visit the Catholic Charities website.

- Sponsor a **lecture series.**

- **Come Back!** – Trouble bringing back those who went through the RCIA process in years past? Get them involved now! Contact previous catechumens/candidates and invite them to take part in the Christmas festivities taking place at the parish. Don't forget – in inviting them, remind them of the importance of Christmas and why they chose to enter the Church family in the first place.