

# Evangelizing Churches Ask “What about Christmas?”

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As we begin the season of Advent in our churches, our hearts turn to a season of preparation, as do our churches make preparation for Christmas. This change of liturgical seasons, may bring forth questions for evangelizing churches:

- What can we do now to prepare our church to be welcoming this Christmas?
- How can we encourage people to come to hear the Good News?
- How can we bring the presence of Christ from our parish community to the hearts of everyone both on Christmas and after?

Here are some ideas from evangelization teams across the Diocese of Cleveland to help in answering these questions.

## Invitation

- ◆ During Advent, use one of the weekend’s homilies to include a segment on how we can be a welcoming presence during the holidays. Keith Strohm, from the Catherine of Siena Institute, suggested that a parish community leave the first 1/3 of the church pews open. Have those who are regular attendees walk those who come less frequently to the open section, and then take their seats in the back. While this may sound a little extreme for some, consider what welcoming gesture could be reasonably expected and shared this Advent with the parish community.
- ◆ Create a pamphlet or door hanger highlighting this year’s Advent programs and activities, as well as confession times, communal reconciliation services, Mass times for Christmas, parish office hours, ways that people could assist those in need, as well as how someone in need can get assistance. Ask volunteers to distribute door hangers in their neighborhoods (be sure to follow ordinances), or share a pamphlet with a friend or neighbor with a personal invitation.

## Cluster Partner, Area-wide, County-wide Ideas

- ◆ Join together to write a promotional ad of invitation to put in your local paper or online.
- ◆ Check into and be present at local Christmas activities.

## Gift Giving

- ◆ Have greeters or volunteers pass out a small gift at the end of Mass as people are leaving with the statement, “See you next week!” or “See you soon!” Items that could be used include a candy cane,

prayer card or an inexpensive inspirational book, DVD, or CD (with a scriptural or pastor message stapled to it).

## Prepare for Christmas Masses

- ◆ Create a welcoming Christmas pew card including a place for contact information including names, addresses, e-mail address and phone. Ask the question, “How can we help you...develop a relationship with Jesus Christ, pray for you, teach you, assist in getting connected or re-connected to the parish community etc.?” Have prominent labeled boxes or baskets in all exit areas for these to be turned in to.

## Promote Future Spiritual Growth Opportunities

- ◆ Be sure to include in announcements upcoming parish events and programs that people will want to look forward to in the coming months (or year).
- ◆ Create a one page printed piece on upcoming and ongoing programs for people of all ages to get involved in to enrich their spiritual lives, such as adult faith formation programs, children’s programs, mission or prayer opportunities, and other spiritually enriching opportunities.
- ◆ If you have a program such as [Catholics Returning Home](#), [Awakening Faith](#), or [ALPHA](#), designed to reach out to those who are not always here, be sure to promote it at Christmas. This could be done through the homily, intercession, announcement or a brief after Communion witness.

## Parish Website

- ◆ Post a [Catholics Come Home](#) commercial on your parish website with an invitation to those who may be away from the faith to feel welcome.
- ◆ Be sure to post Mass times and confession schedules at an easy to see location on the front page.
- ◆ Include a message from the pastor inviting all, and reminding parishioners that all are welcome and to invite a friend.