

TO TEACH

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ADVENT IS TIME TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

"Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mt 3:3). With these words, John the Baptist, one of Christianity's earliest evangelizers, framed the purpose behind Advent's rituals and the significance of Christmas. He proclaimed that the Lord is coming, and our hearts and minds must be ready to receive him. We are called to spread this message to others. This is the essential *mission* of the Church. All ministries—including Catholic education—carry out this work.

This issue of *To Teach* focuses on what it means to evangelize at this special time of year, especially in a Catholic school. Many resources from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) are available to help you as you fulfill your mission to be evangelizers. Each resource helps us unwrap for ourselves, for our students, and for their families the great gift of Emmanuel—God with us.

How Do You Do "Evangelization"?

It's one thing to *talk* about evangelization. It's another thing to *do* it. But here is a useful model to keep in mind. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (no. 46) names five essential elements of evangelization: (1) proclamation, (2) witness, (3) teaching, (4) sacraments, and (5) love of neighbor. Each of these fundamental ways can help us make evangelization a concrete reality in the midst of a busy season.



• **Proclamation:** Every year the Church retells the great story of Christ's coming in the readings for Advent and Christmas. Incorporating these into faculty prayer, parent gatherings, and

school plays and pageants is an important way to proclaim the word of God and transmit the message of the Gospel.



• **Witness:** Mary gives an example of profound witness to her faith when she responds joyously to the angel Gabriel, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Lk 1:46). You can witness to your faith by thinking about its meaning and then allowing the goodness of God's love to be reflected in everything you say and do. By setting aside a regular time to pray, praise, and thank God, you can be a conduit for God's grace and goodness.

• **Teaching:** Through lessons, you can share the meaning and message of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection with children and young people according to their age level and comprehension. In your planning and preparation, you may help students learn about one of the greatest mysteries of our faith—the Incarnation.

• **Sacrament:** School liturgies during Advent are some of the most beautiful and reverent of the year. Use an Advent wreath or Jesse tree to help students appreciate the rituals and symbols that are central to Catholic worship.

• **Love of Neighbor:** Holiday shopping, preparing for visitors, and attending to seemingly endless details can keep this time from being a season of "good cheer." When your school promotes a spirit of caring and generosity, you provide a haven from the commercialism that overwhelms students and their families at this time of year.

AT A GLANCE

USCCB has published many materials that are useful during the Advent and Christmas seasons. Here are some you will want to have available for use in classrooms, at faculty and school board meetings, and for parents' gatherings.

Ministry Through the Lens of Evangelization

An insightful collection of talks by noted experts on the link between ministry and discipleship.

No. 5-609; \$16.95

Catholic Evangelization in an Ecumenical and Interreligious Society

A book on the importance of fostering a greater understanding and respect for people of faith who are not Catholic and—at the same time—showing how such understanding and respect have implications for genuine Catholic evangelization.

No. 5-641; \$6.95

General Directory for Catechesis

The guiding document for the entire Catholic Church on the ministry of catechesis, one intricately linked with the evangelizing mission of the Church.

English: No. 5-225; \$19.95

Spanish: No. 5-226; \$19.95

Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers

A collection of blessings, prayers, and rituals designed for use in the home and taking place within the context of the liturgical seasons and events in family life.

No. 292-6; \$19.95

"The Mouse's Tale" Video

A ten-minute animated cartoon about a well-fed cat who is confronted by his "conscience" (a mouse) while reading a newspaper article about cats starving in Africa. For use with Middle School, Jr. High, Sr. High, and adults.

No. 605-0; \$17.95

"We must find in every Catholic school in the United States an opportunity to talk about God, to talk about Jesus Christ, to tell the people who we are."

Ministry Through the Lens of Evangelization (p. 11)

"Martin the Cobbler" Video

A claymation video depiction of Leo Tolstoy's classic story about the ways in which we can miss the face of Christ in our midst. For use with Elementary, Middle School, and Jr. High.

No. 5-411; \$19.95

Book of Mary

Over the centuries, there have been many prayers written to honor Mary and to ask for her intercession. Several of these are collected in this small book, including hymns, antiphons, litanies, and the mysteries of the rosary.

No. 155-5; \$3.95

A Scriptural Rosary for Justice and Peace

The mysteries of the rosary—joyful, luminous, sorrowful, and glorious—are interwoven with stories from scripture about the life of Jesus.

No. 5-635; \$2.95

A Rosary for Peace

The mysteries of the rosary form a framework for the prayer in this booklet.

No. 5-571; \$3.95

Unity in Diversity: A Scriptural Rosary

Different stories from the gospel are coupled with the mysteries of the rosary as a way to reflect upon the importance of welcoming and embracing immigrants and the "strangers" among us.

English: No. 5-467; 10/\$4.00

Spanish: No. 5-870; 10/\$4.00

When ordering, use the code "F618" on your order form or give this code to the sales representative. Quantity discounts are available on all publications.

Call toll-free 800-235-8722 for more information. To order these resources or to obtain a free catalog of other USCCB titles, call toll-free 800-235-8722. In the Washington metropolitan area or from outside the United States, call 202-722-8716.

Visit the bishops' Internet site located at www.usccb.org. Para pedidos en español, llame al 800-235-8722 y presione 4 para hablar con un representante del servicio al cliente, en español.



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ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVANGELIZATION

for Principals & School Boards

- Include a book review about *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* in your school newsletter. Encourage families to purchase this great resource as a Christmas gift to themselves—one that will keep on giving throughout the years.
- Use *A Scriptural Rosary for Justice and Peace* at school board or faculty meetings during Advent as a way to pray for those who suffer from poverty, injustice, and disease throughout the world.
- Distribute copies of *Ministry Through the Lens of Evangelization* to members of the school board or parent advisory committee. Read and discuss the part your school plays in the overall mission of the Church. Set goals for carrying out this mission in the new year.
- Start a discussion among the faculty about how your school can reach out to parents who are not Catholic and/or uninvolved with parish or school activities.
- Use the questions about the evangelization of youth in *Ministry Through the Lens of Evangelization* (pages 85-87) as a basis for a school board or faculty discussion. Note the ways in which your school is effectively transmitting the Gospel to students and their families, and find ways to strengthen these efforts.
- Think about how the teachers and support staff in your school serve as “missionaries” to the students and their families. Write each member of the faculty a Christmas card, affirming their work in bringing the hope of Christ to others.
- Review plans for school Christmas activities. As a leader, how do you plan to be a welcoming presence during these gatherings? How will the school be seen as the “face of the Church” in these gatherings?
- Distribute copies of *Catholic Evangelization in an Ecumenical and Interreligious Society* to members of your faculty, and use it to brainstorm ideas for National Migration Week (the first week of January). Link these efforts with the feast of the Epiphany.

for Educators

- Draw upon *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* for classroom worship during Advent and Christmas. Send home ideas for praying as a family during these seasons.
- Show *A Mouse’s Tale* and discuss with students the needs of those without adequate food or shelter. Use this opportunity to collect canned goods to restock a parish or diocesan food pantry.
- Promote a spirit of sharing and caring for others by organizing a school-wide “baby shower for Jesus.” Collect layettes, diapers, and other items for a local organization that provides resources for pregnant women. Bring these together in a school liturgy or other celebration.
- Point out to students that Advent is not only a time to remember Jesus’ birth two thousand years ago but a time to look ahead to his coming again. Make a wish list for the future of the world, and post it in the classroom.
- Use prayers to Mary throughout the Advent and Christmas season, using the *Book of Mary* as a resource. Take this opportunity to explain the meaning of intercessory prayer.
- Show *Martin the Cobbler* to your class and discuss how we can witness the presence of God in our midst by paying attention to all those around us. Invite students to write stories with a Christmas theme about seeing the face of Christ in unexpected places.
- Use the Internet to research the sacred meanings of Christmas symbols, such as the Christmas tree, bell, candy cane, and star. Compile your findings in a handout for parents.





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Supporting the Domestic Church

Here are five ways to help families keep the seasons of Advent and Christmas grounded in the Gospel.

- Send home prayer ideas for use before or after meals.
- Encourage parents to share stories of their favorite Christmas memories and activities.
- Affirm the rituals that families have used year after year at Christmastime, especially those drawn from ancestral or ethnic heritages.
- Host an open house in order to help parents get acquainted with other parents.
- Suggest “non-traditional” ways to make prayer a part of family practice, such as the use of Advent “Car Chats,” available through USCCB on the Internet (www.usccb.org/publishing/catsun.htm).

(Ideas derived from goal 101 from *Go and Make Disciples*)

“Evangelization happens when the word of Jesus speaks to people’s hearts and minds.”

—Go and Make Disciples, no. 19

To Teach is Changing!

After the Summer 2005 issue, *To Teach* will change formats. It will only be available as a PDF file that can sent directly to your e-mail address or downloaded from the USCCB Publishing website (www.usccb.org/publishing).

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