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Message from Gary

Manger, Shepherds and Magi: Evangelization made visible

One of the challenges that Catholics face this time of year is how to “keep Christ in Christmas.” Preaching, religious formation, personal devotions all play a role. One visible reminder of the meaning of Christmas is the Nativity Scene (or you might call it a crèche or crib or manger scene).

Back in 2017, St. Gregory the Great Parish challenged all their families to display a Nativity Scene in their home or their yard. This “Nativity Challenge” was not only to remind parishioners of the reason for the season, but to gently evangelize neighbors, relatives, friends and strangers. [Read about it in the Catholic Herald.](#)

This year, Pope Francis offers a similar challenge:

I wish to encourage the beautiful family tradition of preparing the nativity scene in the days before Christmas, but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares. Great imagination and creativity is always shown in employing the most diverse materials to create small masterpieces of beauty. As children, we learn from our parents and grandparents to carry on this joyful tradition, which encapsulates a wealth of popular piety. It is my hope that this custom will never be lost and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be rediscovered and revived.

Last week, Pope Francis issued the apostolic letter, *Admirabile Signum (Enchanting Image), On the Meaning and Importance of the Nativity Scene*. In it, he shares the origins of the practice (remember St. Francis) and a beautiful reflection on the way in which the Gospel unfolds in the scenery and figures of the crèche.

How can you help your families to continue this tradition? Or renew it if they’ve not carried on? Or for those not familiar with the Christmas manger scene, how can you introduce them to this Enchanting Image and its value for them?

Office of Catechesis News

Catechetical Conference - Save the Date

August 28-29, 2020

Mary, Mother of the Church Pastoral Center, Milwaukee.

Save the Date for the 2020 Catechetical Conference. The theme for the conference will be: *Encounter Christ*. This conference will offer presentations for catechists, catechetical leaders, and others who pass on the faith. Please mark your calendar for yourself, your catechists and friends.

Seeking Workshop Presenters for the Catechetical Conference

We are now accepting proposals to present at the conference during workshop sessions. This conference is intended for catechetical leaders, catechists, and others who pass on the faith. Friday's sessions will focus on topics pertinent to Catechetical Leaders while Saturday will offer sessions for both Catechetical leaders & Catechists.

The theme *Encounter Christ* should somehow be incorporated into your talk. When proposing a workshop, please be sure to consider how this workshop will help attendees encounter Christ or how it will help them to help others encounter Christ. For more information regarding presenting or if you are interested in presenting at the 2020 Catechetical Conference, please [click here](#).

Co-Workers in Transition:

Continuing our updates on new directors of religious education or faith formation, we welcome:

- Julie Sostre - St. James, Mukwonago - Youth Activities Coordinator
- Cathy Smith - St. Luke - Director of Faith Formation and Pastoral Associate

For all those beginning a new role this year, let us pray, and let us pledge our support and companionship along the way.

If you know of someone new to a position that we have not listed, please let us know. You can find the lists of other transitions in past [newsletters](#).

Upcoming Events

[Download](#) the Office of Catechesis Calendar to stay up to date on events.



2019-20 Catechetical Calendar

November 2019	March 2020
19 New Directors Institute 9:30 @ MMCPC	3 New Directors Institute 9:30 @ MMCPC
28-29 Thanksgiving - Office Closed	24 Family Perspectives Take Two - Families and Scripture 10:00 @ MMCPC
December 2019	26 New Directors Institute 9:30 @ MMCPC
12 New Directors Institute 9:30 @ MMCPC	April 2020
24-25 Christmas Eve Day - Office Closed	10 Good Friday - Office Closed
31 New Year's Eve - Office Closed	12 Easter Day
January 2020	18 Celebration of Catholic Scouting
1 New Year's Day - Office Closed	28 Family Perspectives (NEW DATE) 9:00 @ MMCPC
9 Gigs, Gears and God 9:00 @ Our Lady of Lourdes Parish	May 2020
21 New Directors Institute 9:30 @ MMCPC	12 Think Line
30 Family Perspectives 9:00 @ MMCPC	25 Memorial Day - Office Closed
February 2020	August 2020
11 Family Fresh-Holy Habits 1:00 @ MMCPC	28-29 Catechetical Conference
13 New Directors Institute 9:30 @ MMCPC	
26 Ash Wednesday	

Updated November 12, 2019

Contact Us	
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Gigs, Geeks & God

January 9, 2020

Our Lady of Lourdes, Milwaukee

This conference on technology, faith formation and parish ministries will feature a keynote speaker, workshops, exhibitors, and ample time for sharing ideas with experts and colleagues.

[Register Now](#)

Family Perspectives

January 30, 2020 OR April 28, 2020 **(NEW DATE)**

9:00am - 2:30pm

Mary, Mother of the Church Pastoral Center, Milwaukee

Family Perspectives is a comprehensive approach to support your efforts to integrate family ministry in your parish! After you attend the one day workshop to review the latest research and Church teaching on ministering to and engaging families in faith, there will be an individualized follow-up for your parish. Parishes that participate will receive 4 to 6 hours of on-site support to offer guidance and resources to make your family ministry come alive and be more meaningful in your community. To find out more and to register, [click here](#)

Archdiocese News

Totus Tuus

The Office of Youth Evangelization is pleased to announce that Totus Tuus, the parish-based Summer Catechetical Youth Program, is returning in Summer 2020! We will have room to visit 7 parishes for a week of dynamic, Christ-centered, and fun formation for youth in grades 1-12. To learn more about Totus Tuus, [read our Parish Information Guide](#).

When you are ready to reserve your week, please use the [2020 Reservation Form](#) and return it to the Office of Youth Evangelization with your deposit. Please note, weeks are given out on a first-come, first-served basis! If you have any questions about Totus Tuus, please do not hesitate to contact Doug at ulaszekd@archmil.org or (414) 758-2211.

Winter/Spring Retreats for Parish Staff

Ask Your Powerful Question

2020 Winter Lay Ministry Retreat

January 16 -18, 2020

Redemptorist Retreat Center, Oconomowoc

There is a Powerful Question embedded in the fabric of each person's life journey waiting to be found. Once discovered, it ignites passion and reveals purpose. Pursuing an answer is creating a legacy. Attend this retreat to discover, discern or deepen your powerful question - your personal God-given mission! **For more information and to register,**

visit: <https://archmil.regfox.com/2020-winter-lay-ministry-retreat>

Desert Day for Lay Ministers at Holy Hill

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

Holy Hill, Basilica and National Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians

Desert Days are quiet days of prayer, reflection and rest for pilgrims looking to spend quiet time with the Lord. Particularly during the season of Lent, it is easy for lay ministers to spend so much time helping others enter into Lent that they neglect their own prayer life. Join us for this special day-retreat. There is no schedule for the Desert Day. You will be provided with a private room, a warm lunch, suggested activities, and opportunities to attend Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, if you wish. Silence will be maintained. **For more information and to register, visit:** <https://archmil.regfox.com/lent-2020-desert-day-holy-hill>

From our Friends

Marenda Advent Reflection

Thursday, December 12 at 9:00 am

Congregation of the Great Spirit

The Congregation of the Great Spirit is hosting this Advent morning of reflection. Here we will look at Our Lady of Guadalupe through Native eyes. Mary of Guadalupe appeared as a mestiza, a woman of mixed race, Indigenous and Spanish. Her apparition offers hope and unity to divided peoples. She does this not on her own, but through the One whose heart beats in her womb. The Guadalupe event is a model of enculturated evangelization. Let us see how this model lives today in a Catholic - Native American parish with its unique values, art, music, dance, stories, etc. Come celebrate with all our relations! Mitakuye Oyasin!

Register at: www.marenda.org



Christ is Alive! – Essay Contest for Grades 3-8

The Communication Center, a distributor of Catholic religious education materials, announces its first annual Christ is Alive! Essay Contest. The goal? To give students a chance to proclaim the Good News that Christ is Alive and to use what they are learning in class to do so! The contest is open to students in grades 3 through 8 enrolled in parish religious education or a Catholic school.

To participate, students simply need to describe a moment when they felt close to God. Entries should be just one page and are due February 28, 2020, so you have plenty of time to organize something for your students.

If one of your students wins:

- The student gets \$100 and a Bible
- His or her class gets \$100 for a celebration
- His or her catechist gets \$100 and a \$100 credit on our website, comcenter.com
- Your parish gets \$200 and a \$200 credit at comcenter.com

To learn about the contest, visit <https://www.comcenter.com/christisalive/> or contact Chris Olsen, colsen@comcenter.com or 1-800-348-2227.

Resources

Advent Resources

Advent is here. The Advent season is a time of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming at the end of time and also to the anniversary of the Lord's birth on Christmas. As you begin this season, please visit our [Advent Resource page](#) for blessings, both general and catechist resources, online advent calendars, Whole-Community Catechesis for Advent ideas and more.

Materials for the movie *The Star*

When the animated Christmas movie, *The Star*, came out in November 2017, NCCL together with FCH created a Catholic curriculum, inspired by the movie. This curriculum can be used by families, as well as church groups. Materials include faith sharing sessions, and a

blessing for a nativity scene, You may want to offer to your families.

Free Materials: [Spanish](#) [English](#)

If families download the electronic version, they can just click and access clips from the movie.

[Download coloring pages, character cards and more.](#)



Save the Date

National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) Convocation

Mark your calendar for THE professional development conference for catechetical leaders - just across the river!

MAY 17-21, 2020

GRAND RIVER CENTER

Dubuque, Iowa

Just a 2 ½ to 3 ½ hour drive from anywhere in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.



Job Openings

Director of Youth Formation - St. Francis Borgia, Cederburg

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Do you have an article, event or district meeting you would like included in the newsletter???

Please send information to: murphyjc@archmil.org

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Archdiocese of Milwaukee

St. Francis 53235

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