

# **Advent Intergenerational Learning Program Focus: Justice and Service “Our Faith Call Us to Serve”**

## **Introduction to Intergenerational Learning**

Intergenerational learning models are designed in a 2½-3 hour timeframe with time for a meal included. The design format for an intergenerational learning model includes six parts.

### **Registration and Hospitality**

Welcome people and ask them to sign-in for the program; and make or receive name tags. Distribute Home Kits including the handouts for the session. Invite people to share a meal. (Depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal.)

### **Part 1. Gathering**

Provide an overview of the program and theme. Conduct a community building activity and a forming groups activity (if necessary). Lead the group in prayer and song on the theme of the program.

### **Part 2. All-Ages Opening Experience**

Intergenerational religious education begins with a multigenerational experience of the theme that all the generations share together. In-common-experiences of generations are usually less verbal and more observatory than in the other three elements. In-common-experiences equalize the ages, so that listening to music or singing, making an art project, watching a video, hearing a story, participating in a ritual, praying together, and so on, are things that different-aged people do at the same time and place in a similar manner. Learning is at a level where all may do it together.

### **Part 3. In-Depth Learning Experience**

Through structured learning activities and discussion all generations explore the meaning of the event and develop the ability to participate meaningfully in the event. In-depth learning experiences can be designed in one of three formats:

- The **Learning Activity Center Format** provides structured learning activities at a variety of stations or centers in a common area. Learning activity centers are usually facilitated by a leader with background reading, instructions for the activity, and materials for engaging in the activity. Tables and chairs (or floor space) are essential so that individuals and families can learn, create, and discuss.
- The **Parallel Learning Format** provides age-appropriate learning for groups at the same time. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic – utilizing specific learning activities that are designed for their life cycle stage, e.g., families with children, adolescents, young adult, adults, et al. Parallel learning sessions can be designed in a variety of ways, e.g., learning activity centers for the families-with-children group, integrated lesson plan for adolescents, faith sharing groups or guest speaker for adults.
- The **Learning Group Format** provides a series of facilitated learning activities for the entire group using intergenerational groupings or family and age groups. The entire group is guided through an integrated learning program.

## Part 4. Whole Group Sharing Experience

All participants re-gather and each group briefly shares what they have learned and/or created in their in-depth experience. Whole group sharing provides an opportunity for each generation to teach the others. Groups can share the project or activity they created, offering a verbal summary or symbol of their learning, a dramatic presentation, etc. Whole group sharing can also be conducted in small groups – intergenerational or family and age groups – rather than using presentations to the entire group.

## Part 5. Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application

To conclude the program participants have the opportunity to reflect on what they learned and to prepare for applying their learning to their daily lives. The Home Kit provides individuals and families with a variety of practical tools for bringing the event home. After an explanation of how to use the Home Kit, individuals and families have time to create an at-home action plan for using the Home Kit. Participants can be organized into family groupings, intergenerational groupings, and/or kindred groups of age groups for reflection and application.

## Part 6. Closing Prayer Service

# Advent

## Intergenerational Program Design

Theme: Our Faith Calls Us to Serve  
Time: 2½-3 hours

*The crowds asked John, "What ought we to do?" John told them, "If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn't have any. If you have food, share it with someone else." (Luke 3:10-11)*  
(From the Gospel of the third Sunday of Advent, Cycle C)

*Our faith calls us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers. This is the call of Jesus, the challenge of the prophets, and the living tradition of our Church. (Century of Catholic Social Teaching, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1990)*

One way to prepare people of all ages for Advent is to involve them in service as individuals, as age groups, as families, and as intergenerational groups. Advent service connects everyone to the Old Testament Lectionary readings which strongly emphasize justice and service, and the Messiah who will bring justice to all peoples.

Advent Service includes activities for preparing people for service, a planning process for organizing service, and an extensive list of Advent service projects. You can use this Advent Service activity in a variety of ways. First, you can use the planning process and service ideas to organize Advent service projects for children through adults. You can adopt one or two service projects as a parish or as an age group. You can make available Advent service projects for families to do at home or you can group families together for service. Second, you can combine involvement in service with an educational session to prepare children through adults for engagement in service.

Many organizations conduct specific Christmas service projects, so it is important to utilize existing Christmas-oriented service projects in your parish community or civic community. It will be important to research what the parish, schools, civic organizations, and other churches are planning to do and find ways to work with them, rather than initiating additional new projects.

# Registration and Hospitality

- Sign-in for the program; make/receive name tags.
- Distribute Home Kits including the handouts for the session.
- Invite people to share a meal. (Depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal.)

## Part 1. Gathering

- Welcome the participants and provide an overview of the program and schedule.
- Conduct a community building activity and a forming groups activity (if necessary).
- Lead the participants in an opening prayer service on the theme of justice and service.
  - Suggested Advent Lectionary readings:
    - Old Testament: Isaiah 2:1-5 (First Sunday of Advent-A), Isaiah 11:1-10 (Second Sunday of Advent-A), Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10 (Third Sunday of Advent-A), Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11 (Third Sunday of Advent-B)
    - Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11 (Third Sunday of Advent-A), Luke 3:10-18 (Third Sunday of Advent-C)
  - Use the following church resources for creating an opening prayer service:
    - Prayers from the Sacramentary for the Sundays of Advent
    - Music on justice and service themes some of which may be used during the Advent season. Check the following sources for songs:
      - *Singing Our Faith – A Hymnal for Young Catholics* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001) [Hymnal, Leader's/Catechist's Manual, 11 CD set]
      - *Walking by Faith – Music and Ritual Prayer for Children*. David Haas and Robert W. Piercy. (Chicago, GIA Publications, 1997.) [CD]
      - *Spirit and Song – A Seeker's Guide for Liturgy and Prayer*. (Portland: OCP Publications, 1999.) [Hymnal and 10 CD set]
      - *Gather – Comprehensive*. (Chicago: GIA, 1994)
  - Here are additional prayer resources for Advent prayer services. The children or adolescent prayer services can easily be adapted for an intergenerational audience. (\* These two resources are highly recommended because they contain fully designed prayer services for all ages.)
    - Costello, Gwen. *Junior High Prayer Services by Themes and Seasons*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2000.
    - \* Galipeau, Jerry. *Prayer Services for Parish Life*. Schiller Park, IL: World Library Publications, 2004.
    - \* Haas, David. *Increase Our Faith – Prayers Services and Faith Sharing for Whole Community Catechesis (Cycle A)*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2004.

- Haas, David. *Praying with the Word – Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1996.
- McCann, Deborah. *Let Us Gather – Prayer Services for Catholic Schools and Assemblies*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2002.
- Morley, Jack, editor. *Bread of Tomorrow – Prayers for the Church Year*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.
- Piercy, Robert W., and Vivian E. Williams. *When Children Gather – 20 Prayer Services for the Liturgical Year*. Chicago: GIA Publications, 1998.
- Rupp, Joyce. *Inviting God In – Scriptural Reflections through the Year*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2001.
- Rupp, Joyce. *Out of the Ordinary – Prayers, Poems, and Reflections for Every Season*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000.
- Singer, Charles. *Prayers for Feasts*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2002.
- Vos Wezeman, Phyllis, and Jude Dennis Fournier. *Celebrations Seasons – Prayer Lessons for Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2000.

## Part 2. All Ages Opening Experience

The All Ages Opening Experience introduces the participants to the theme of the program. There are a variety of ways to conduct the opening experience. For a presentation to the large group you can use drama, media, storytelling, or other interactive approach that works well with a large group. Here are three suggestions:

**Suggestion 1. Music:** Prepare an extended prayer service on the theme of “Our Faith Calls Us to Service.” Include a litany for those in need in the community and world. The prayer service helps people experience how the call to justice and service is rooted in our faith.

**Suggestion 2. Dramatization:** Alone or in combination with an extended prayer service you can dramatize Gospel passages that help us experience how the call to justice and service is rooted in our faith. Consider dramatizing Advent Gospel readings – Matthew 11:2-11 or Luke 3:10-18 – or other passages such as the Rich Man and Lazarus or the Final Judgment (Matthew 25). Here are several resources with dramas and role plays.

- Glavich, Mary Kathleen. *Acting Out the Miracles and Parables*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1988.
- Glavich, Mary Kathleen. *Acting Out the Gospels – 40 Five-Minute Plays for Education and Worship*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1999.
- Crehan, Diane. *I Remember Jesus – Stories to Tell and How to Tell Them*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1999.
- Marmoughet, Rosemary. *Scripture Alive – Role-Plays for Youth*. Winona, MN: St. Mary’s Press, 1997.
- Rousell, Sheila O’Connell and Terri Vorndran Nichols. *Lectionary-Based Gospel Dramas for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany*. Winona, MN: St. Mary’s Press, 1997.

- Rousell, Sheila O’Connell and Terri Vorndran Nichols. *Lectionary-Based Gospel Dramas for Lent and the Easter Triduum*. Winona, MN: St. Mary’s Press, 1999.
- Schneider, M. Valerie. *Gospel Scenes for Teens – 23 Guided Prayer Meditations*. Mystic, CT: Twenty Third Publications, 2000.
- Zyromski, Page McKean. *Echo Stories for Children*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998.

## Part 3. In-Depth Learning: Parallel Learning

The In-Depth Learning Experience is designed so that it can work in the *Parallel Learning Format* using lesson plans for families with children, adolescents, and adults.

1. Families with Children Session Plan (attached)
2. Adolescent – Adult Large Group Session Plan (attached)
3. Young Adult and Adult Small Group Session Plan (attached)

## Part 4. Whole Group Sharing Experience

- Determine what each group will bring back to the large group to share as a result of their learning.
- Determine how each group will share their reports or projects so that they “teach” the other groups about the event and theme.

**Examples:** Presentations by children of their “Billboard”; presentations by adolescents and adults of their pledge.

## Part 5. Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application

- Guide individuals and families in sharing their learning in family clusters, individual family units, and/or kindred groups (young adults, adults, older adults)
- Review the Home Kit for the event containing prayers, rituals, service projects, family enrichment, and learning activities.
- Review the reflection activities or strategies to use in conjunction with the event.
- Guide individuals and families in developing an individual or family action plan for celebrating/living the event at home using the Home Kit, and planning for participation in the Advent season and service projects.

## Part 6. Closing Prayer Service

Conclude in prayer. Here are several elements of a closing prayer service that you can use to prepare your prayer service.

## **A Litany Based on Matthew 25:31-46**

Leader: In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus challenges us to serve those in need. In fact we will be judged by how well we have served others. Let us now pray that God will give us the eyes to see those in need and to act.

Leader: I was hungry and you gave me food....

All: Let us act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.

Leader: I was thirsty and you gave me drink....

All: Let us act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.

Leader: I was a stranger and you welcomed me....

All: Let us act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.

Leader: I was naked and you clothed me....

All: Let us act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.

Leader: I was ill and you comforted me....

All: Let us act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.

Leader: God, true light and source of all light, may we recognize you in oppressed people and poor people, in homeless people and hungry people. May we be open to your Spirit that we may be a means of healing, strength and peace for all your people. We ask this through Jesus, your son and our brother! Amen.

## **Sharing Actions for Justice**

Ask the families to share one service project they will do during Advent. Ask the adolescent and adult participants to share one of their "I will...." statements from their Justice Pledge with the group. Play some quiet instrumental music in the background while the "I will...." statements are read.

## **Closing Prayer**

Together invite all the young people to pray the prayer of service from Mother Teresa.

*At the end of life we will not be judged by  
how many diplomas we have received,  
how much money we have made,  
how many great things we have done.*

*We will be judged by  
"I was hungry and you gave me food to eat,  
I was naked and you clothed me  
I was homeless and you took me in."*

*Hungry not only for bread – but for love  
Naked not only for clothing – but naked of human dignity and respect  
Homeless not only for want of a room of bricks – but homeless because of rejection.*

*This is Christ in distressing disguise.*

Mother Teresa (*Words To Love By...*)



# Families with Children

## Advent Service—Session Plan

### “Our Faith Call Us to Serve”

#### Activity Plan

This activity can be adapted for young adolescents. See the variation idea at the end.

1. Gather all the supplies you need for the Advent Service Learning Activity.
  - children’s Bibles for each child (or for each work group)
  - Art supplies for drawing an advertisement: poster paper/art paper/newsprint, crayons, markers, magazines (for photos), glue sticks, tape, scissors, etc.
  - Christmas music and cassette or CD player
2. Begin by asking the children the meaning of the word “serve:” *What does the word serve mean?* Let them offer a few ideas. Then tell them that the dictionary has more than twenty meanings for the word “serve.” The word “serve” can mean to offer food, to help, to spend time, to work, to give honor, and to be obedient.
3. Ask the children, *Who do you serve in your life?* and *What do you do to serve others?* Let them offer responses to both questions.
4. Ask them to recall stories, events or teachings that tell us about how Jesus wants us to serve others. Try to draw out stories from the group. Ask the group to work together with you in filling out the details of the story. (You might want to remind them of famous stories such as The Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37.)
5. In the next part of the activity, the children are going to create a “Service Advertisement.” Explain that each group will prepare a “billboard” advertisement that takes the Scripture passage(s) you have selected (see below) and turns it into a modern-day message from God to us, convincing us to help others and show our love of God and neighbor. You can choose to have the whole group work on one Bible story or assign each group a different story. (If you need more Scripture passages, turn to the handout, *Scripture Guide to Justice*, and select additional stories.) Read the story(s) to the group. Ask the children to follow in their Bibles.

#### Bible Stories

Matthew 25:31-44 (*Whenever you did it to one of the least, you did it to me*)

Luke 10:25-37 (*Who is my neighbor?*)

Luke 16:19-31 (*Lazarus and the rich man*)

John 6:5-13 (*Jesus feeds the hungry*)

Guide the children as they produce their Service Advertisements. Play Christmas music while the groups work.

**Note:** Select different Scripture passages for each grade level or age group to minimize overlap in the Service Commercials activity. Then create a display in the worship space at church or in the church foyer to share the Service Commercials with families and the whole church community. This is a wonderful way to prepare the entire community for service and the coming of the Messiah.

6. Acting as Master of Ceremonies, introduce each group and invite them to present their billboard. After all of the presentations, lead a discussion with the entire group on the meaning of the presentations and the things they may have had in common. Use the following questions to begin your discussion.
  - What did you like best on the billboards?
  - What did they tell us about Jesus' message of service?
  - What is God telling us to do?
7. Introduce the children to the service project(s) that you have selected (see **Activity Plan: Planning for Service** and the handout, *Advent Service Ideas*). Prepare the group now to take action on their service project.

## Variation

- ▶ For older children or young adolescents, consider expanding the options for creating their advertisement by using one or more of the following techniques. Each group can use a different technique. Be sure to gather the resources you will need for the options you select.
  - A 30 second TV or radio ad that the children role play
  - An ad in a magazine
  - Poster advertisement
  - A direct mail postcard, letter, or advertisement
  - A button
  - Writing pads: phone message pad, memo pads, school pad
  - Magnet for the refrigerator
  - Clothing: T-shirt, Caps
  - A canvas bag or patch for a school bag

Acting as Master of Ceremonies, introduce each group for the presentation of their "service advertisement." After all of the presentations, lead a discussion with the entire group on the meaning of the presentations and the things they may have had in common. Use the following questions to begin your discussion.

- What did you like best about the advertisements? What surprised you?
- What did the commercials have in common?
- What new insights did you gain about helping others?
- What did they tell us about Jesus' message of service?
- What is God telling us to do?

# Scripture Guide to Service

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## Old Testament

Ex 22:20-27	Justice and mercy toward stranger, orphan, widow, neighbor
Lv 19:9-18	Treat your neighbor with justice and mercy; love your neighbor as yourself
Dt 24:17-22	Justice toward strangers, orphans, widows
Ps 9:7-12,18	God rules the world with justice
Ps 41:1-3	Regard for the lowly and the poor
Ps 68:5-6	God's care for the helpless and homeless
Ps 72	God liberates and defends the poor and oppressed
Ps 82	No more mockery of justice
Ps 96:10-13	God judges the people with justice
Ps 103	Yahweh is always on the side of the oppressed
Ps 140:12	God defends the cause of the poor
Ps 146:1-10	Creator and God of the oppressed
Ps 146:6-9	The Lord gives justice and liberty
Is 58:1-12	God doesn't want empty worship but a conversion of heart that produces justice, love, and mercy
Is 61:1-2	Mission of Christ foretold, good news to the poor; liberation

## New Testament

Mt 5:38-48	Give your coat; walk the extra mile
Mt 19:16-30	The rich young man (also: Mk 10:17-31, Lk 18:18-30)
Mt 20:26-28	Christians must be servants
Mt 25:31-46	Whatever we do to our neighbor, we do to Christ
Lk 1:52-53	Mary's song of praise; God exalts the poor and lowers the rich
Lk 3:10-18	John the Baptist's call to share extra clothing, food
Lk 4:16-30	Jesus announces his mission to liberate people
Lk 6:20-26	Beatitudes, condemnation of oppressive and complacent rich
Lk 7:18-23	Tell John what you see; the Good News is preached
Lk 10:25-37	The Good Samaritan
Lk 12:32-34	Sell and give alms; your heart will be where your riches are
Lk 16:19-31	The story of Lazarus and the rich man
Lk 19:7-9	Zaccheus: conversion, repentance, and restitution
Jn 6:5-13	Christ feeds the hungry
Jn 13:1-15	Jesus, the Suffering Servant, washes the feet of the disciples
Acts 2:43-47	The first Christian community shared everything
Acts 4:32-35	True Christian community; possessions shared
Rm 12:10-18	Make hospitality your special care; make friends with the poor
2Cor 8:1-15	Be generous in sharing with the needy
2Cor 9:1-15	Give gladly
Jas 1:22-27	Be doers, not only hearers of the word
Jas 2:1-17	Love your neighbor, faith without action is dead
1Pt 4:7-11	Put your gifts at the service of others
1Jn 4:19-21	We can't love God without loving neighbor

## Activity Plan: Planning for Service

### Step One: Research Existing Christmas Service Projects

Research groups or organizations sponsoring Christmas service projects—in your parish, area churches and diocesan agencies, community organizations, and national projects. Use the resource sheet, *Advent Service Ideas*, to help you research local service opportunities.

### Step Two: Select or Create Projects

Using the resource sheet, *Advent Service Ideas*, and your own research decide in advance on the number of service projects you want to adopt and connect people to during Advent. Decide if you want to offer a variety of service options in a variety of timeframes from which they can select their own involvement throughout Advent (individually, as an age group, as families, or with a small group) *or* if you want to adopt one or two projects for all generations (or for families or for an age group) as part of a parish-wide Advent service effort.

#### Things to Remember in Selecting a Service Project

- ▶ First, make sure the service project is well organized and designed for children, adolescents, adults, and/or families. Make sure it provides opportunities for every person to serve and make a difference.
- ▶ Carefully weigh the commitment of time, resources, and energy available on the part of those who will be serving.
- ▶ Select service activities that match the time, abilities, needs, interests, skills, knowledge, and responsibilities of children, adolescents, adults, and/or families.
- ▶ Choose service projects which address issues with which the children, adolescents, adults, and/or families have some previous knowledge, experience or contact, or which connect to the other programs and activities in the parish or local community.
- ▶ Seek out service opportunities in which everyone can have an active role and real responsibilities. Make sure they can be actively engaged in the service project.
- ▶ Integrate fun and relationship building with service whenever possible.
- ▶ Look for intergenerational opportunities in service projects—where people of different ages are working side-by-side. Seek out projects where families can join other families in service. Joining with people of other generations or with other families makes service more attractive, and provides support for nurturing a commitment to justice and service.

#### Creating a Service Plan

Record your plan for youth service on the *Service Planning Worksheet*. Be sure to include all of the important details.

## Step Three: Prepare to Serve

### **Things to Remember as You Prepare People for Service**

- ▶ Help people learn more about the issue. Contact your parish or service organization for relevant information about the issue you are addressing (e.g. articles, booklets, videos).
- ▶ Help people become familiar and comfortable with the service site and what they are likely to encounter there. People need a clear picture of what to expect at the work site. They need to have a “feel” for the place that takes in sights and sounds, touches and smells. The more they know about the service site, the better prepared they will be to share their energy and efforts in service.
- ▶ Help people become competent to serve – provide the training and skills needed to accomplish your tasks. Service projects require different knowledge and skill levels. If people need prior training, ask your service organization how they can acquire that training. Most often the service organization will provide the orientation or training themselves.

Record your preparation details on the *Service Planning Worksheet*.

## Step Four: Engage in Service

### **Things to Remember as You Serve**

- ▶ Meet the advocates for justice. The witness of people who are giving themselves generously, often at some risk, can help us overcome our fears of service and see how to put our faith into action. Make time to ask them questions and listen to their stories. Sometimes this happens naturally as people work together, side by side. When working with teams, it sometimes works best to include “sharing time” into the program.
- ▶ Meet the victims of injustice. The experiences and stories of people who suffer from injustice touch our hearts and move us to action. It gives our issue or concern a real human face. By listening attentively, we can recognize the gifts of those we serve and how much we can learn from them. What is true for adults, is even more true for children and adolescents – real learning comes through contact with real people.
- ▶ Remember that service means “doing with” rather than “doing for.” Allow those who are serving to work alongside and be served and resourced by people in need.

## Step Five: Reflect on Your Service Experience

Schedule a time after the service involvement to discuss and evaluate the service experience. This can be on the same day as the service involvement. By doing this you will eliminate the need for an additional meeting. Consider debriefing the experience over a light meal or snacks. Invite people to share the highs and lows of the experience, their thoughts and feelings, and their suggestions for making the experience better next time around. Select appropriate questions from the list below to help your discussion. (Consider giving children an activity that encourages reflection, such as drawing pictures that capture their experience or writing a short story.)

### **Connecting with Experience**

- ▶ What struck you most strongly? What happened?
- ▶ What images stand out in your mind? What sights and sounds, touches and smells? What experiences and conversations? Why did they make the impression they did?
- ▶ What was happening in your heart? What did you feel? What touched you most deeply today? Why? What did you find most frustrating? Most hopeful? Why?

### **Connecting with People**

- ▶ What did you learn about the people you met? How is their experience most like yours? How is it different? How would you feel if you had to change places for a week? a year? Why?
- ▶ What did you learn about yourself today? What do you like about what you learned? What do you dislike and most want to change?

### **Connecting with Issues**

- ▶ How were justice and injustice present in the situations you faced today? Did you learn anything new about the causes of injustice and the changes that are necessary?
- ▶ How did your service involvement try to address your issue?

### **Connecting with Faith**

- ▶ How was God present in what happened within and around you? How were you God for others? How were others God for you? Where was the “holy” in what happened? Where was the “evil?”
- ▶ What did you discover about following Jesus? How did this service experience put into practice certain teachings or stories of Jesus?
- ▶ What new insights did you discover about why service is essential to the Christian life?

### **Connecting with the Future**

- ▶ What did you learn that will help you serve in the future?
- ▶ Did the service experience bring to mind anything that you might want to change about yourself, your priorities or how you live your life?

# Advent Service Ideas

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*The crowds asked John, "What ought we to do?" John told them, "If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn't have any. If you have food, share it with someone else." (Luke 3:10-11, CEV)*

(From the Gospel of the third Sunday of Advent, Cycle C)

*Our faith calls us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers. This is the call of Jesus, the challenge of the prophets, and the living tradition of our Church.  
(Century of Catholic Social Teaching, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1990)*

## Introduction

The Catholic call to justice and service involves us as individuals, families and parish communities in actions of direct service and in efforts to address the causes of injustice and inequity. We are called as Church to help people survive their present need or crisis. We are called, too, to help change the systems and structures that make it impossible for people to catch up or get ahead.

Working at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen, visiting the sick or disabled, and tutoring children are common examples of direct service. Legislative advocacy, community organizing, and working with organizations that challenge and work to change the structures that promote injustice are examples of social change actions. For justice to reign, both are essential. Direct service needs to be coupled with actions aimed at removing the causes of the problems that imperil people's life and dignity. For example, families who are working at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen could also be involved with a local coalition for the homeless that is working to create housing, employment, and just policies for the homeless. In this way families will experience the benefits of working directly with the homeless *and* learn to change the system which keeps people homeless.

### **To serve those in need consider...**

#### Working with a Local Service Organization

Examples: serving at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter; distributing items at a food bank; visiting the elderly; working at a senior citizen facility, a hospital, or day care center; helping the Red Cross during local emergencies; working with Special Olympics or programs for the developmentally-challenged; participating in or initiating environmental programs; tutoring programs for children; Big Brother/Big Sister

#### Addressing Needs in the Parish or Neighborhood

Examples: chores and shopping for the homebound, child care for single parents, visiting the sick, cleaning the neighborhood

- ☑ Collecting Resources  
Examples: food drives, toys for tots, clothing drives, books/videos for libraries
- ☑ Building and Repair Projects  
Examples: building homes with Habitat for Humanity, weatherizing/repairing/painting homes, building playgrounds
- ☑ Charitable Giving/ Alternative Gift Giving  
Examples: financial support for the relief efforts of local and national groups who work directly with the poor: *Catholic Relief Services* (209 West Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-3403) [CRS sponsors Operation Rice Bowl during Lent], *Save the Children* (P.O. Box 960, Westport, CT 06881-9988) [Save the Children sponsors an annual Christmas giving project.]

**To work for justice consider...**

- ☑ Advocacy for Those who Suffer Injustice  
Examples: legislative advocacy through letter writing on important issues and legislation that affects the poor, families, children; working with groups to change legislation or budget priorities
- ☑ Support for Organizations Working for Justice  
Examples: promoting the purpose and activities of organizations working for change, providing financial support (e.g. giving to the annual collection for the *Campaign for Human Development*, sponsored by U.S. Bishops, which funds employment and community development projects for the poor), volunteering time to work with the organization

## **Advent Service Ideas**

### ► **Christmas Collections**

#### **Food**

Christmas is a time when people collect food or clothing. Check with local service groups and agencies to see what kinds of things they and their clients need. Shelters, soup kitchens, and food banks almost always have a need for canned goods and non-perishables.

- Set up box collections in your church foyer and publicize it to the congregation.
- Distribute shopping bags for a food collection after all the weekend Masses in early December. Attach a list of needed food items on each bag so that you receive the food items needed by the shelters, soup kitchens or food banks.
- Distribute shopping bags to parishioners door-to-door with a sheet of paper describing what your group is doing and why. Ask people to put in the bag items needed by the food bank (attach a list to the bag). They can bring the bag to one of the weekend Masses or you can set up a time to collect the bag (e.g., several days after you distribute the bags).
- Telephone parishioners and solicit food items for them to bring to Mass this coming weekend.
- Go door-to-door and ask for food bank items. Include a flyer that describes the services of the food bank and how others can be involved, including how they can contribute in the future.



- After getting permission from the grocery store manager, set up a food collection outside the store and ask patrons to purchase an extra item during their shopping trip so that they can add to the food collection on their way out of the store.

### **Clothing Collection**

Many agencies conduct clothing collections during the Christmas season. Winter coat collections are popular in colder climates. Involve the young people in this effort by identifying a community organization that is collecting winter coats, publicize the project throughout the parish, collect the clothes at weekend Masses or in person at people's homes, and then deliver them to the sponsoring agency. Another variation on a clothing collection is to contact a child care center in a poor community or a children's service agency to develop a "hats and mittens" collection.

### Organizations

- *The Box Project*, Box 435, Dept. BP, Plainville, CT 06062 (Write to find out how you can help supply families with much-needed clothing and other household items.)
- *NGA*, B St. Rd., Southhampton, PA 18966 (215-322-5759) (NGA gets clothing and other essential items to those in need. Call to see if it has a program in your area.)

### **Essentials**

Shelters, for example, have an ongoing need for "essentials" like: sheets, blankets and towels; new underwear, socks, T-shirts, pajamas; toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, shaving cream, disposable razors; etc. Other ideas include:

- *School Kits*: Put together kits containing the things needed to get through the day, e.g., notebooks, pencils, pens, markers, crayons, calculator.
- *Special Days*: Imagine what it is like to celebrate a birthday or holiday in a shelter or detention center and have no one notice. Decide what should go into a birthday or holiday box, and commit to putting together a box or two or more.
- *Dessert Trays*: Provide a shelter or soup kitchen with a dessert to complement their usual lunch or supper; donate ice cream sandwiches or cones, or all the fixings needed for a make-your-own-sundae bar; have a parish bake-off with all baked goods going to the shelter or soup kitchen.
- *Baby Box*: Make "care packages" for teen parents; include disposable diapers, baby wipes, baby shampoo, lotion, baby powder, baby soap, baby blanket, pacifier, bottles, infant toys, a guide for new parents, etc.
- *Kitchen Equipment*: Collect and donate coffeemakers, cutting boards, pots and pans, utensils, etc.

### **Toy Collection**

#### **(Toys for Tots or Giving Tree Project)**

Local organizations, such as the Salvation Army, organize *Toys for Tots* programs. The young people can organize the parish's involvement in the *Toys for Tots* program by announcing the need for toys, collecting the toys, and delivering the toys to the sponsoring agency. A variation on collecting toys is to organize a Giving Tree project. Identify a child care facility in a poor community or an agency, such as Catholic Family Services or the Salvation Army, that can supply you with the names of children (age and sex) who are in need of toys for Christmas. Write the name, age, and sex of every child

on a piece of construction paper cut-out in the shape of an ornament. Attach the names to the Christmas tree in the church. During the weekend Masses in early December invite parishioners to take a name off the tree and to bring a wrapped gift back on the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Collect the gifts and deliver them to the center or agency you are working with.

► **Christmas Stocking Service Project**

Sponsor a party for young children in need during the Advent season. These parties feature food, gifts, and a visit by Santa Claus. Make a wonderful contribution to such an occasion by providing the guests with gift stockings. Felt stockings can be sewn for each child or inexpensive net stockings can be purchased for this project. All stockings should be the same. Ask children to bring appropriate items to fill the stockings. Send a note to parents enlisting support for this project. Remind children and parents that items must be small enough to fit in a stocking and appropriate for both boys and girls. Provide a list of suitable items for the stockings such as:

- small toys
- games
- stuffed animals
- snow scenes
- markers
- candy canes
- crayons
- toy watches
- coloring books
- gift certificates
- pencils
- wind-up toys

Provide collection boxes for the items. Then have a team of children and adults available to fill the stockings. Arrange a time for delivery. Several classes or groups can work together on this project. One group can sew the stockings, one can provide the items, and another can fill the stockings and deliver them. This is a great service project because it benefits children with special needs. Spreading joy to children is an important part of the Advent season.

► **Christmas Fundraiser for a Justice Organization**

Rock-a-thons and similar ideas are fun ways to raise money for organizations that service those in need and/or work for justice. (In the rock-a-thon young people (and/or adults) gather pledges and earn money for each hour they rock in rocking chairs.) Select your favorite fundraising idea and/or work with other parish groups or church groups to sponsor a fundraiser for an organization.

► **Charitable Gift Certificates**

Many local and national justice and service organizations sponsor special Christmas fundraising projects that involve making a donation and receiving a calendar or special gift. The young people can adopt one of these organizations and “sell” gift certificates for the organization as a form of alternative Christmas gift giving.

► **Christmas Packages for Prisoners**

Contact the local prison about your desire to provide Christmas packages for prisoners who have no family or friends. They will give you instructions on how to package the gifts so that their security remains intact. You can place in each package an assortment of candy, magazines or books. Socks and underwear are also welcomed. You can ask prison officials what inmates can and cannot receive in the mail.

► **Adopt-a-Family**

Work with a local agency to find families that you can provide a complete Christmas celebration, including Christmas meal, gifts for family members, Christmas tree and ornaments, etc.

Salvation Army's Adopt-a-Family Program

The Salvation Army's *Adopt-a-Family Program* offers your family the chance to reach out to a family in your community who is in need of help during the holiday season. Families needing assistance register with their local Salvation Army, which then matches them with a sponsoring family. Sponsors are given a list of important details – the recipients' first names, ages, clothing sizes, and special requests or needs. The Salvation Army handles the exchange of all gifts. To become an *Adopt-a-Family* sponsor, contact the nearest Salvation Army.

► **Christmas for Shut-ins**

Develop a list (names and address) of shut-ins in your parish or community and send them Christmas cards or small Christmas gifts. You can do the same thing for older adults living at senior citizen residences or nursing homes. You may want to consider a "personal shopper" program, which involves young people in doing grocery shopping or Christmas gift shopping for shut-ins.

► **Financial Support for Organizations**

Provide financial support to organizations that work directly with the poor locally and globally, such as:

- CARE, 660 First Avenue, New York, NY 10016
- Catholic Relief Services, 209 West Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-3403
- Habitat for Humanity, 121 Habitat St., Americus, GA 31709-3498
- Heifer Project International, P.O. Box 808, Little Rock, AR 72203
- Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, PA 17501
- Save the Children, P.O. Box 960, Westport, CT 06881-9988

Heifer Project

Through Heifer Project International you can provide a hungry family with an animal that will enable them to become self-reliant by producing food, caring for the earth, and sharing with others. Select the animal you want to donate, or the share you want to give toward purchasing the animal, for example \$500 for a cow, \$120 for a goat or pig or sheep, \$20 for a flock of chicks. Join with other families to make a contribution. Call 800-422-0755 for the Heifer Project catalog (P.O. Box 808, Little Rock, AR 72203).

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is a Christian housing ministry that has built or renovated over 60,000 low-cost houses since 1976 for families in need. This holiday season help a family celebrate the holidays by moving into a new Habitat home. A gift of \$20 purchases a 50-pound box of nails, \$35 helps to purchase a living room window, \$50 helps to pay for an interior door. Habitat provides a special holiday Housewarming Card for a new Habitat

family, signed by your family. Call 912-924-6935 for information or write 121 Habitat St., Americus, GA 31709-3498.

Covenant House

Covenant House houses, feeds, counsels, and educates thousands of young people each year. Support the national work of Covenant House as they house and care for homeless youth. Each winter (Christmas time), Covenant House launches a national bed and blanket campaign on behalf of homeless youth. Contact Covenant House at P.O. Box 731, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10108-0731.

# Service Planning Worksheet

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## Research for Advent Service Projects

### Projects

(Type of project, place, dates)

### Agency

(Contact Person, Phone Number)


Place an \* next to those projects with which you will be involved.

# Individual Service Projects

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Time/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Logistics (transportation, supplies, etc.):

How will we learn more about the issue?

How will we become familiar and comfortable with the service site?

How will we get the training we need to serve (if it is needed)?

When will we meet to reflect on our service experience?

# Adolescents and Adults Advent Service— Large Group Session Plan “Our Faith Call Us to Serve”

## Organizing Tip

There are a number of ways to organize Advent service projects. Here are three options you can use with the participants in this activity.

**Option 1:** You pre-determine service project(s) that you want to present to the participants by using the *Planning for Service* process and the handout, *Advent Service Ideas* or you can select the one or two service projects for the group from the handout, *Advent Service Ideas*.

**Option 2:** You can engage the participants in the process of researching and determining the service projects they will be involved in. Guide the participants through the process in **Activity Plan: Planning for Service** to plan the service opportunities. Use the handout, *Advent Service Ideas* to generate specific ideas for service.

**Option 3:** Distribute copies of the handout, *Advent Service Ideas* to everyone. Ask each person to review the variety of ideas and to select up to three ideas they personally would do. Then work with the group to determine the top 2 or 3 ideas for Advent Service projects.

## Activity Plan

1. Gather all the supplies you need for the Advent Service activity.
  - Bibles for each child (or for each work group)
  - Newspapers and magazines
  - Christmas music and cassette or CD player
2. Pass around copies of local or national daily newspapers, and national magazines (e.g., *Time*, *Newsweek*). Each person in the group gets 3-4 pages from a variety of different sections of the newspaper and at least one national magazine. Give your pages a quick scan, looking for articles and references to contemporary justice issues. When you find an article or reference, tear it out. After each person has completed their justice search, share with each other what you found in the paper or magazine, why you selected this article or reference, and what type of justice issue it was: local, regional, national or global.

Conclude the activity by asking, *What justice issues and concerns, call out for our response as Catholics?* Ask them to reflect on their research in the prior activity or on the issues facing their local community or area. List these ideas on newsprint for all to see. Place a check next to items that get mentioned several times.

3. In small groups of 4-6 people (or in the large group), invite the participants to identify all the ways that people in the community are *actually* involved in service to those in need. Ask them to consider first how their age group (adolescents, young adults, adults, older adults, parents, et al.) are involved in service. (Be sure they include how they, as individuals, are involved in service.) Then ask them to think about how families in the parish or community are involved in service, and how the parish (and the diocese) and community organizations are involved in service to those in need. Record the responses on newsprint. This is an excellent way to demonstrate how people are already engaged in service (thereby building energy and enthusiasm for service). It also identifies specific ideas for service (helpful for the conclusion of this service learning activity).
4. Invite the participants to think quietly about the question, *Why is it important for Catholics to serve others and work for justice?* (Consider asking: If you had to share your response with people who did not know about Jesus or the Catholic Church, what would you say?) Ask them to recall specific teachings and actions of Jesus that make service essential for those who follow him. Ask them to recall specific teachings and actions of the Church that demonstrate the importance of justice and service.
5. Invite the participants to share their responses in small groups (or as a large group). Ask for reports from each small group and record the responses on newsprint. (If you conduct this as a large group sharing, simply write the responses on newsprint immediately.)
6. Ask the participants to share their reactions to the newsprint list. For example: *Did the group make a strong case for the importance of justice and service in the lives of Catholics? Was this activity difficult or easy? What have we learned from this activity?*
7. Provide a brief presentation to highlight the foundations of justice and service in Scripture and Church Teachings. Use *A Century of Catholic Social Teaching* by the Catholic Bishops of the United States (included with *Generations of Faith*), the Lectionary readings for Advent, and the following outline as your guide for the presentation. Use transparencies or newsprint sheets to present the key points of your presentation.

**Option:** You might want to invite a guest presenter to give a short talk on the foundations of justice and service in Scripture and Church teachings.

### **Part One: Introduction**

*In A Century of Catholic Social Teaching the Catholic Bishops of the United States write, "Our faith calls us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers. This is the call of Jesus, the challenge of the prophets, and the living tradition of our Church."*



*The years since the Second Vatican Council have witnessed an amazing growth in the Church's understanding of justice and service. The Church increasingly views itself as a people set aside for the sake of others – a community that stands in solidarity with the poor, that reaches out in service to those in need, and that struggles to create a world where each person is treated with dignity and respect. Church documents challenge us to discern the Spirit's movements in the "signs of the times" and to respond to Jesus' call to justice – as gifted individuals and families, as citizens of a powerful nation, and as neighbors in a global community. Justice and service are central to who we are as God's people and to how we live our faith life out at home, in our neighborhood settings and on the international plane.*

*The call to work for justice and serve those in need is....*

- *founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ, who came "to bring glad tidings to the poor... liberty to captives... recovery of sight to the blind ..." (Luke 4:18-19), and who identified himself in the powerful parable of the Last Judgment with the hungry, the homeless, the stranger, "the least of these." (cf. Matthew. 25:45);*
- *inspired by the passion for justice of the Hebrew prophets and the scriptural call to care for the weak and to "let justice surge like water" (Amos 5:24);*
- *shaped by the social teaching of our Church, papal encyclicals, conciliar documents, and episcopal statements that, especially over the last century, have explored, expressed, and affirmed the social demands of our faith, insisting that work for justice and peace and care for the poor and vulnerable are the responsibility of every Christian; and*
- *lived by the people of God, who seek to build up the kingdom of God, to live our faith in the world and to apply the values of the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church in our own families and parishes, in our work and service in local communities, the nation, and the world. (Century of Catholic Social Teaching)*

### **Part Two: Scriptural Foundation**

Engage the participants in exploring the Scriptural foundation of the call to justice and service. Introduce this part of the presentation by explaining how central justice and service are in the Advent Lectionary readings. For example: *The crowds asked John, "What ought we to do?" John told them, "If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn't have any. If you have food, share it with someone else." (Luke 3:10-11, CEV) (From the Gospel of the third Sunday of Advent, Cycle C)*

Organize people into groups of 2-4. Give each group one Scripture passage (from the Advent readings or additional justice readings below). Ask them to read the passage and then answer the question: *What does this passage say to us about the importance of working for justice and serving others as Catholics?* After their reflection time ask each group to share a brief report with the entire group. (If you need more Scripture passages, consult the handout, *Scripture Guide to Justice*.)

### Advent Readings

Use the six readings highlighted in **bold print** and then add readings from the next list.

	Cycle A	Cycle B	Cycle C
Week One	<b>Isaiah 2:1-5</b> Matthew 24:37-44	Isaiah 63:16-17,19; & 64:2-7 Mark 13:33-37	Jeremiah 33:14-16 Luke 21:25-28, 34-36
Week Two	<b>Isaiah 11:1-10</b> Matthew 3:1-12	Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11 Mark 1:1-8	Baruch 5:1-9 Luke 3:1-6
Week Three	<b>Isaiah 35:1-6, 10</b> <b>Matthew 11:2-11</b>	<b>Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11</b> John 1:6-8, 19-28	Zephaniah 3:14-18 <b>Luke 3:10-18</b>
Week Four	Isaiah 7:10-14 Matthew 1:18-24	2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11, 16 Luke 1:26-38	Micah 5:1-4 Luke 1:39-45

#### Additional Justice and Service Readings

- Leviticus 19:8-18
- Deuteronomy 24:17-22
- Isaiah 58:6-11
- Matthew 25:31-44
- Luke 4:16-19
- Luke 10:25-37
- Luke 16:19-31
- John 6:5-13
- John 13:1-15
- 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 and 9:6-15
- James 2:1-17

#### **Part Three: Church Teachings**

*“Across this country and around the world, the Church’s social ministry is a story of growing vitality and strength, of remarkable compassion, courage, and creativity. It is the everyday reality of providing homeless and hungry people with decent shelter and needed help, of giving pregnant women and their unborn children lifegiving alternatives, of offering refugees welcome, and so much more. It is believers advocating in the public arena for human life wherever it is threatened, for the rights of workers and for economic justice, for peace and freedom around the world, and for “liberty and justice for all” here at home. It is empowering and helping poor and vulnerable people to realize their dignity in inner cities, in rural communities and in lands far away. It is the everyday commitment of countless people, parishes and programs, local networks and national structures – a tradition of caring service, effective advocacy, and creative action.” (A Century of Catholic Social Teaching)*

*“Catholic social teaching is a powerful and liberating message in a world of stark contradictions: a world of inspiring new freedom and lingering oppression, of peaceful change and violent conflict, of remarkable economic progress for some and tragic misery and poverty for many others. Our teaching is a call to conscience, compassion, and creative action in a world confronting the terrible tragedy of widespread abortion, the haunting reality of hunger and homelessness, and the evil of continuing prejudice and poverty. Our teaching lifts up the moral and human dimensions of major public issues, examining “the signs of the times” through the values of the Scriptures, the teaching of the Church, and the experience of the People of God.” (A Century of Catholic Social Teaching)*

*The Catholic Bishops of the United States emphasize that...*

- *The social dimensions of our faith have taken on special urgency and clarity over this last century.*
- *Catholic social teaching is sometimes misunderstood as a peripheral aspect rather than as an integral and constitutive element of our faith. Where religion is seen as personal and privatized, the call to incorporate justice as an integral element of faith must be emphasized.*

- *The Catholic social vision offers words of hope, a set of principles and directions for action to a world longing for greater freedom, justice, and peace.*
- *Our bishops suggest six basic principles and themes as central to the Church's social vision:*
  - *The life and dignity of the human person*
  - *The rights and responsibilities of the human person*
  - *The call to family, community and participation*
  - *The dignity of work and the rights of workers*
  - *The option for the poor and the vulnerable*
  - *Solidarity*
- *Efforts to respond to the immediate sufferings endured by those treated unjustly must be accompanied by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering and injustice.*
- *We must work together to ensure that we continue to move together from strong words about charity and justice to effective action, from official statements to creative ministry at every level of the Church's life.*

(For background on the six themes consult *A Century of Catholic Social Teaching*.)

8. Invite the participants to reflect on the presentation by using the following questions.

- *In light of the presentation, Why are we as Catholics called to serve others and work for justice?*
- *Invite the participants to compare and contrast the answers they just gave with their responses in the activity prior to the presentation. (The answers should be on newsprint sheets.)*
- *How do you see the call to serve and work for justice rooted in the life of Jesus?*

9. Introduce the need to act on our faith through works of justice and service to those in need by explaining...

*The Catholic call to justice and service involves us as individuals, families and parish communities in actions of direct service and in efforts to address the causes of injustice and inequity. We are called as Church to help people survive their present need or crisis. We are called, too, to help change the systems and structures that make it impossible for people to catch up or get ahead.*

*Working at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen, visiting the sick or disabled, and tutoring children are common examples of direct service. Legislative advocacy, community organizing, and working with organizations that challenge and work to change the structures that promote injustice are examples of social change actions. For justice to reign, both are essential. Direct service needs to be coupled with actions aimed at removing the causes of the problems that imperil people's life and dignity. For example, families who are working at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen could also be involved with a local coalition for the homeless that is working to create housing, employment, and just policies for the homeless. In this way families will experience the benefits of working directly with the homeless and learn to change the system which keeps people homeless.*

10. Reconnect the participants with first activity (determining justice issues). Review the top responses to the question, *What justice issues and concerns call out for our response as Catholics?* These responses can be very helpful in selecting service projects.

Introduce the Advent Service projects based on which option you selected under Organizing Tips. Engage the group in planning or determining service projects, and then prepare the group to take action on their service project(s).

11. Conclude the activity by saying, *God has made each of us unique, blessing us with different talents and opportunities. So, each of our efforts at integrating justice and service within life will look a bit different. The building blocks, however, remain much the same: growing in our understanding of justice issues, integrating a concern for justice into our prayer life, and sharing our talents and resources with others. Although our paths to justice and service may be different, our journey is always a shared one. Working individually and together, there is much we can do to create a better world and to help bring God's reign just a bit closer in our time.*

## **Extend the Activity**

### **► Justice Pledge**

Distribute two copies of *This is what God asks of you...* to everyone and ask them to write one or two things they will do to live justly. (The handout is designed to be copied and then cut into two slips of paper.)

Ask the participants to share one of their "I will..." statements with the group. Play some quiet instrumental music in the background while the "I will..." statements are read.

### **► Pledge for Charity, Justice, and Peace**

This Pledge flows from the themes of Catholic social teaching. The Pledge for Charity, Justice, and Peace is offered as an opportunity for Catholics to recommit themselves to serving the poor and working for justice and peace in the new millennium.

# *Pledge for Charity, Justice, and Peace*

*The Lord calls us "to bring glad tidings to the poor. . . .  
to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18).*

## **As disciples of Jesus, I pledge to:**

- ◆ **Pray** regularly for greater justice and peace.
- ◆ **Learn** more about Catholic social teaching and its call to protect human life, stand with the poor, and care for creation.
- ◆ **Reach** across boundaries of religion, race, ethnicity, gender, and disabling conditions.
- ◆ **Live** justly in family life, school, work, the marketplace, and the political arena.
- ◆ **Serve** those who are poor and vulnerable, sharing more time and talent.
- ◆ **Give** more generously to those in need at home and abroad.
- ◆ **Advocate** for public policies that protect human life, promote human dignity, preserve God's creation, and build peace.
- ◆ **Encourage** others to work for greater charity, justice, and peace.

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Signature

*Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church  
sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice.*  
(Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 1991)

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For more information or additional pledge cards call toll-free 800-235-8722 or [www.nccbuscc.org](http://www.nccbuscc.org).

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*This is what God asks of you, and only this:*

*That you act justly,  
love tenderly,  
and walk humbly with your God*  
(Micah 6:8)

**In my attempt to act justly, I will...**

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*This is what God asks of you, and only this:*

*That you act justly,  
love tenderly,  
and walk humbly with your God*  
(Micah 6:8)

**In my attempt to act justly, I will...**

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# Scripture Guide to Service

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## Old Testament

Ex 22:20-27	Justice and mercy toward stranger, orphan, widow, neighbor
Lv 19:9-18	Treat your neighbor with justice and mercy; love your neighbor as yourself
Dt 24:17-22	Justice toward strangers, orphans, widows
Ps 9:7-12,18	God rules the world with justice
Ps 41:1-3	Regard for the lowly and the poor
Ps 68:5-6	God's care for the helpless and homeless
Ps 72	God liberates and defends the poor and oppressed
Ps 82	No more mockery of justice
Ps 96:10-13	God judges the people with justice
Ps 103	Yahweh is always on the side of the oppressed
Ps 140:12	God defends the cause of the poor
Ps 146:1-10	Creator and God of the oppressed
Ps 146:6-9	The Lord gives justice and liberty
Is 58:1-12	God doesn't want empty worship but a conversion of heart that produces justice, love, and mercy
Is 61:1-2	Mission of Christ foretold, good news to the poor; liberation

## New Testament

Mt 5:38-48	Give your coat; walk the extra mile
Mt 19:16-30	The rich young man (also: Mk 10:17-31, Lk 18:18-30)
Mt 20:26-28	Christians must be servants
Mt 25:31-46	Whatever we do to our neighbor, we do to Christ
Lk 1:52-53	Mary's song of praise; God exalts the poor and lowers the rich
Lk 3:10-18	John the Baptist's call to share extra clothing, food
Lk 4:16-30	Jesus announces his mission to liberate people
Lk 6:20-26	Beatitudes, condemnation of oppressive and complacent rich
Lk 7:18-23	Tell John what you see; the Good News is preached
Lk 10:25-37	The Good Samaritan
Lk 12:32-34	Sell and give alms; your heart will be where your riches are
Lk 16:19-31	The story of Lazarus and the rich man
Lk 19:7-9	Zaccheus: conversion, repentance, and restitution
Jn 6:5-13	Christ feeds the hungry
Jn 13:1-15	Jesus, the Suffering Servant, washes the feet of the disciples
Acts 2:43-47	The first Christian community shared everything
Acts 4:32-35	True Christian community; possessions shared
Rm 12:10-18	Make hospitality your special care; make friends with the poor
2Cor 8:1-15	Be generous in sharing with the needy
2Cor 9:1-15	Give gladly
Jas 1:22-27	Be doers, not only hearers of the word
Jas 2:1-17	Love your neighbor, faith without action is dead
1Pt 4:7-11	Put your gifts at the service of others
1Jn 4:19-21	We can't love God without loving neighbor

## Activity Plan: Planning for Service

### Step One: Research Existing Christmas Service Projects

Research groups or organizations sponsoring Christmas service projects—in your parish, area churches and diocesan agencies, community organizations, and national projects. Use the resource sheet, *Advent Service Ideas*, to help you research local service opportunities.

### Step Two: Select or Create Projects

Using the resource sheet, *Advent Service Ideas*, and your own research decide in advance on the number of service projects you want to adopt and connect people to during Advent. Decide if you want to offer a variety of service options in a variety of timeframes from which they can select their own involvement throughout Advent (individually, as an age group, as families, or with a small group) *or* if you want to adopt one or two projects for all generations (or for families or for an age group) as part of a parish-wide Advent service effort.

#### Things to Remember in Selecting a Service Project

- ▶ First, make sure the service project is well organized and designed for children, adolescents, adults, and/or families. Make sure it provides opportunities for every person to serve and make a difference.
- ▶ Carefully weigh the commitment of time, resources, and energy available on the part of those who will be serving.
- ▶ Select service activities that match the time, abilities, needs, interests, skills, knowledge, and responsibilities of children, adolescents, adults, and/or families.
- ▶ Choose service projects which address issues with which the children, adolescents, adults, and/or families have some previous knowledge, experience or contact, or which connect to the other programs and activities in the parish or local community.
- ▶ Seek out service opportunities in which everyone can have an active role and real responsibilities. Make sure they can be actively engaged in the service project.
- ▶ Integrate fun and relationship building with service whenever possible.
- ▶ Look for intergenerational opportunities in service projects—where people of different ages are working side-by-side. Seek out projects where families can join other families in service. Joining with people of other generations or with other families makes service more attractive, and provides support for nurturing a commitment to justice and service.

#### Creating a Service Plan

Record your plan for youth service on the *Service Planning Worksheet*. Be sure to include all of the important details.



## Step Three: Prepare to Serve

### **Things to Remember as You Prepare People for Service**

- ▶ Help people learn more about the issue. Contact your parish or service organization for relevant information about the issue you are addressing (e.g. articles, booklets, videos).
- ▶ Help people become familiar and comfortable with the service site and what they are likely to encounter there. People need a clear picture of what to expect at the work site. They need to have a “feel” for the place that takes in sights and sounds, touches and smells. The more they know about the service site, the better prepared they will be to share their energy and efforts in service.
- ▶ Help people become competent to serve – provide the training and skills needed to accomplish your tasks. Service projects require different knowledge and skill levels. If people need prior training, ask your service organization how they can acquire that training. Most often the service organization will provide the orientation or training themselves.

Record your preparation details on the *Service Planning Worksheet*.

## Step Four: Engage in Service

### **Things to Remember as You Serve**

- ▶ Meet the advocates for justice. The witness of people who are giving themselves generously, often at some risk, can help us overcome our fears of service and see how to put our faith into action. Make time to ask them questions and listen to their stories. Sometimes this happens naturally as people work together, side by side. When working with teams, it sometimes works best to include “sharing time” into the program.
- ▶ Meet the victims of injustice. The experiences and stories of people who suffer from injustice touch our hearts and move us to action. It gives our issue or concern a real human face. By listening attentively, we can recognize the gifts of those we serve and how much we can learn from them. What is true for adults, is even more true for children and adolescents – real learning comes through contact with real people.
- ▶ Remember that service means “doing with” rather than “doing for.” Allow those who are serving to work alongside and be served and resourced by people in need.

## Step Five: Reflect on Your Service Experience

Schedule a time after the service involvement to discuss and evaluate the service experience. This can be on the same day as the service involvement. By doing this you will eliminate the need for an additional meeting. Consider debriefing the experience over a light meal or snacks. Invite people to share the highs and lows of the experience, their thoughts and feelings, and their suggestions for making the experience better next time around. Select appropriate questions from the list below to help your discussion. (Consider giving children an activity that encourages reflection, such as drawing pictures that capture their experience or writing a short story.)

### **Connecting with Experience**

- ▶ What struck you most strongly? What happened?
- ▶ What images stand out in your mind? What sights and sounds, touches and smells? What experiences and conversations? Why did they make the impression they did?
- ▶ What was happening in your heart? What did you feel? What touched you most deeply today? Why? What did you find most frustrating? Most hopeful? Why?

### **Connecting with People**

- ▶ What did you learn about the people you met? How is their experience most like yours? How is it different? How would you feel if you had to change places for a week? a year? Why?
- ▶ What did you learn about yourself today? What do you like about what you learned? What do you dislike and most want to change?

### **Connecting with Issues**

- ▶ How were justice and injustice present in the situations you faced today? Did you learn anything new about the causes of injustice and the changes that are necessary?
- ▶ How did your service involvement try to address your issue?

### **Connecting with Faith**

- ▶ How was God present in what happened within and around you? How were you God for others? How were others God for you? Where was the “holy” in what happened? Where was the “evil?”
- ▶ What did you discover about following Jesus? How did this service experience put into practice certain teachings or stories of Jesus?
- ▶ What new insights did you discover about why service is essential to the Christian life?

### **Connecting with the Future**

- ▶ What did you learn that will help you serve in the future?
- ▶ Did the service experience bring to mind anything that you might want to change about yourself, your priorities or how you live your life?

# Advent Service Ideas

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*The crowds asked John, "What ought we to do?" John told them, "If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn't have any. If you have food, share it with someone else." (Luke 3:10-11, CEV)*

(From the Gospel of the third Sunday of Advent, Cycle C)

*Our faith calls us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers. This is the call of Jesus, the challenge of the prophets, and the living tradition of our Church.  
(Century of Catholic Social Teaching, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1990)*

## Introduction

The Catholic call to justice and service involves us as individuals, families and parish communities in actions of direct service and in efforts to address the causes of injustice and inequity. We are called as Church to help people survive their present need or crisis. We are called, too, to help change the systems and structures that make it impossible for people to catch up or get ahead.

Working at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen, visiting the sick or disabled, and tutoring children are common examples of direct service. Legislative advocacy, community organizing, and working with organizations that challenge and work to change the structures that promote injustice are examples of social change actions. For justice to reign, both are essential. Direct service needs to be coupled with actions aimed at removing the causes of the problems that imperil people's life and dignity. For example, families who are working at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen could also be involved with a local coalition for the homeless that is working to create housing, employment, and just policies for the homeless. In this way families will experience the benefits of working directly with the homeless *and* learn to change the system which keeps people homeless.

### **To serve those in need consider...**

#### Working with a Local Service Organization

Examples: serving at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter; distributing items at a food bank; visiting the elderly; working at a senior citizen facility, a hospital, or day care center; helping the Red Cross during local emergencies; working with Special Olympics or programs for the developmentally-challenged; participating in or initiating environmental programs; tutoring programs for children; Big Brother/Big Sister

#### Addressing Needs in the Parish or Neighborhood

Examples: chores and shopping for the homebound, child care for single parents, visiting the sick, cleaning the neighborhood

- ☑ Collecting Resources  
Examples: food drives, toys for tots, clothing drives, books/videos for libraries
- ☑ Building and Repair Projects  
Examples: building homes with Habitat for Humanity, weatherizing/repairing/painting homes, building playgrounds
- ☑ Charitable Giving/ Alternative Gift Giving  
Examples: financial support for the relief efforts of local and national groups who work directly with the poor: *Catholic Relief Services* (209 West Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-3403) [CRS sponsors Operation Rice Bowl during Lent], *Save the Children* (P.O. Box 960, Westport, CT 06881-9988) [Save the Children sponsors an annual Christmas giving project.]

**To work for justice consider...**

- ☑ Advocacy for Those who Suffer Injustice  
Examples: legislative advocacy through letter writing on important issues and legislation that affects the poor, families, children; working with groups to change legislation or budget priorities
- ☑ Support for Organizations Working for Justice  
Examples: promoting the purpose and activities of organizations working for change, providing financial support (e.g. giving to the annual collection for the *Campaign for Human Development*, sponsored by U.S. Bishops, which funds employment and community development projects for the poor), volunteering time to work with the organization

## **Advent Service Ideas**

### ► **Christmas Collections**

#### **Food**

Christmas is a time when people collect food or clothing. Check with local service groups and agencies to see what kinds of things they and their clients need. Shelters, soup kitchens, and food banks almost always have a need for canned goods and non-perishables.

- Set up box collections in your church foyer and publicize it to the congregation.
- Distribute shopping bags for a food collection after all the weekend Masses in early December. Attach a list of needed food items on each bag so that you receive the food items needed by the shelters, soup kitchens or food banks.
- Distribute shopping bags to parishioners door-to-door with a sheet of paper describing what your group is doing and why. Ask people to put in the bag items needed by the food bank (attach a list to the bag). They can bring the bag to one of the weekend Masses or you can set up a time to collect the bag (e.g., several days after you distribute the bags).
- Telephone parishioners and solicit food items for them to bring to Mass this coming weekend.
- Go door-to-door and ask for food bank items. Include a flyer that describes the services of the food bank and how others can be involved, including how they can contribute in the future.

- After getting permission from the grocery store manager, set up a food collection outside the store and ask patrons to purchase an extra item during their shopping trip so that they can add to the food collection on their way out of the store.

### **Clothing Collection**

Many agencies conduct clothing collections during the Christmas season. Winter coat collections are popular in colder climates. Involve the young people in this effort by identifying a community organization that is collecting winter coats, publicize the project throughout the parish, collect the clothes at weekend Masses or in person at people's homes, and then deliver them to the sponsoring agency. Another variation on a clothing collection is to contact a child care center in a poor community or a children's service agency to develop a "hats and mittens" collection.

### Organizations

- *The Box Project*, Box 435, Dept. BP, Plainville, CT 06062 (Write to find out how you can help supply families with much-needed clothing and other household items.)
- *NGA*, B St. Rd., Southhampton, PA 18966 (215-322-5759) (NGA gets clothing and other essential items to those in need. Call to see if it has a program in your area.)

### **Essentials**

Shelters, for example, have an ongoing need for "essentials" like: sheets, blankets and towels; new underwear, socks, T-shirts, pajamas; toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, shaving cream, disposable razors; etc. Other ideas include:

- *School Kits*: Put together kits containing the things needed to get through the day, e.g., notebooks, pencils, pens, markers, crayons, calculator.
- *Special Days*: Imagine what it is like to celebrate a birthday or holiday in a shelter or detention center and have no one notice. Decide what should go into a birthday or holiday box, and commit to putting together a box or two or more.
- *Dessert Trays*: Provide a shelter or soup kitchen with a dessert to complement their usual lunch or supper; donate ice cream sandwiches or cones, or all the fixings needed for a make-your-own-sundae bar; have a parish bake-off with all baked goods going to the shelter or soup kitchen.
- *Baby Box*: Make "care packages" for teen parents; include disposable diapers, baby wipes, baby shampoo, lotion, baby powder, baby soap, baby blanket, pacifier, bottles, infant toys, a guide for new parents, etc.
- *Kitchen Equipment*: Collect and donate coffeemakers, cutting boards, pots and pans, utensils, etc.

### **Toy Collection**

#### **(Toys for Tots or Giving Tree Project)**

Local organizations, such as the Salvation Army, organize *Toys for Tots* programs. The young people can organize the parish's involvement in the *Toys for Tots* program by announcing the need for toys, collecting the toys, and delivering the toys to the sponsoring agency. A variation on collecting toys is to organize a Giving Tree project. Identify a child care facility in a poor community or an agency, such as Catholic Family Services or the Salvation Army, that can supply you with the names of children (age and sex) who are in need of toys for Christmas. Write the name, age, and sex of every child

on a piece of construction paper cut-out in the shape of an ornament. Attach the names to the Christmas tree in the church. During the weekend Masses in early December invite parishioners to take a name off the tree and to bring a wrapped gift back on the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Collect the gifts and deliver them to the center or agency you are working with.

► **Christmas Stocking Service Project**

Sponsor a party for young children in need during the Advent season. These parties feature food, gifts, and a visit by Santa Claus. Make a wonderful contribution to such an occasion by providing the guests with gift stockings. Felt stockings can be sewn for each child or inexpensive net stockings can be purchased for this project. All stockings should be the same. Ask children to bring appropriate items to fill the stockings. Send a note to parents enlisting support for this project. Remind children and parents that items must be small enough to fit in a stocking and appropriate for both boys and girls. Provide a list of suitable items for the stockings such as:

- small toys
- games
- stuffed animals
- snow scenes
- markers
- candy canes
- crayons
- toy watches
- coloring books
- gift certificates
- pencils
- wind-up toys

Provide collection boxes for the items. Then have a team of children and adults available to fill the stockings. Arrange a time for delivery. Several classes or groups can work together on this project. One group can sew the stockings, one can provide the items, and another can fill the stockings and deliver them. This is a great service project because it benefits children with special needs. Spreading joy to children is an important part of the Advent season.

► **Christmas Fundraiser for a Justice Organization**

Rock-a-thons and similar ideas are fun ways to raise money for organizations that service those in need and/or work for justice. (In the rock-a-thon young people (and/or adults) gather pledges and earn money for each hour they rock in rocking chairs.) Select your favorite fundraising idea and/or work with other parish groups or church groups to sponsor a fundraiser for an organization.

► **Charitable Gift Certificates**

Many local and national justice and service organizations sponsor special Christmas fundraising projects that involve making a donation and receiving a calendar or special gift. The young people can adopt one of these organizations and “sell” gift certificates for the organization as a form of alternative Christmas gift giving.

► **Christmas Packages for Prisoners**

Contact the local prison about your desire to provide Christmas packages for prisoners who have no family or friends. They will give you instructions on how to package the gifts so that their security remains intact. You can place in each package an assortment of candy, magazines or books. Socks and underwear are also welcomed. You can ask prison officials what inmates can and cannot receive in the mail.

► **Adopt-a-Family**

Work with a local agency to find families that you can provide a complete Christmas celebration, including Christmas meal, gifts for family members, Christmas tree and ornaments, etc.

Salvation Army's Adopt-a-Family Program

The Salvation Army's *Adopt-a-Family Program* offers your family the chance to reach out to a family in your community who is in need of help during the holiday season. Families needing assistance register with their local Salvation Army, which then matches them with a sponsoring family. Sponsors are given a list of important details – the recipients' first names, ages, clothing sizes, and special requests or needs. The Salvation Army handles the exchange of all gifts. To become an *Adopt-a-Family* sponsor, contact the nearest Salvation Army.

► **Christmas for Shut-ins**

Develop a list (names and address) of shut-ins in your parish or community and send them Christmas cards or small Christmas gifts. You can do the same thing for older adults living at senior citizen residences or nursing homes. You may want to consider a "personal shopper" program, which involves young people in doing grocery shopping or Christmas gift shopping for shut-ins.

► **Financial Support for Organizations**

Provide financial support to organizations that work directly with the poor locally and globally, such as:

- CARE, 660 First Avenue, New York, NY 10016
- Catholic Relief Services, 209 West Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-3403
- Habitat for Humanity, 121 Habitat St., Americus, GA 31709-3498
- Heifer Project International, P.O. Box 808, Little Rock, AR 72203
- Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, PA 17501
- Save the Children, P.O. Box 960, Westport, CT 06881-9988

Heifer Project

Through Heifer Project International you can provide a hungry family with an animal that will enable them to become self-reliant by producing food, caring for the earth, and sharing with others. Select the animal you want to donate, or the share you want to give toward purchasing the animal, for example \$500 for a cow, \$120 for a goat or pig or sheep, \$20 for a flock of chicks. Join with other families to make a contribution. Call 800-422-0755 for the Heifer Project catalog (P.O. Box 808, Little Rock, AR 72203).

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is a Christian housing ministry that has built or renovated over 60,000 low-cost houses since 1976 for families in need. This holiday season help a family celebrate the holidays by moving into a new Habitat home. A gift of \$20 purchases a 50-pound box of nails, \$35 helps to purchase a living room window, \$50 helps to pay for an interior door. Habitat provides a special holiday Housewarming Card for a new Habitat

family, signed by your family. Call 912-924-6935 for information or write 121 Habitat St., Americus, GA 31709-3498.

Covenant House

Covenant House houses, feeds, counsels, and educates thousands of young people each year. Support the national work of Covenant House as they house and care for homeless youth. Each winter (Christmas time), Covenant House launches a national bed and blanket campaign on behalf of homeless youth. Contact Covenant House at P.O. Box 731, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10108-0731.



# Service Planning Worksheet

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## Research for Advent Service Projects

### Projects

(Type of project, place, dates)

### Agency

(Contact Person, Phone Number)


Place an \* next to those projects with which you will be involved.

# Individual Service Projects

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Time/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Logistics (transportation, supplies, etc.):

How will we learn more about the issue?

How will we become familiar and comfortable with the service site?

How will we get the training we need to serve (if it is needed)?

When will we meet to reflect on our service experience?

# Young Adult and Adult Advent Service— Small Group Learning Session “Our Faith Calls Us to Serve”

## Focusing

And the crowds asked John, “What then should we do?” He said to them in reply, “Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food, should do likewise. Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?” He answered them, “Stop collecting more than what is prescribed.” Soldiers also asked him, “And what is it that we should do?” He told them, “Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages.” (Luke 3:10-18, NAB) (from the Gospel of the third Sunday of Advent, Cycle C)

Our faith calls us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers. This is the call of Jesus, the challenge of the prophets, and the living tradition of our Church.  
(*A Century of Social Teaching*. A Pastoral Message of Catholic Bishops of the United States. November 1990)

## Gathering

*Take a few moments to connect or re-connect with the members of your group.*

*Begin this session with the following activity. You will need a variety of local and national newspapers and magazines for this activity.*

- ◆ Pass around copies of local or national daily newspapers, and national magazines (e.g., *Time*, *Newsweek*). Each person in the group gets 3-4 pages from a variety of different sections of the newspaper and at least one national magazine. Give your pages a quick scan, looking for articles and references to contemporary justice issues. When you find an article or reference tear it out. After each person has completed their justice search, share with each other what you found in the paper or magazine, why you selected this article or reference, and what type of justice issue it was: local, regional, national and global. Save your news clippings for later in the session.

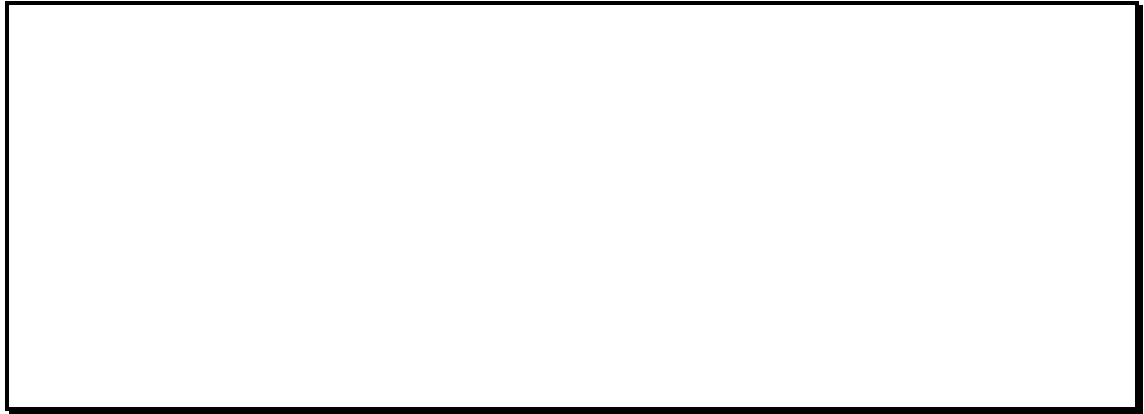
## Reflecting

*This small group session focuses on the meaning of justice and why the Church sees justice as essential to its mission in the world.*

## Part One: What is Justice?

Take a moment to reflect on the meaning of justice for you using the question below and then share your reflections with your group. As a group, try to identify common understandings of justice.

- ◆ Justice can be a difficult concept to understand. *When you think of justice what comes to mind?* (Think of an image, an example, a definition.)



Oftentimes definitions of justice focus on legal justice since there are so many news stories on court cases and TV shows dealing with the legal system. In this session we are not going to focus on legal justice; we are going to focus on social justice. In this light we can define justice in the following manner:

*Justice recognizes the dignity of each person and requires that each person receive the minimum level of care and respect essential for life today.*

Daniel Maguire writes, "To speak of justice is to reach for the foundations of human existence. Justice is not one virtue among the lot. It is the cornerstone of human togetherness. To survive and thrive a little we need justice like a body needs blood.

"Justice is the discovery of the value of persons, or, in the common term, the discovery of the "sanctity of life." Justice implies indebtedness. You *owe* each person his or her basic needs. Indebtedness is grounded in worth. Justice is thus founded upon a perception of the worth of persons. We show what we think persons are worth by what we ultimately concede is due to them. Talk of justice would sound like gibberish if we have no perception of the value of persons.

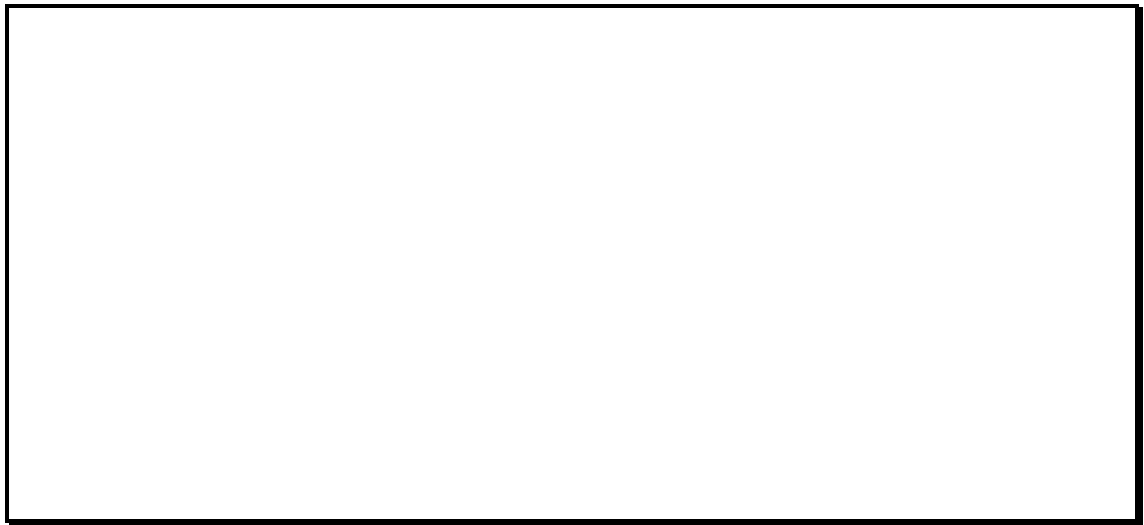
"All of which leads to a jarring conclusion. If we deny persons justice, we have declared them worthless! Justice, you see, is not the best we can do in reaction to the value of persons. Friendship is. *Justice is the least we can do for persons.* It is the first response to the value of persons, the least we can do in view of that value. In friendship and love we respond lavishly. Justice is concerned with the minimal due. Less than this we could not do without negating the value of the person." (*The Moral Imperative*)

- ◇ Discuss, as a group, how the definition of justice and the reflections of Daniel Maguire compare and contrast with your definitions of justice.

### **Part Two: What is the Minimum Due Each Person?**

*Take a moment to reflect on the basic human needs that are necessary for life, using the question below and then share your reflections with your group. As a group try to identify a list of basic human needs.*

- ◇ What are the basic human needs and rights that are essential to life, such as food and shelter, and fundamental freedoms and civil liberties?



*Now take a few minutes to discuss the following question as a group.*

- ◇ Which items on your list were truly basic human needs necessary for life and which were human wants? Which items did the group think were the most important?

## **Discovering**

*This section presents the foundations of the Church's social teachings – exploring why “our faith calls us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers” (Catholic Bishops of the United States). Each part of the Discovering section weaves together personal reading and reflection. Part One includes a discussion as a group.*

### **Part One: Basic Rights and Responsibilities**

*Justice recognizes the dignity of each person and requires that each person receive the minimum level of care and respect essential for life today.*

“Flowing from our God-given dignity each person has basic rights and responsibilities. These include the right to freedom of conscience and religious liberty, to raise a family, to immigrate, to live free from unfair discrimination and to have a share of earthly goods

sufficient for oneself and one's family. People have a fundamental right to life and to those things which make life truly human – food, clothing, housing, health care, education, security, social services and employment. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities – to one another, to our families and the larger society, to respect the rights of others and to work for the common good." (*A Century of Social Teaching*).

### **Basic Human Rights**

(Summarized from Catholic social teaching and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and Declaration on the Rights of the Child.)

- a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family
  - freedom to raise a family
  - freedom to immigrate
  - care if a person is disabled or handicapped
  - basic health care
  - a good, basic education (through high school)
  - safe and adequate shelter
  - freedom of conscience and religious liberty
  - a job that provides a decent standard of living to meet basic needs
  - enough food to keep healthy
  - freedom to live free from discrimination on the basis of race, religion or gender
  - protection from physical, sexual and mental abuse
  - conditions for children and teens to develop physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, and morally
  - protection for children fourteen and under from full time work that interferes with education or is harmful to health and well-being
- ◆ Discuss as a group your reflections on the quote from the U.S. Bishops and the summary list of basic human rights.
- ◆ How essential are these basic human needs?
  - ◆ Are there any that you would question?
  - ◆ How important is it that every person receive the "minimum level of care and respect essential for life today?"

### **Part Two: The Bible Teaches about Justice**

- ◆ Explore the Bible's understanding of justice by reading the following passages:
- ◆ Isaiah 58:6-11 (*Share your bread with the hungry*)
  - ◆ Matthew 25:31-44 (*Whenever you did it to one of the least, you did it to me*)
  - ◆ Luke 4:16-19 (*The mission of Jesus*)
  - ◆ Luke 10:25-37 (*Who is my neighbor?*)
  - ◆ Luke 16:19-31 (*Lazarus and the rich man*)
  - ◆ 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 (*Give to those in need*)

- ◇ Reflecting on these Bible passages, identify what the Bible is teaching about justice.

**The Bible teaches...**

### **Part Three: The Church Teaches about Justice**

*A Century of Catholic Social Teaching* by the Catholic Bishops of the United States presents an excellent summary of the major themes of the Church's social teachings.

- The Church's social mission is founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ, inspired by the passion for justice of the Hebrew prophets, shaped by the social teaching of our Church, and lived by the People of God.
- The social dimensions of our faith have taken on special urgency and clarity over this last century.
- Catholic social teaching is sometimes misunderstood as a peripheral aspect rather than as an integral and constitutive element of our faith. Where religion is seen as personal and privatized, the call to incorporate justice as an integral element of faith must be emphasized.
- The Catholic social vision offers words of hope, a set of principles and directions for action to a world longing for greater freedom, justice, and peace.
- Our bishops suggest six basic principles and themes as central to the Church's social vision:
  - The life and dignity of the human person
  - The rights and responsibilities of the human person
  - The call to family, community and participation
  - The dignity of work and the rights of workers
  - The option for the poor and the vulnerable
  - Solidarity
- Efforts to respond to the immediate sufferings endured by those treated unjustly must be accompanied by concrete efforts to address the causes of human suffering and injustice.
- We must work together to ensure that we continue to move together from strong words about charity and justice to effective action, from official statements to creative ministry at every level of the Church's life.

- ◇ Read the introduction, “Social Mission and Social Teaching,” “Basic Themes,” and “The Continuing Challenge” sections of *A Century of Catholic Social Teaching*.
- ◇ Reflecting on the summary of the Church’s social teachings, identify what the Church is teaching about justice.

**The Church teaches...**

## Sharing

*Share your reflections on what the Bible and Church teach about justice (questions 1 and 2). After each person has shared his or her responses, then take time to discuss questions 3, 4, and 5 as a group.*

- ◇ Based on your reading of the Bible passages, what does the Bible teach about justice?
- ◇ Based on your reading of *A Century of Social Teaching*, what does the Church teach about justice?
- ◇ As a group, compare and contrast your definition of justice at the beginning of the session with the understanding of justice which is presented in the Bible and Church teaching. How does it affirm and/or challenge your present thinking about justice and your involvement in action for justice?
- ◇ As a group, discuss why the Church should or should not be involved in addressing justice issues.
- ◇ Imagine what the world would be like if the principles embodied in the Bible and the Church’s social teaching became a reality in our time. What would it mean for our life, our family life, our community, our nation and world?

## Living

### **Applying Catholic Social Teaching**

*Close your session together by applying Catholic social teaching to real justice issues. Share your rewritten justice issue and then discuss the closing question.*

- ◇ Return to the justice news clippings you found in the Gathering Activity. Rewrite just one of these clippings by applying biblical and Church teaching to the way it could be in a truly just world. What would need to change in our world to make this come true?



## **Using Your Gifts**

*Take time over the next several weeks to think about how you can become a better steward of your gifts in the work of justice.*

- ◆ It has been said that no one can do everything, but everyone can do something. Each of us has unique abilities, a certain amount of time at our discretion, particular financial resources, obligations and responsibilities. And each of us will someday give an account of our stewardship to God. Are there changes that you should make in allocating your talent, time, and treasure so that you can promote the work of justice – locally, nationally, globally?

## **Reflect on How Jesus Comes to Us in the Poor**

*Find a quiet place this week to pray and reflect on the meaning of justice and service for you. Use this quote from Henri Nouwen to begin your reflection.*

What finally counts is not whether we know Jesus and his words but whether we live our lives in the Spirit of Jesus. The Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of Love. Jesus himself makes this clear when he speaks about the last judgment. There people will ask, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?” and Jesus will answer, “In so far as you did this to one of the least... of mine, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:37, 40).

This is our great challenge and consolation. Jesus comes to us in the poor, the sick, the dying, the prisoners, the lonely, the disabled, the rejected. There we meet him, and there the door to God’s house is opened for us.  
(*Bread for the Journey*. Henri J. M. Nouwen)

## **Learn More about Human Rights**

*One way to learn more about human rights around the world is to study the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights.*

December 10<sup>th</sup> is the anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Adopted in 1948, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights sets forth thirty rights and freedoms of each and every person on the face of the earth. The Declaration says that everyone on the planet, regardless of race, sex, language or religion, has certain basic rights. Among these are the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services; the right to work in just and favorable conditions, and the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Each of these freedoms is being denied to some of the world’s citizens today. Take time to learn about these rights. (Check out the UN web site at <http://www.udhr50.org>.)

### Ways to Act for Justice and Serve Others

*Discover some of the ways you can be involved in action for justice and service to those in need.*

- ◆ Review the ideas listed in **Advent Service Ideas** at the end of this session. Identify several specific things you can do to work for justice and serve others. Develop a plan for implementing one of your ideas. Consider gathering with several others to act together.

### Make a Pledge for Charity, Justice and Peace

*Take time this week to commit to the Jubilee Pledge and to begin living it in your life.*

- ◆ The Pledge for Charity, Justice, and Peace flows from the themes of Catholic social teaching and is an opportunity for Catholics to recommit themselves to serving the poor and working for justice and peace in the new millennium.

## *Pledge for Charity, Justice, and Peace*

*The Lord calls us "to bring glad tidings to the poor. . . .  
to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18).*

### As disciples of Jesus, I pledge to:

- ◆ **Pray** regularly for greater justice and peace.
- ◆ **Learn** more about Catholic social teaching and its call to protect human life, stand with the poor, and care for creation.
- ◆ **Reach** across boundaries of religion, race, ethnicity, gender, and disabling conditions.
- ◆ **Live** justly in family life, school, work, the marketplace, and the political arena.
- ◆ **Serve** those who are poor and vulnerable, sharing more time and talent.
- ◆ **Give** more generously to those in need at home and abroad.
- ◆ **Advocate** for public policies that protect human life, promote human dignity, preserve God's creation, and build peace.
- ◆ **Encourage** others to work for greater charity, justice, and peace.

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Signature

*Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church  
sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice.*

*(Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 1991)*

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For more information or additional pledge cards call toll-free 800-235-8722 or [www.nccbuscc.org](http://www.nccbuscc.org)

## **Make A Justice Commitment**

*Take time this week to determine how you can act more justly.*

- ◆ Reflect on the following reading from the Book of Micah and complete the commitment sentence. Then make plans to live your commitment. Determine things you may need to stop doing and things you may need to begin doing. Don't be afraid to change.

**This is what God asks of you, and only this:  
That you act justly,  
love tenderly,  
and walk humbly with your God  
(Micah 6:8)**

**In my attempt to act justly, I will...**

## **Read More About Justice**

- ◆ *Bring Forth Justice – Basics for Just Christians.* Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk. (New York: Paulist Press, 1997).
- ◆ *Called to Global Solidarity.* Catholic Bishops of the United States. (Washington, DC: USCC Office of Publishing, 1997).
- ◆ *Economic Justice for All – Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy.* (10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition). Catholic Bishops of the United States. (Washington, DC: USCC Office of Publishing, 1997).
- ◆ *Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice.* Catholic Bishops of the United States. (Washington, DC: USCC Office of Publishing, 1998).
- ◆ *Journey into Compassion – A Spirituality for the Long Haul.* James McGinnis. St. Louis: Institute for Peace and Justice, 1989.
- ◆ *Renewing the Earth – An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching.* Catholic Bishops of the United States. (Washington, DC: USCC Office of Publishing, 1992).

## **Praying**

One of the ways we can deepen our compassion for those in need and remember them daily is through prayer. Make a commitment to pray regularly for those in need and to pray for guidance, strength, and persistence to respond to the needs of people.

### **A Litany Based on Matthew 25:31-46**

*Close the session by praying together. Take turns reading each prayer litany and then responding together as a group.*

- ❖ In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus challenges us to serve those in need. In fact we will be judged by how well we have served others. Let us now pray that God will give us the eyes to see those in need and to act.
- ❖ I was hungry and you gave me food....  
Response: Let us act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.
- ❖ I was thirsty and you gave me drink....  
Response: Let us act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.
- ❖ I was a stranger and you welcomed me....  
Response: Let us act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.
- ❖ I was naked and you clothed me....  
Response: Let us act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.
- ❖ I was ill and you comforted me....  
Response: Let us act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.
  
- ❖ God, true light and source of all light, may we recognize you in oppressed people and poor people, in homeless people and hungry people. May we be open to your Spirit that we may be a means of healing, strength and peace for all your people. Inspire us to use the varied gifts with which we have been blessed in the service of others. We ask this Jesus, your son and our brother! Amen.

### **Closing Prayer**

*Together pray Mother Teresa's prayer of service.*

At the end of life we will not be judged by  
how many diplomas we have received,  
how much money we have made,  
how many great things we have done.

We will be judged by  
"I was hungry and you gave me food to eat,  
I was naked and you clothed me  
I was homeless and you took me in."

Hungry not only for bread – but for love  
Naked not only for clothing – but naked of human dignity and respect  
Homeless not only for want of a room of bricks – but homeless because of rejection.

This is Christ in distressing disguise.

(Mother Teresa. *Words To Love By...*)

# Advent Service Ideas

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*The crowds asked John, "What ought we to do?" John told them, "If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn't have any. If you have food, share it with someone else." (Luke 3:10-11, CEV)*

(From the Gospel of the third Sunday of Advent, Cycle C)

*Our faith calls us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers. This is the call of Jesus, the challenge of the prophets, and the living tradition of our Church.  
(Century of Catholic Social Teaching, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1990)*

## Introduction

The Catholic call to justice and service involves us as individuals, families and parish communities in actions of direct service and in efforts to address the causes of injustice and inequity. We are called as Church to help people survive their present need or crisis. We are called, too, to help change the systems and structures that make it impossible for people to catch up or get ahead.

Working at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen, visiting the sick or disabled, and tutoring children are common examples of direct service. Legislative advocacy, community organizing, and working with organizations that challenge and work to change the structures that promote injustice are examples of social change actions. For justice to reign, both are essential. Direct service needs to be coupled with actions aimed at removing the causes of the problems that imperil people's life and dignity. For example, families who are working at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen could also be involved with a local coalition for the homeless that is working to create housing, employment, and just policies for the homeless. In this way families will experience the benefits of working directly with the homeless *and* learn to change the system which keeps people homeless.

### **To serve those in need consider...**

#### Working with a Local Service Organization

Examples: serving at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter; distributing items at a food bank; visiting the elderly; working at a senior citizen facility, a hospital, or day care center; helping the Red Cross during local emergencies; working with Special Olympics or programs for the developmentally-challenged; participating in or initiating environmental programs; tutoring programs for children; Big Brother/Big Sister

#### Addressing Needs in the Parish or Neighborhood

Examples: chores and shopping for the homebound, child care for single parents, visiting the sick, cleaning the neighborhood

- ☑ Collecting Resources  
Examples: food drives, toys for tots, clothing drives, books/videos for libraries
- ☑ Building and Repair Projects  
Examples: building homes with Habitat for Humanity, weatherizing/repairing/painting homes, building playgrounds
- ☑ Charitable Giving/ Alternative Gift Giving  
Examples: financial support for the relief efforts of local and national groups who work directly with the poor: *Catholic Relief Services* (209 West Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-3403) [CRS sponsors Operation Rice Bowl during Lent], *Save the Children* (P.O. Box 960, Westport, CT 06881-9988) [Save the Children sponsors an annual Christmas giving project.]

**To work for justice consider...**

- ☑ Advocacy for Those who Suffer Injustice  
Examples: legislative advocacy through letter writing on important issues and legislation that affects the poor, families, children; working with groups to change legislation or budget priorities
- ☑ Support for Organizations Working for Justice  
Examples: promoting the purpose and activities of organizations working for change, providing financial support (e.g. giving to the annual collection for the *Campaign for Human Development*, sponsored by U.S. Bishops, which funds employment and community development projects for the poor), volunteering time to work with the organization

## **Advent Service Ideas**

### ► **Christmas Collections**

#### **Food**

Christmas is a time when people collect food or clothing. Check with local service groups and agencies to see what kinds of things they and their clients need. Shelters, soup kitchens, and food banks almost always have a need for canned goods and non-perishables.

- Set up box collections in your church foyer and publicize it to the congregation.
- Distribute shopping bags for a food collection after all the weekend Masses in early December. Attach a list of needed food items on each bag so that you receive the food items needed by the shelters, soup kitchens or food banks.
- Distribute shopping bags to parishioners door-to-door with a sheet of paper describing what your group is doing and why. Ask people to put in the bag items needed by the food bank (attach a list to the bag). They can bring the bag to one of the weekend Masses or you can set up a time to collect the bag (e.g., several days after you distribute the bags).
- Telephone parishioners and solicit food items for them to bring to Mass this coming weekend.
- Go door-to-door and ask for food bank items. Include a flyer that describes the services of the food bank and how others can be involved, including how they can contribute in the future.

- After getting permission from the grocery store manager, set up a food collection outside the store and ask patrons to purchase an extra item during their shopping trip so that they can add to the food collection on their way out of the store.

### **Clothing Collection**

Many agencies conduct clothing collections during the Christmas season. Winter coat collections are popular in colder climates. Involve the young people in this effort by identifying a community organization that is collecting winter coats, publicize the project throughout the parish, collect the clothes at weekend Masses or in person at people's homes, and then deliver them to the sponsoring agency. Another variation on a clothing collection is to contact a child care center in a poor community or a children's service agency to develop a "hats and mittens" collection.

### Organizations

- *The Box Project*, Box 435, Dept. BP, Plainville, CT 06062 (Write to find out how you can help supply families with much-needed clothing and other household items.)
- *NGA*, B St. Rd., Southhampton, PA 18966 (215-322-5759) (NGA gets clothing and other essential items to those in need. Call to see if it has a program in your area.)

### **Essentials**

Shelters, for example, have an ongoing need for "essentials" like: sheets, blankets and towels; new underwear, socks, T-shirts, pajamas; toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, shaving cream, disposable razors; etc. Other ideas include:

- *School Kits*: Put together kits containing the things needed to get through the day, e.g., notebooks, pencils, pens, markers, crayons, calculator.
- *Special Days*: Imagine what it is like to celebrate a birthday or holiday in a shelter or detention center and have no one notice. Decide what should go into a birthday or holiday box, and commit to putting together a box or two or more.
- *Dessert Trays*: Provide a shelter or soup kitchen with a dessert to complement their usual lunch or supper; donate ice cream sandwiches or cones, or all the fixings needed for a make-your-own-sundae bar; have a parish bake-off with all baked goods going to the shelter or soup kitchen.
- *Baby Box*: Make "care packages" for teen parents; include disposable diapers, baby wipes, baby shampoo, lotion, baby powder, baby soap, baby blanket, pacifier, bottles, infant toys, a guide for new parents, etc.
- *Kitchen Equipment*: Collect and donate coffeemakers, cutting boards, pots and pans, utensils, etc.

### **Toy Collection**

#### **(Toys for Tots or Giving Tree Project)**

Local organizations, such as the Salvation Army, organize *Toys for Tots* programs. The young people can organize the parish's involvement in the *Toys for Tots* program by announcing the need for toys, collecting the toys, and delivering the toys to the sponsoring agency. A variation on collecting toys is to organize a Giving Tree project. Identify a child care facility in a poor community or an agency, such as Catholic Family Services or the Salvation Army, that can supply you with the names of children (age and sex) who are in need of toys for Christmas. Write the name, age, and sex of every child

on a piece of construction paper cut-out in the shape of an ornament. Attach the names to the Christmas tree in the church. During the weekend Masses in early December invite parishioners to take a name off the tree and to bring a wrapped gift back on the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Collect the gifts and deliver them to the center or agency you are working with.

► **Christmas Stocking Service Project**

Sponsor a party for young children in need during the Advent season. These parties feature food, gifts, and a visit by Santa Claus. Make a wonderful contribution to such an occasion by providing the guests with gift stockings. Felt stockings can be sewn for each child or inexpensive net stockings can be purchased for this project. All stockings should be the same. Ask children to bring appropriate items to fill the stockings. Send a note to parents enlisting support for this project. Remind children and parents that items must be small enough to fit in a stocking and appropriate for both boys and girls. Provide a list of suitable items for the stockings such as:

- small toys
- games
- stuffed animals
- snow scenes
- markers
- candy canes
- crayons
- toy watches
- coloring books
- gift certificates
- pencils
- wind-up toys

Provide collection boxes for the items. Then have a team of children and adults available to fill the stockings. Arrange a time for delivery. Several classes or groups can work together on this project. One group can sew the stockings, one can provide the items, and another can fill the stockings and deliver them. This is a great service project because it benefits children with special needs. Spreading joy to children is an important part of the Advent season.

► **Christmas Fundraiser for a Justice Organization**

Rock-a-thons and similar ideas are fun ways to raise money for organizations that service those in need and/or work for justice. (In the rock-a-thon young people (and/or adults) gather pledges and earn money for each hour they rock in rocking chairs.) Select your favorite fundraising idea and/or work with other parish groups or church groups to sponsor a fundraiser for an organization.

► **Charitable Gift Certificates**

Many local and national justice and service organizations sponsor special Christmas fundraising projects that involve making a donation and receiving a calendar or special gift. The young people can adopt one of these organizations and “sell” gift certificates for the organization as a form of alternative Christmas gift giving.

► **Christmas Packages for Prisoners**

Contact the local prison about your desire to provide Christmas packages for prisoners who have no family or friends. They will give you instructions on how to package the gifts so that their security remains intact. You can place in each package an assortment of candy, magazines or books. Socks and underwear are also welcomed. You can ask prison officials what inmates can and cannot receive in the mail.



► **Adopt-a-Family**

Work with a local agency to find families that you can provide a complete Christmas celebration, including Christmas meal, gifts for family members, Christmas tree and ornaments, etc.

Salvation Army's Adopt-a-Family Program

The Salvation Army's *Adopt-a-Family Program* offers your family the chance to reach out to a family in your community who is in need of help during the holiday season. Families needing assistance register with their local Salvation Army, which then matches them with a sponsoring family. Sponsors are given a list of important details – the recipients' first names, ages, clothing sizes, and special requests or needs. The Salvation Army handles the exchange of all gifts. To become an *Adopt-a-Family* sponsor, contact the nearest Salvation Army.

► **Christmas for Shut-ins**

Develop a list (names and address) of shut-ins in your parish or community and send them Christmas cards or small Christmas gifts. You can do the same thing for older adults living at senior citizen residences or nursing homes. You may want to consider a "personal shopper" program, which involves young people in doing grocery shopping or Christmas gift shopping for shut-ins.

► **Financial Support for Organizations**

Provide financial support to organizations that work directly with the poor locally and globally, such as:

- CARE, 660 First Avenue, New York, NY 10016
- Catholic Relief Services, 209 West Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-3403
- Habitat for Humanity, 121 Habitat St., Americus, GA 31709-3498
- Heifer Project International, P.O. Box 808, Little Rock, AR 72203
- Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, PA 17501
- Save the Children, P.O. Box 960, Westport, CT 06881-9988

Heifer Project

Through Heifer Project International you can provide a hungry family with an animal that will enable them to become self-reliant by producing food, caring for the earth, and sharing with others. Select the animal you want to donate, or the share you want to give toward purchasing the animal, for example \$500 for a cow, \$120 for a goat or pig or sheep, \$20 for a flock of chicks. Join with other families to make a contribution. Call 800-422-0755 for the Heifer Project catalog (P.O. Box 808, Little Rock, AR 72203).

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity is a Christian housing ministry that has built or renovated over 60,000 low-cost houses since 1976 for families in need. This holiday season help a family celebrate the holidays by moving into a new Habitat home. A gift of \$20 purchases a 50-pound box of nails, \$35 helps to purchase a living room window, \$50 helps to pay for an interior door. Habitat provides a special holiday Housewarming Card for a new Habitat

family, signed by your family. Call 912-924-6935 for information or write 121 Habitat St., Americus, GA 31709-3498.

Covenant House

Covenant House houses, feeds, counsels, and educates thousands of young people each year. Support the national work of Covenant House as they house and care for homeless youth. Each winter (Christmas time), Covenant House launches a national bed and blanket campaign on behalf of homeless youth. Contact Covenant House at P.O. Box 731, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10108-0731.