The New Evangelization
With Ideas for Advent and Christmas
2011 Edition

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The New Evangelization with Ideas  
For Advent and Christmas 2011

Table of Contents

The New Evangelization in the Universal Church ................................................................. 3
Recent New Evangelization Efforts in the Diocese of Green Bay ........................................... 4
Evangelization at Advent and Christmas 2011 ................................................................. 5
  Background ................................................................................................................................. 5
  Area #1: Parking Lot Ministry .................................................................................................... 5
  Area #2: Expand your Greeter Ministry .................................................................................... 6
  Area #3: Pew Materials ............................................................................................................. 6
  Area #4: Think of the Children (and Their Parents!) ............................................................... 8
  Area #5 From the Pulpit ............................................................................................................. 8
  Area #6 As They Leave: Getting ‘em to Come Back ............................................................... 10
NOTE: About the Money ........................................................................................................... 11
Pamphlets Worth Considering ................................................................................................ 12

Note about this Packet: There are lots and lots of ideas presented here. Please examine the 
contents of this packet and decide if there are 1-2 suggestions you could incorporate at your 
parish this Advent and Christmas 2011.
The New Evangelization in the Universal Church

Pope John Paul II began using the term “new evangelization” in the early 1980’s to refer to the need to use new energies and methodologies in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. Evangelization is not new in its content, but must begin using a style and language adapted to the people of our day. Avery Dulles suggested the new evangelization has at least four characteristics that set it apart from the evangelistic opportunities of previous centuries:

- The new evangelization is to involve every Christian.
- Whereas primary evangelization shares the Christian message for the first time to peoples/nations, new evangelization is aimed at countries where the Church has been solidly established but where large numbers of people have lost a living sense of the faith and are alienated from the church. Europe and America are always mentioned as targets of the new evangelization.
- The new evangelization is aimed at individuals, but it is also aimed at transforming cultures to be more harmonious with Christian values and more open to the gospel message.
- The new evangelization is a lifelong process that involves catechetical instruction, moral doctrine and the social teaching of the Church.

Pope Benedict XVI too is extremely concerned with efforts at new evangelization. Since 1985, the only change to the structure of the Vatican was in 2010 when Pope Benedict announced the creation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. Here are some recent statements and developments regarding the new evangelization:

- The next Synod of Bishops will be held in 2012, and will be dedicated to the theme "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith” Pope Benedict, October 24, 2010
- ‘Metropolis Mission’ is the first major project of the newly formed Pontifical Council when simultaneous activities will take place in 11 European cities during Lent of 2012. “The Metropolis Mission should be a concrete message sent by the great cities—the great dioceses—of Europe to the next Synod of Bishops.” Archbishop Fisichella, President of the Pont. Council, July 14, 2011
- “Many are the causes of this disorientation, which manifests itself in a profound existential uneasiness, but behind all this one can perceive a negation of the transcendent dimension of man and the fundamental relationship with God. Because of this, it is decisive that Christian communities promote sound and demanding journeys of faith.” Pope Benedict, July 5, 2011
- “Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.” Statement of the Vatican Council on Interreligious Dialogue with the World Council of Churches, June 30, 2011
- “In relation to the wider world, the Christian commitment to live and to bear witness to the Gospel offers distinct challenges in every time and place. The Christian life in societies that are home to various ancient religions always demands honesty and sincerity about one’s own beliefs, and respect for one’s neighbour. The presentation of the Gospel in such circumstances, therefore, involves the delicate process of inculturation.” Pope Benedict to the High Council of Missionary Societies, May 16, 2011
Recent New Evangelization Efforts in the Diocese of Green Bay

Catholics Come Home Commercials, Lent 2010
Inactive Catholics were invited to give the Church “another look” during TV commercials aired during Lent of 2010. Mass counts conducted shortly after the commercials suggested that 7.4% more Catholics began joining us for Sunday Eucharist. Annual Mass counts taken in October (6 months after commercials aired!) found 32% of Catholics were attending Mass, a 4% increase that reversed a 10-year trend of lesser Mass attendance each year.

New Evangelization Grants, Fall 2010 and Spring 2011
Thanks to contributions to the Bishop’s Appeal, fully 38 parishes received funds for their new evangelization efforts during the past year. Parishes used these funds for a great diversity of projects, ranging from giving out “Rediscovering Catholicism” books at all Christmas Masses to creating parish road signs outside of town to creating an introductory parish DVD.

Bishop Ricken’s Pastoral Letter, June 2011
After inviting every parish and a whole host of individuals to provide input, Bishop Ricken promulgated his pastoral letter on priorities for parishes and the diocese on June 12, 2011. “Parishes: Called to be Holy, Fully Engaged, Fully Alive” included six pastoral priorities to be implemented in each parish over the next 5-7 years. One of these priorities was the Call to Evangelize and to be Welcoming Parishes. An Evangelization Area Task Force has begun meeting to offer resources and responses to parish requests regarding this priority area.

Advertising-as-Evangelization Campaign Scheduled for Winter of 2011-12
Thanks to a grant from the Evangelization Endowment of Advancing the Mission as well as some funding from the Bishop’s Appeal, the Diocese of Green Bay is in the process of contracting with WFRV/CBS, WLUK/Fox, WBAY/ABC and Marcus Theaters to air commercial invitations to area Catholics to more deeply participate in their faith. Keep an eye out for these messages (hopefully) starting in December!
Evangelization at Advent and Christmas 2011
Step-by-Step Ideas for Enhancing Parish Welcoming/Hospitality

Background
As you are already aware, lots of visitors, family and friends come for Mass at some point during Advent and/or the Christmas season. Some are going to Mass regularly and some are coming for the first time in several months (or years!) With all the busy-ness in all our lives during this time of year, Advent and Christmas is the perfect time to focus on the strength of our worship and welcoming/hospitality in our parish homes.

The following ideas are developed explicitly with the new evangelization in mind. Specifically, these resources are aimed at helping less active Catholics experience Jesus more fully in a community that celebrates Mass with one another. Many of these less active Catholics think of themselves as “spiritual but not religious.” Many have attended services at nondenominational churches that encourage people to bring coffee into auditorium-style worship space. Many do not understand the faith well enough to appreciate why Catholic Christians need to belong to parish, what the Mass means, or why it is important that they attend Mass and regularly receive the sacraments. These resources are aimed at tackling some of these issues.

We hope you will incorporate at least 1-2 of these ideas into your Advent and Christmas seasons this year.

Area #1: Parking Lot Ministry
Because people form a first impression of people within 3-5 seconds of meeting them, it is important that your parish consider what happens within the first 3-5 minutes of people arriving at your parish. This begins with people arriving at your parking lot. Two parking lot ideas can easily be implemented this Advent and Christmas.

1. First, begin asking regular parishioners to leave the best parking spaces (up front and close to the entrances) for guests and to park further back in the church lot. Ask them by making announcements at Mass and in the bulletins in November. Begin this practice with the First Sunday of Advent and continue this through the Christmas season by reminding people at Mass, in the bulletins, on your parish website and in newsletters.

2. Second, create a “parking lot ministry” during Advent and Christmas. For this ministry, people should be located at each parking lot driveway, much like crossing guards are placed at intersections near schools. As people enter the parking lot, these people can smile, wave and welcome people into the parking lot. A few people can also be located in the parking lot itself so they may greet guests and help elderly parishioners who park in the spaces up front and then accompany them inside.
Step-by-Step Ideas for Enhancing Parish Welcoming/Hospitality (Conti.)

Area #2: Expand your Greeter Ministry
Inactive Catholics will expect virtually all greeters to be senior, white males. Surprise them by having greeters at every entrance who do not fit this stereotype. Families and children should especially be encouraged to join this ministry for Advent and Christmas – it is something easy and fun that does not ask a major commitment of time!

Make sure greeters look people in the eye, smile, say “hello” and “welcome” to every single person who comes through the door. Especially in large parishes, greeters should introduce themselves by first name and ask them if they can help them find a good seat for Mass. The greeter should then accompany them to a seat or introduce them to one of those “senior, white male” ushers to accompany them!

Area #3: Pew Materials
To put it bluntly – inactive Catholics do not read bulletins or brochures given to them as they leave the church. Even if they take a bulletin handed to them as they walk out the door, less active Catholics will not read it! Therefore, we highly recommend you strategically place specific items in the pew, either with the hymnals on the backs of the rows or at the end and in the middle of each pew.

NOTE: Some parishes are concerned about the “mess” of papers in pews after Mass. Our experience with parishes in this area suggests that does not happen. Adults pick up dropped items and put them back (if they don’t want them!) and parents do the same for their children who might play with items during services. Give this a try – you might be surprised how well it goes!!

Pew Materials for Advent:

- Have an Advent calendar (with traditional windows that open each day) available in the pews the First and Second Sundays of Advent. Advent calendars are valued by every age group. In particular, children love to do the calendar during Advent and parents love that you gave them something religious to do with their kids.
- For adults, consider also having an Advent pamphlet or booklet in the pew itself. You can have some at the entrances too, but inactive Catholics who pick them up at the pew are more likely to look at it before Mass. If they are impressed with the material, they may use it during Advent!
Step-by-Step Ideas for Enhancing Parish Welcoming/Hospitality (Conti.)

Area #3: Pew Materials (Conti.)

- Do NOT have envelopes in the pews during Advent and Christmas. It does not matter if the envelopes also invite people to check a box and give info as a visitor. The envelope gives the impression that something should go in it. People will (correctly) assume that means money and that is absolutely NOT the message we want to give them the first 5-7 minutes after they arrive at your parish.

  a. Similarly, many parishes have pew cards with a list of check items ranging from “We are visiting” to “I am going to the Hospital.” Get rid of these for Advent and Christmas. Why? That is entirely too impersonal and hinders people feeling connected to your parish. Ironically, it contradicts the message of “we care.”

  b. Finally, guests today are suspicious when asked for their name and contact info so do not have this sort of pew card set out. (Aren’t you also suspicious when simply asked for your zip code at the checkout line?) If a person comes often enough, they will eventually approach parish staff about joining. This fosters relationships and is much more critical for retaining new parishioners than chasing after names from guests.

Pew Materials for Christmas Masses:
Overall, the most important message you can give with your pew card is that they are welcome and that we hope they will come back again soon. So, create or select a pew card that gives this message and only this message. Here are three good options:

  1. Make use of the low cost “big bookmarks” being offered by the diocese. Your parish has already received this information, but it is reprinted for you on Page 11 of this resource guide.

  2. A Holy card is a viable alternative. It could be tied to the saints (maybe the patron saint of your church), or to Christmas, and/or that gives parish info.

  3. A final option is to place Christmas cards directly in the pews, addressed, “For Family and Friends Visiting us Today” with handwritten, personal expressions of parish sentiments inside. Children in Catholics Schools and faith formation programs can also make Christmas cards that can be placed in pews for guests. Faithful parishioners could make a small Christmas craft item to give away.
Step-by-Step Ideas for Enhancing Parish Welcoming/Hospitality (Conti.)

Area #4: Think of the Children (and Their Parents!)
Each week of Advent, have something different available in the pews for the children who come to Mass with their parents. Invest in your children and you will reap benefits with everyone – the kids, their parents and all who dream of a parish filled with younger Catholics.

- Sundays of Advent: We highly recommend an Advent calendar for at least the First and Second Sundays of Advent (See Advent Pew materials above.) Advent calendars can be obtained by Autom.com or from CreativeCommunications.com starting at $.09 each.
- Christmas Masses: Autom.com and CreativeCommunications.com have diverse items such as: 12 Days of Christmas prayer cubes ($.19 each); Puzzles of Santa kneeling before the baby Jesus ($.39 each); Baby Jesus coins ($.33 each); Manger cut-outs ($1.99 for 32); Candy cane explanation card set ($3.99 each card set); and “Jesus is the best gift of Christmas” erasers ($.05 each). A free alternative is Christmas coloring pages available off the internet.

Area #5 From the Pulpit
Every Sunday’s Scriptures offer rich opportunities for preaching to connect the Word to daily life in our secular, American culture. Advent and Christmas are no exceptions. Here are a few preaching ideas in the spirit of the new evangelization:

For Advent, the Season of Waiting:
- (In)active Catholics do not know that the longing and emptiness they feel at various points in their lives is a longing for God. They do not understand the great line from Augustine, “Our hearts are restless, Lord, until they rest in you.” They do not understand/appreciate how and why the catechism and every great spiritual writer begins by identifying the longing inside us. They do not know that this longing may be a large part of what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God.
- (In)active Catholics do not know that Advent is a season to sit with the tension of one’s waiting, one’s longing. They do not know that feelings of “there must be more to the Christmas season than this” is actually a longing for God. They do not know that desires for closer relationships with family and friends means they are actually doing and living Advent well!
- (In)active Catholics do not know how to connect the Advent images of the promise of the second coming and the need for repentance/conversion/preparation with the flurry of daily life that we all live from Thanksgiving to New Years. They believe those images mean they should not be busy, but since that will not change in any significant way, they leave them behind. They simply don’t know how to incorporate the Advent images into their busy flurry of life.
Step-by-Step Ideas for Enhancing Parish Welcoming/Hospitality (Conti.)

Area #5 From the Pulpit (Conti.)

• (In)active Catholics aren’t really sure what to do with Gaudete Sunday. They appreciate that they are to be rejoicing in the midst of their Christmas preparation. But, by this time of the month (Dec. 11 for 2011) they are simply overwhelmed with Christmas parties and preparations and their own emptiness and longing. They need help connecting Gaudete Sunday to any of the first three points above.

For Christmas, the Season of the Mystery of the Incarnation:

• (In)active Catholics need help exploring the mystery of the Incarnation. For example, they do not get that a helpless newborn baby was fully divine. They do not understand how with the incarnation, humanity enters more fully into the sacred. They do not get the connection between Catholics preferential option for the poor with Jesus’ birth and incarnation.

• (In)active Catholics do not know how the incarnation is the basis for our sacramental worldview. Indeed, they do not even know that we have a sacramental theology/worldview. They do not understand that because of the incarnation and Genesis 1:26-7 that Catholics believe that human nature is in its essence good. They do not understand how because of the incarnation that Catholic Christians believe that God continues speaking to us through our flesh, through our five senses. And they do not understand that God joins us fully in the sacraments, but also in sacramentals, in the sacredness of all the rest of creation.

• (In)active Catholics do not know that Catholics believe that God continues the mystery of incarnation in the Eucharist and in the body of believers. This one is huge because this means they do not know why they need to go to Mass regularly, why they need to belong to a community of believers. With the latest research showing that less than 50% of Catholics know about and/or believe in the Real Presence, there is no doubt that they see no connection between Christmas and the Eucharist and the need to be a disciple within the context of a faith community.
Step-by-Step Ideas for Enhancing Parish Welcoming/Hospitality (Conti.)

Area #6 As They Leave: Getting ‘em to Come Back
The section on pew materials on Page 6 suggested that (in)active Catholics often do not read the parish bulletin. This is generally true. However, those guests who have a favorable experience of your parish community and/or a significant experience of Jesus during Mass may be inclined to open your bulletin to find out more about your parish. Therefore, use your parish bulletins during Advent and Christmas in large part to build on their experience during Mass and to encourage them to return again during these seasons. Yes, it is a place for announcements, but why limit it to this?! Here are a couple of ideas for your parish at Advent and Christmas:

- **Effective Bulletins:** As the Mass can help evangelize and catechize (in)active Catholics, so can your bulletin! Consider having some brief messages from the pastor and/or parish staff and/or active parishioners. They can give their reflections on the day’s readings. They can talk about how they slow down during Advent. They can share why Christmas is meaningful to them at the parish. With a little effort, you can have a great series all through Advent and Christmas written by different people throughout the parish!
  - Sample bulletin inserts are also available for free through the diocese. They can be obtained electronically at [www.gbdioc.org/evangelization](http://www.gbdioc.org/evangelization) All inserts during Advent and Christmas will tie the Sunday readings to the importance of a parish community for living out one’s faith.
Step-by-Step Ideas for Enhancing Parish Welcoming/Hospitality (Conti.)

Area #6 As They Leave: Getting ‘em to Come Back (Conti.)

- **“Advertising” Next Week:** Nondenominational churches are well known for sharing in advance what topic will be covered in the following week(s) for people who return to their community. It is time for us Catholics to do this too! Every Sunday during Advent and Christmas, we recommend that your parish bulletin or announcements include a little snippet that “previews” the readings and the topic/theme for the homily for the following Sunday. This does not have to be elaborate and detailed, pressing preachers to prepare their homilies weeks in advance. Here’s a sample for the Second Sunday of Advent:
  - “Next weekend we’ll hear John the Baptist tell us to prepare the way of the Lord and to make straight his paths. What does that mean for you today, in the midst of all the parties and Christmas preparations? We obviously still have to go to those Christmas parties and we have to get our loved ones their various presents. So, what does “prepare the way” really mean? Join us for Mass next weekend to continue to let yourself explore and experience Advent in your life.”

- **Invite People to Return:** Consider having your additional greeters from your expanded Advent/Christmas Greeter Ministry talk with people after Mass as well as before. Ushers can still pass out bulletins. In addition, have your greeters look people in the eyes, smile and wish them well that day, tell people they are glad to see them, and/or tell people you hope to see them again soon.

**NOTE: About the Money….**

How do you justify the money to enhance the experience of inactive Catholics during Advent and Christmas? Here are several reasons:

- **Pragmatics:** Like the Christmas gift cards and the free rosaries that we receive in the mail, people do respond to “free” gifts by putting more in the collection basket.
- **Marketing:** The more positive the impression, the more likely people are to return to your parish, return to Mass and potentially join your parish.
- **Stewardship:** Followers of Jesus, true disciples, appreciate that all they have is a gift from God. This goes for parishes as well as individuals. Cheaper options that use more of parishioner’s time and talents can be utilized if a parish is motivated to do so.
- **Vitality:** Guests who form a good first impression and long-time parishioners who are pleasantly surprised with an unexpected “gift” will be in better spirits and more likely to participate a bit more fully at Mass. A contagious spirit in your entire parish is waiting to be unleashed!
- **Evangelization:** Last but not least, sometimes we need to remind ourselves that the Church does not exist to serve our needs. Rather, the Church exists to share the Good News of Jesus Christ! One of the easiest ways to do this is to reach out to the people who take time to join us for Mass.
## Pamphlets Worth Considering

### English Resources

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### Family Resources

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**Key:**
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- (OSV)Our Sunday Visitor
- (CU)Catholic Update
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