



GoodNewsNotes

DIOCESE OF SCRANTON OFFICE FOR PARISH LIFE

This Issue

- Advent Family Resources p. 2
- Animating the Faith of Youth and Young Adults p. 2
- COVID-19 Guidelines for Advent & Christmas p. 3
- Digital Advent and Christmas Crèche Calendar p. 3
- PreCana Formation Update p. 4
- Virtual Grief Support Group p. 4
- Navigating the Advent and Christmas Seasons Amidst the Pandemic p. 4
- World Youth Day Information Meeting p. 5
- Called to Be People of Water and Light* Online Mini Retreat p. 6

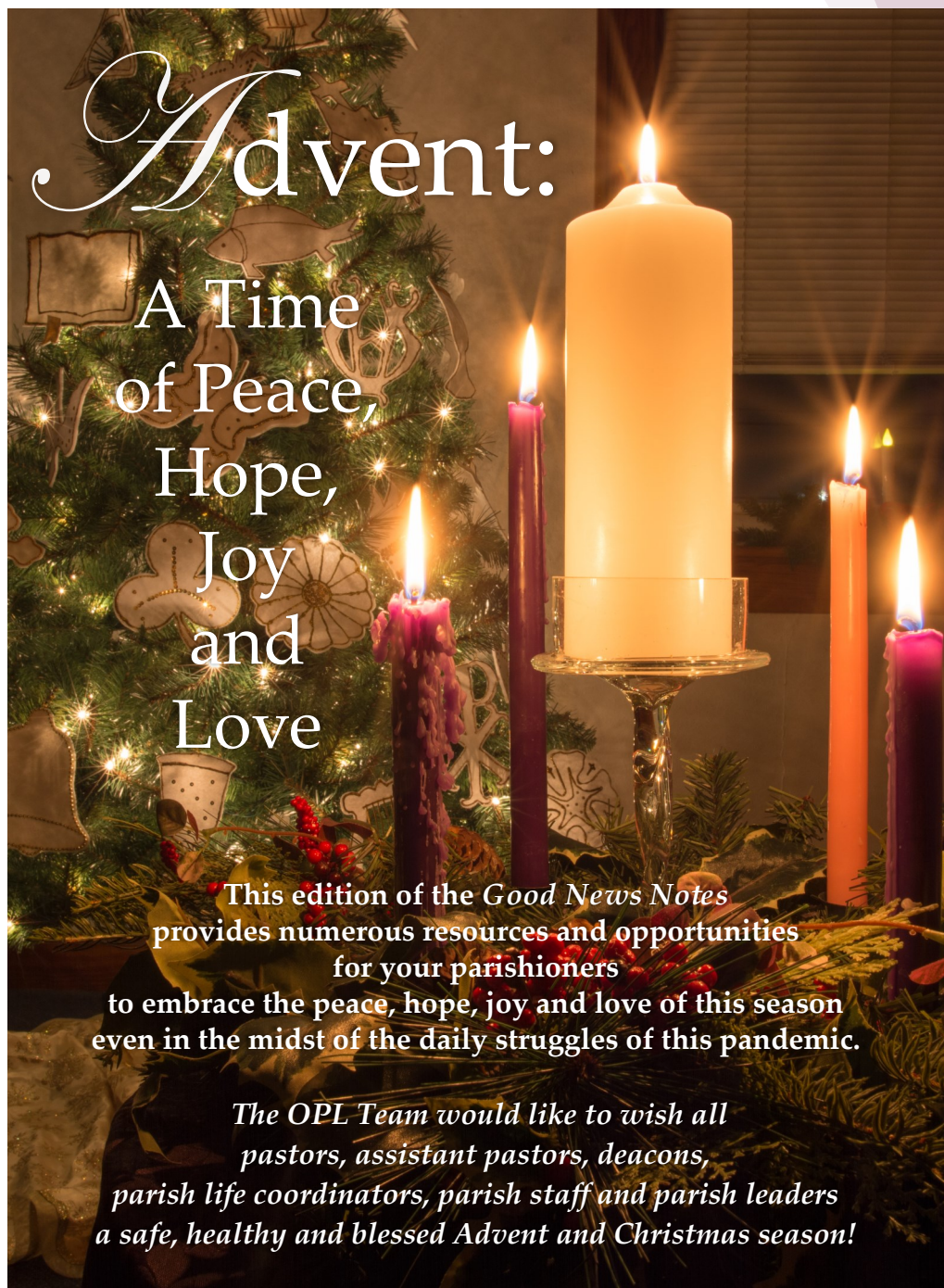
Tuesday, December 8
Solemnity of the
Immaculate Conception

Saturday, December 12
Feast of
Our Lady of Guadalupe

Friday, December 25
Solemnity of the
Nativity of the Lord

Wednesday, January 1
Solemnity of
Mary, the Mother of God

Holy Day obligations
are suspended
during the pandemic



This edition of the Good News Notes provides numerous resources and opportunities for your parishioners to embrace the peace, hope, joy and love of this season even in the midst of the daily struggles of this pandemic.

The OPL Team would like to wish all pastors, assistant pastors, deacons, parish life coordinators, parish staff and parish leaders a safe, healthy and blessed Advent and Christmas season!



Bishop's Youth Awards

The Bishop's Youth Awards are complete. There were 686 nominees for 2020. The list of award recipients for this year will be posted on the Diocesan Website by the beginning of December.

Advent Family Resources

Watch our website, Facebook and Edmodo pages each week for more family resources and links in our journey together in preparing for Advent. Here is a preview of what is to come:



- Celebrating Advent at Home Each Week
- Making an Advent Wreath, Calendar
- Advent Around the World
- Special Catholic Celebrations and Traditions of Advent
- Resources care of TeachingCatholickids.com
- Blessings of the Family Advent Wreath, Christmas Tree and Manger
- Catholic Alternative to Elf on the Shelf

Animating the Faith of Youth and Young Adults

Ave Maria Press is offering a professional development webinar entitled, "Animating the Faith of Youth and Young Adults: Attending to Our Present; Building Our Future" on **Tuesday, December 8, 2020 at 3:00PM**. The current challenges faced by the Church have forced us to confront our traditional methods of outreach and evangelization to youth and young adults. COVID-19 has also forced us to dream up new approaches that have the potential to sustain us long after the pandemic has subsided. For the past few months, Scott Boyle, associate director of recruitment and formation for the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame, facilitated conversations with youth and young adult ministry leaders from across the country who have shared their experiences and ideas for accompanying and animating these two groups. In this session, he will share insights and reasons to hope from these conversations and propose practical ideas to catalyze and reinvigorate youth and young adults in the parish and beyond!

For more details contact Jacki Douglas at 570-207-2213 X-1100 or jdouglas@dioceseofscranton.org.

Arts and Faith: Advent

Loyola Press has a series called "[Arts and Faith: Advent](#)" offering brief (3 minute) reflections on art and scripture that folks can watch or read each week.

Battling Bah-Humbug This Year?

Many people are finding it very difficult to get into the holiday spirit this year. Here are a few tips and some links to help you traverse this Advent season without losing the joy of Christmas.

- **Tip 1: Listen to Advent music**—One way that has been found to battle the inner bah-humbug is to listen to Advent music. Ten years ago, that was a lot harder than it is now. If you use Spotify, you can search Advent playlists. Pro tip: use quotes around "Advent" or you'll get Adventure music thrown in (which may not be *such* a bad thing...).
- **Tip 2: Pick one Advent devotion**—Do not make this a "one more thing for this busy time of year" Advent. Instead, why not pick one Advent devotion? Just. One. Maybe it's an Advent wreath or it's the Jesse Tree. Maybe it's an Advent calendar with devotions. Maybe it's reading and reflecting on the Nativity story as a family and or a prayer before or after meals.
- **Tip 3: Be intentional with your decorating**—There's no way around it, not really. And really, isn't decorating part of preparing? And Advent is a time of preparation. So decorating makes sense. *How* you decorate can vary widely, but if you're battling bah-humbug, then we suggest that you approach it very intentionally. Make it tie in with Advent, with your family, with your Catholic heritage. (Don't have a Catholic heritage? You're making it right now!)
- **Tip 4: Smile**—Because, really, we're getting ready for a baby (Jesus)! And babies bring joy and happiness! This Baby, in particular, brings something special. Snuggle up with a hot drink and a comfy family member or pet and enjoy the twinkle.

Free Advent Enrichment

About this time of year, Chris and Linda Padgett (We all remember them from our virtual Catechist Camp) start looking for opportunities or resources that can add a little special enrichment to their Advent journey. So they thought they would offer some to you. Join them each Sunday night during Advent on my their Facebook fan page (link below) at 7:30pm EST. Linda and Chris will be offering a different reflection each week about the beautiful gifts they have to share with others because of THE UNIQUE GIFT Jesus has given them. [Click here](#) to join Chris and Linda!

Catholic Relief Services Advent Calendar

CRS has an Advent Calendar you can sign up to follow during the season (scripture, ideas for outreach, inspiring quotes). [Click here](#) or visit www.crs.org.

COVID-19 Diocesan Update for Advent/Christmas Season

The following is a list of updates regarding diocesan guidance for the Advent and Christmas Season:

- The Diocese of Scranton, after confirmation obtained from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, will allow priests to celebrate up to four Masses on Christmas Eve and up to four Masses on Christmas Day due to the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not an expectation or requirement that this many Masses be held and permission is granted for Christmas 2020 only.
- As the obligation to attend Mass will still be suspended at Christmas, those who are hesitant to attend Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day should be encouraged to attend Mass during the Christmas Season, especially during the Christmas Octave.
- Deaneries or parish clusters are encouraged to collaborate on the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Mass schedule to allow for the greatest number of options for those desiring to celebrate Mass. Christmas Mass times of neighboring parishes can be published in parish bulletins and social media.
- Christmas decorations, including the Advent wreath and Christmas crèche, may be utilized as usual. Any individuals decorating the church, including vendors delivering trees or flowers, are asked to remain masked while working or in church.
- Christmas pageants of any kind are not allowed this year, even outside the liturgy.
- For the care and protection of all, parish staffs should take great care to avoid any large parties/gatherings with one another during the Christmas season.

To visit the full list of diocesan guidelines during the pandemic, please visit the [diocesan website](#).

Living the Sunday Word: Reflecting as a Virtual Community

The lectionary readings unite believers around the world. Whether we are able to celebrate Eucharist with our parish families or not, we take comfort in the fact that we can still gather with fellow believers, be nourished by the Word, and be in the presence of one another virtually. Liturgy Training Publications is offering free online sessions reflecting on the Sunday readings of Advent.

Sessions take place from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM Eastern Time (4:00 PM to 5:30 PM Pacific Time) on Tuesday evenings on December 1, 8, and 15. [Click here](#) to register or visit [ltp.org](#).

Advent and Christmas Liturgical Resource

The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC) has compiled a liturgical resource to assist parishes in preparing liturgies for the Advent and Christmas season. This resource, available in both English and Spanish, includes:

- Information regarding preparing liturgies during the pandemic
- Handouts which you might provide for families and the homebound (about the Advent Season, the Advent Wreath, and the Jesse Tree)
- A full text for a Rite of Reconciliation of Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution (to be used where permissible)
- Music Suggestions
- The Liturgical Year Calendar Advisory
- Lectionary Readings for Sundays and Solemnities (Year B)
- The Proclamation of the Birth of Christ (to be sung before Mass)
- Proclamation of the Date of Easter (to be sung on the Solemnity of the Epiphany)
- The O Antiphons (December 17-24)
- Information about the FDLC

To download this resource, please [click here](#) or visit [fdlc.org](#) and click on 'resources.'

Digital Advent and Christmas Crèche Calendar

For the past six years, the McGrath Institute for Church Life has partnered with the Marian Library at the University of Dayton, Ohio, bringing to Notre Dame's campus an exhibit of crèches, or Nativity scenes, from around the world, and gathering members of the community to pray in procession and prepare for the coming of Christ.



This year, the coronavirus pandemic prevents them from hosting our annual exhibit and pilgrimage. Instead, they invite you to reflect on the Incarnation in their [digital Advent and Christmas Crèche Calendar](#)—a beautiful retrospective selection of crèches from our previous six exhibits.

Once you sign up, you will receive an email every day, beginning the First Sunday of Advent, November 29, 2020, through the Baptism of the Lord, January 10, 2021, with an image and description of a crèche from a different part of the world, along with a brief prayer that you can offer for yourself and your loved ones.

Navigating the Advent and Christmas Seasons Amidst the Pandemic

The losses we have all experienced due to the Corona-virus Pandemic have been seemingly endless this year, and our Advent and Christmas Seasons will certainly continue this theme of loss and change. Please begin to plan how you as an individual, and how you as a parishioner or parish, can make these beautiful seasons deeply meaningful and fruitful, even in the midst of the losses and changes.

- Author Tim Swift has written, "Five ways to survive a season crashed by COVID-19" in the *Catholic Review*. In this article, Mr. Swift offers some concrete ways to address the changes we will experience in these next months. [Click here](#) for the link to his article.
- Additionally, general resources for continuing to navigate through the pandemic are still offered through our own [Diocesan website](#).
- Admittedly, many pandemic resources are only able to be accessed by individuals with computer and internet capabilities. Please consider how your parish and you can safely reach out to those you know who do not have these resources. A phone call is one of the most loving ways we can extend comfort and care to our relatives, fellow parishioners, and friends.
- If your parish would like to coordinate volunteer phone calls to your parishioners throughout these seasons, the Diocese of Burlington created a "[Parish Call Campaign Guidelines and Sample Script](#)" which you may be able to adapt for your own parish.
- The holidays are historically times when many people suffer greater incidences of anxiety and depression and this year's pandemic will almost certainly exacerbate that suffering. This means that we will need to take extra good care both of ourselves and of those around us. Please reach out to the Office for Parish Life, or to our Catholic Social Service Offices, if you need help in accessing care for yourself or others.
- Most important for us as people of Faith, is to remain fixed upon and grateful for what has remained true. Our God is eternal, as is love. For a hopeful reflection, please read Vinita Hampton Wright's article titled, "[A Different Kind of Thanksgiving](#)."

Natural Family Planning Updates

Due to the difficulty of in-person ministry during the pandemic, please consider and/or recommend the many online NFP training options offered by the Couple to Couple League. (<https://ccli.org/>) CCLI offers online instruction in both English and Spanish, as well as both synchronous/live and asynchronous classes.

PreCana Formation Updates

Our **Diocesan PreCana Days of Reflection** continue to be offered. We completed our November PreCana Day via Zoom, and we will also offer our December 6th PreCana Class via Zoom. Due to the changeable nature of ministry during the pandemic, we will determine whether to hold PreCana classes in-person or live-via-Zoom on a month-by-month basis.

Asynchronous Online PreCana Classes are also available through an outside vendor, provided in both English and Spanish. Details can be found on our Online PreCana Webpage. (<https://www.dioceseofscranton.org/parish-life/community/marriage/marriage-preparation/online-marriage-preparation/>)

FOCCUS continues to be another excellent option for PreCana Formation for both English and Spanish speaking couples. Facilitators can work with couples via FaceTime, WebEx, Zoom, etc. For those wanting to become FOCCUS Facilitators during these months of social distancing, the FOCCUS organization offers online training. (<https://www.foccusinc.com/training.aspx>) .

Marriage Enrichment Opportunity

PLEASE STAY TUNED! As part of our Diocesan observance of National Marriage Week, February 7th -14th, 2021, we will be offering a virtual Marriage Enrichment Experience with Chris and Linda Padgett. Chris and Linda are gifted Catholic speakers with decades of experience in Marriage Ministry. We will continue to offer more details about this Event in the coming months.

Virtual Grief Support Group

Winter and the post-holiday season can be difficult times to navigate grief, particularly during an ongoing period of social distancing. Please consider joining the virtual grief support group offered by Cathedral of Saint Peter Parish in Scranton. Anyone is welcome; you do not have to be a member of the parish to participate. The group will convene online, Wednesday evenings 6:30 to 7:30. The dates of the virtual meetings will be **January 6, 13, 20 and 27**. For more information please contact Deacon Ed Shoener at 570-814-5133 or at 570-344-7231.

Exploring the Sunday Readings

Find out if your parish has plans under way for journeying with the Word during Advent! Take part in an Advent scripture study with "**Exploring the Sunday Readings**" or faith sharing resources from [Renew International](#) – reunite with a parish-based faith sharing group via a video call, or set up a regular time to phone a fellow parishioner each week during the season!

"I CALL us to be servant leaders who engage in SERVICE to our neighbors near and far and who work for justice and stewardship to hasten the Reign of God."

SERVICE



Called to Be People of Water and Light **Online Retreat**

We are called to be messengers of hope, rising from the waters of baptism, and leading others to the light. This gathering is more than a webinar or a video. This mini retreat offered by the Center for Ministry Development on **Tuesday, December 15, 2020 from 2:00 to 3:15 PM** will be an experience of community, in which we will gather around the Word, prepare for the newness of the Incarnation, and explore what this means for each of us as disciples and as ministry leaders. Come prepared to share, interact, and support one another.

Join us for this opportunity to reflect on this moment in our spirituality as leaders proclaiming God's love together.

Registration is \$35 and includes participation in the webinar, access to recordings, PowerPoint presentation slides, handouts, and a guide to share the recordings and engage conversation with others. [Click here](#) for more information or to register.

The graphic features the WYD LISBON 2023 logo, which includes a green cross and a red and white figure. To the right are two photos: one of a large crowd of pilgrims and another of a coastal town. The text "World Youth Day Info Meeting" is written in a stylized font. Below it, the date and time "Tuesday, December 1st 7:00pm" are listed. The description says: "Young Adults, join us for a virtual meeting to learn more about the Diocese of Scranton's pilgrimage to World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon, Portugal." The email address "shannon-kowalski@dioceseofscranton.org" is provided for the virtual meeting link.

World Youth Day Info Meeting

Tuesday, December 1st 7:00pm

Young Adults, join us for a virtual meeting to learn more about the Diocese of Scranton's pilgrimage to World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon, Portugal.

Email shannon-kowalski@dioceseofscranton.org for the virtual meeting link

Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry **Accepting Applications for January 2021**

The Office for Parish Life encourages parish leaders to consider **application for the *Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry* for January 2021!**

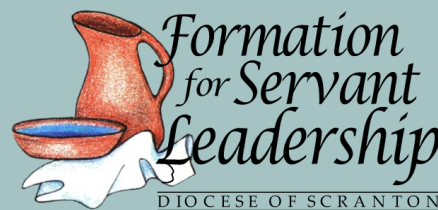
The *Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry* is a ministry formation program designed to equip and advance the servant leadership capacities of individuals serving their parish in areas such as:

- Parish Pastoral Councils,
- Directors of Religious Education and Catechists,
- Liturgical Coordinators,
- Parish Staff,
- Volunteer Ministry teams, and others!

Through independent online study with the University of Dayton's Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF)—in English or Spanish language tracks—as well as ministry skills workshops and opportunities for prayer and reflection, *Diocesan Certificate* candidates enrich their knowledge base, while also learning practical tools for effective parish ministry in their faith communities.

The Office for Parish Life anticipates welcoming new candidates into the *Diocesan Certificate in Lay Ministry* program in the New Year.

Prospective candidates are encouraged to contact Kitty Scanlan, Coordinator for Lay Ministry Formation, at 570-207-2213, or by email at Kitty-Scanlan@dioceseofscranton.org for application information, materials, and application submissions.



OPL Month At A Glance

December 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 LTP Sunday Reading Reflection 7:00PM	2	3	4	5
6 2nd Sunday of Advent PreCana via Zoom Chris and Linda Padgett Reflection 7:30PM	7	8 Immaculate Conception Animating the Faith of Youth 3:00PM LTP Sunday Reading Reflection 7:00PM	9	10	11	12 Our Lady of Guadalupe
13 3rd Sunday of Advent Chris and Linda Padgett Reflection 7:30PM	14	15 Called to Be People of Water and Light Online Mini-Retreat 2:00PM LTP Sunday Reading Reflection 7:00PM	16	17	18	19
20 4th Sunday of Advent Chris and Linda Padgett Reflection 7:30PM	21	22	23	24	25 Nativity of the Lord	26
27 Holy Family	28	29	30	31		

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Coordinator for Lay Ministry Formation: **Kitty Scanlan**

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