

Autumn, leading up to Advent

**Introduction**

This is the season of the liturgical year in most parishes during which the children’s catechesis process gets up and running. Because of that, it is also the best time of year to initiate a catechetical formation process for the rest of the parish. People are thinking in terms of beginnings at this time of year.

Don’t be afraid to ask much more from the adults of your parish than has typically been asked in the recent past. Adults want faith. There is an in-born hunger for God.

**Suggestions for use**

- Invite parents with children in catechesis to gather during the same times their children do, using a form of assembly as suggested in *Handbook for Success in Whole Community Catechesis*.
  - Use the *Growing Faith* booklets, following the session plan and using the PowerPoint presentations in the *Facilitator’s Guide*.
- Announce a two week sign up period for membership in small Christian communities in your parish, and provide *Growing Faith* booklets as their resource.
- Encourage average folks of all ages in the parish to consider starting study groups, or to plan a personal period of study. Offer *Growing Faith* booklets as the backbone of such a study program, which might also include the use of the *Catechism* itself, the documents of Vatican II, the Scriptures, or other resources.
- Begin the fall season by asking members of each leadership group within the parish (council, committees, and others) to spend a half hour per meeting studying their faith. How can they become effective leaders if they do not understand the wonders of Catholic belief?

**Suggested curriculum for autumn**

	<b>Year A</b>	<b>Year B</b>	<b>Year C</b>
September	#13: The Reign of God During the early part of fall in Year A, we read about the wonders of Christ’s work.	#11: You are Messiah! In the Gospels during year B we are reminded often that Jesus lives among us as Savior & Lord. We are called to follow him.	#47: Ways to pray The reflective time of autumn is a perfect time to examine what keeps us from praying.
October	#9: Creation Autumn is a time of year during which Creation can be a powerful tool for personal reflection	#4: Scripture This is a perfect time to pause and consider Scripture as it tells of God’s mighty works!	#35: Grace & Merit At this time of year, the liturgy helps us see that grace is a free gift from a loving God.
November	#21: Liturgy & Trinity During late fall, the readings turn to matters of God’s powerful work among us.	#28: Holy Orders While we all share in the priestly work of Christ, the ministerial priesthood is a gift of the Spirit.	#34: Social Justice As the readings turn to the end times, we are reminded again that we are each other’s keepers.

## Advent, leading up to Christmas

### Introduction

Advent is a season which sometimes gets overlooked because it is quite short and it falls during a very busy period of the year in most people's social calendars. But drawing people to pause during Advent and consider their faith is realistic and powerful!

### Suggestions for use

- Holy special “advent parties” at the parish, inviting each household to take part in one or two of them. During these parties, provide a catechesis assembly, following the usual assembly format, adding holiday treats as the shared food.
  - You might consider organizing the parish by neighborhood if it is large in order to help folks meet those living near them in your locale.
- Invite households to commit themselves to two evenings during this season where they would gather together, share a meal, and then read and reflect on the *Growing Faith* booklets.
- Introduce the parents of your children to *Growing Faith* as part of their advent studies. Possibly invite parents to attend catechesis sessions at the same time which their children do.
- Holy an advent activity night early in the season, teaching households to make advent wreathes and other ways of remembering the season at home. Use the *Growing Faith* booklets to send home materials around which the household can gather.
- Hold special evenings for single young adults, and single middle aged adults, to offer them study and conversation about faith. Use the *Growing Faith* booklets as your starting point.

### Suggested curriculum for Advent

	Year A	Year B	Year C
Early December	<p><b>#1: The inborn hunger for God</b>                      Our inborn longing to return to God is satisfied by the gift of Christ to the world. In Matthew we hear John the Baptist call us to “prepare the way!”</p>	<p><b>#30: We are made to be with God</b>                      We humans are destined to live eternally with God. The birth of Christ opens the avenue we need. We can come to know the Light of the World.</p>	<p><b>#12: Mary: Mother of Christ and of the church</b>                      Mary’s own faith is pivotal in God’s plan to reach us with love. Our devotion to her is rich.</p>
Mid December	<p><b>#45: Forms of prayer and how to enter into them</b>                      Advent is a wonderful time in mid winter to pause for growth in our prayer lives. Christ is born into our lives through prayer.</p>	<p><b>#46: The wellsprings of prayer</b>                      We are able to pray because the Holy Spirit prompts us to. This is a lovely season to turn to prayer, as Mary did.</p>	<p><b>#42: Possessions &amp; Greed</b>                      This is a good time of year to take stock of what we have and what else we think we need. Luke helps us see how the poor are treated in God’s kingdom.</p>

## The Christmas Season, and the Feast of the Epiphany

### Introduction

This is a relatively short – and usually very busy! – season in the life of Christians and of the Church. It is probably not possible to schedule much lifelong catechesis during this period, either for children or adults. However, the Feast of the Epiphany, falling in early January as the Season comes to a close, is a very suitable time to invite everyone in the parish back to the formation process.

### Suggestions for use

- Considering holding “Epiphany parties” as a way of ending the Christmas Season, but also of re-starting the formation process in your parish. This would be a fine time to gather parents whose children are in formation, or young single adults. As the winter months proceed and the holiday trimmings are put away, an active formation program can pick up the slack and be a popular winter activity, even if you live in warm climates!
- A parish-wide Epiphany assembly might work in small parishes, while in larger parishes, such gatherings may be held throughout the week leading up to or following this Feast.

### Suggested curriculum for Christmas & Epiphany

Using any of the methods for gathering, or for personal use, suggested above or in the *Growing Faith Facilitator’s Guide*, here is our suggested booklet for each year:

	<b>Year A</b>	<b>Year B</b>	<b>Year C</b>
The Feast of the Epiphany	<b>#5: Faith is our Response</b> Once we have seen Christ, our only response is faith, much like the Magi. “We have come to pay him homage,” the magi said.	<b>#2: God’s Plan For Us</b> This is a wonderful time for us to pause and consider what God has in store for us – for we are now children of God.	<b>#3: Revelation</b> The “Jesus event” we are celebrating here is God’s full revelation to us of God’s love, as the Magi realized with force!

## The short period of Ordinary Time between Christmas and Lent leading up to Ash Wednesday

### **Introduction**

The length of this brief liturgical season varies with the year. In some years it is very short while in others it is much longer, depending upon the date for Easter which moves each year. Because of this, we recommend that you maintain flexibility from year to year in your planning. If the season is too short for the three recommended booklets, simply use one or two, and use the others later in the year, possibly adding them to the autumn season.

However, do not underestimate the importance of this period of winter for getting folks back in the habit of regular, on-going, lifelong catechesis. The recent holidays are over; people are looking ahead to several months of winter before Easter; this is an excellent time to promote adult faith formation!

### **Suggestions for use**

Gather people according to the custom and plan of your parish, using the suggestions above or those in the *Growing Faith Facilitator's Guide*.

- Invite parents with children in catechesis to gather during the same times their children do. Use the *Growing Faith* booklets, following the session plan and using the PowerPoint presentations in the *Facilitator's Guide*.
  - For those who did not gather with you in the autumn season, this might be their time to begin. Be open to people at whatever stage of faith they enter.
- Announce a two week sign up period for membership in small Christian communities in your parish, and provide *Growing Faith* booklets as their resource.
  - Let those already involved in small Christian communities in your parish lead this process.
- Encourage average folks of all ages in the parish to consider starting study groups, or to plan a personal period of study. Offer *Growing Faith* booklets as the backbone of such a study program, which might also include the use of the *Catechism* itself, the documents of Vatican II, the Scriptures, or other resources.

## Suggested curriculum for mid-winter

Then use the following booklets:

	<b>Year A</b>	<b>Year B</b>	<b>Year C</b>
Mid January	<b>#6: One, true God</b> During this season, we read in Matthew about Jesus teachings and actions, announcing a new way to see God.	<b>#7: The Trinity</b> As Christ called disciples from among the most average people, so we are called to live in the love of the Trinity.	<b>#8: God the creator</b> In Luke we come to see that God is great. God's love for us in Christ is expressed in multiple ways.
Late January	<b>#22: Rites of the church</b> The church celebrates what we believe. In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus announces the reign of God.	<b>#18: Marks of the church</b> The church formed as a unity, as a holy community, open to all, and with a clear mission: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.	<b>#19: People of the church</b> During this season, Christ calls his disciples – and us – to follow him and work in the kingdom.
Early February	<b>#38: Keeping Sunday holy</b> The 3 <sup>rd</sup> commandment flows from the deep seated human need to remain with God.	<b>#39: Honoring parents</b> The 4 <sup>th</sup> commandment helps us understand the role which authority plays in our lives.	<b>#41: Called to chastity</b> The 6 <sup>th</sup> & 9 <sup>th</sup> commandments are a clear call to live first in love, always growing to greater love.

## Lent: Forty Days to Triduum and Easter

### **Introduction**

In some ways, this is the most natural time of year to provide adult formation within the parish. Many adult members are motivated during Lent to take on additional commitments relative to their faith. We should be careful, however, not to limit our formation only to Lent because the entire liturgical year can become important if, over time, we provide meaningful ways for people to grow in their faith all year long.

Nonetheless, Lent remains a dear time for many people. We recommend that you broaden your invitation to participate in the parish community during this season through local advertising, marketing, and other means. Keep an open door and an open heart to the many people who are not close to the parish in other times.

### **Suggestions for use**

- Invite parents with children in catechesis to gather during the same times their children do, using a form of assembly as suggested in *Handbook for Success in Whole Community Catechesis*.
  - Use the *Growing Faith* booklets, following the session plan and using the PowerPoint presentations in the *Facilitator's Guide*.
  - If you are not gathering with parents at any other time of year, make Lent the special season in which to do so.
  - Combine such gatherings with Lenten devotions to the Stations of the Cross or others.
- Announce a pre-Lent sign up period for membership in small Christian communities in your parish, and provide *Growing Faith* booklets as their resource.
- Encourage average folks of all ages in the parish to consider joining Lenten study groups, or to plan a personal period of Lenten study. Offer *Growing Faith* booklets as the backbone of such a study program, which might also include the use of the *Catechism* itself, the documents of Vatican II, the Scriptures, or other resources.
- During Lent, ask all members of each leadership group within the parish (council, committees, and others) to spend a half hour per meeting studying their faith.
- Provide a special outreach to those who do not attend regularly, or who do not feel welcome. Hold special “coming home for Lent” gatherings, using the *Growing Faith* booklets as your resource.
- Reach out to the young adults, especially the large group of single young adults and middle aged adults.

## Suggested curriculum for Lent and Holy Week

By offering the short study course outlined below, many Catholics will return to the practice of their faith, and many who have never left will be enriched! Use the various methods for gathering mentioned above, or in the *Guide*.

	<b>Year A</b>	<b>Year B</b>	<b>Year C</b>
Ash Wednesday	<b>#10: Sin &amp; Grace</b> The readings during Lent lead us to recognize our sinfulness and to call on Jesus for healing and grace.	<b>#33: Sin</b> The readings of Lent lead us to understand that even though we have sinned, God's love is unending.	<b>#31: Conscience</b> During Lent we examine ourselves to see how closely we are following the teachings of Christ.
Early Lent	<b>#26: Reconciliation</b> The return to the Lord, like the stories of those in the Gospel who were healed, is made today through the church.	<b>#27: Anointing of the sick</b> Christ heals by his very touch, by his word. The church continues that healing through anointing with oil.	<b>#48: Praying as Jesus taught</b> This is the season during which we come to recognize that God's kingdom comes in our hearts as we pray.
Mid Lent	<b>#36: Magisterium</b> The church is our guide to new life. Jesus calls Lazarus and all of us to believe that there is life after death!	<b>#37: No strange gods</b> The 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> commandments are a call to grow a pure heart and Lent is the season in which we purify ourselves.	<b>#40: Defending life</b> The 5 <sup>th</sup> commandment calls us to repentance like that of the prodigal son. No matter what, we can always come home to God.
Passion Sunday & Triduum	<b>#32: Faith, hope, love</b> This holy week is the perfect time in year A to pause and allow the beauty of Holy Week to guide us as we enter into the Paschal Mystery ourselves.	<b>#14: The Passion</b> The Passion of Christ is the story of the Paschal Mystery: death leading to new life. It is our story, too.	<b>#15: Resurrection</b> This central mystery of our faith is celebrated as the only way to true happiness. Death leads to life.

## The Easter Season: Fifty Days to Pentecost

### Introduction

We turn now to a Season of the Year during which much rich life long catechesis can be offered. Because this is the season during which academic school years are winding up, people tend to begin shutting down. First communion celebrations often fall during this period, adding to the busy schedules and diffuse attention of the parish.

But this is also the season during which those who were baptized at Easter are finding their home within the church. For them, these are the first weeks of “new life” and their experience can be shared with the rest of the community.

### Suggestions for use

Because of this, even if you do not have newly baptized or newly received members of your parish, we recommend that you use this time to continue the life long catechesis process.

- Connect gatherings for adults with celebrations of the end of the school year and with preparation for receiving the Eucharist.
- Use the Feast of the Ascension as the occasion for a parish wide renewal of faith.
- During these Spring months, invite someone to give a brief post-communion presentation, announcing the *Growing Faith Project*. Explain how the booklets work, and briefly present the theme from the booklet selected for that week in the parish. Then, give each person a booklet along with the bulletin as “take home” material for in-home formation.

### Suggested curriculum for the Easter Season & Pentecost

	Year A	Year B	Year C
Within the first week or two after Easter	#17: Church is mystery The readings from John in this season remind us of the glory of God, which is found in life in the community of Jesus, the church.	#23: Baptism Easter is the season during which we celebrate baptism: new fire and newly blessed water. It is our entry into the death of Christ.	#24: Confirmation During these fifty days ending in Pentecost, we celebrate a renewal of this sacrament of the Spirit.
Midway between Easter and Pentecost	#29: Matrimony The sacraments are one of the most wonderful ways to celebrate God’s love among us, especially marriage.	#44: Encounter with God The call to response to our encounter with God is celebrated during the Easter Season!	#25: Eucharist Christ remains with us throughout history, especially through the Eucharist.
Pentecost	#43: Telling the truth The 8 <sup>th</sup> commandment leads us to understand that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. The Spirit of Pentecost is the Spirit of Truth.	#20: Heaven & Hell The Kingdom of God is announced. The Spirit fills us with power. And this power saves us!	#16: The Holy Spirit Pentecost! The Spirit is given to us to empower us to work in the reign of God.