

Dear Catechetical Leaders,

Blessed Second Week of Advent! As we move through this grace filled season, I hope you are finding time for prayer and reflection. Below are several great resources for both Advent and Christmas.

Also, in the next few weeks, the Office of Catholic Faith Formation will be sending out copies of the *Confirmation Sourcebook* to every parish. The material will also be posted online and there will be training opportunities on this sacrament later next year.

Joy and Peace,

Anne Frederick
Director of Religious Education

Gaudete Sunday

The Third Sunday of Advent is Gaudete Sunday, the 'pink candle' Sunday, the Sunday we light the pink candle on the Advent wreath. Gaudete is the imperative plural form of the Latin verb gaudere (to rejoice). It is a command ordering us to rejoice! In these days of penance and preparation leading up to the feast of our Savior's birth, it reminds us of the joy that is to come, and serves, amid this season of penance, as a kind of 'break' when we recall the hope we have because of the coming of Jesus. (<http://www.catholic.org/featured/reality.php?ID=2823>)

2012 Youth on Mission Contest: Mission Possible!

Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and the Archdiocese of Seattle introduce the second annual Youth on Mission Contest, "Mission: Possible." This year's theme is "Christ Has No Body Now But Yours" (based on the prayer by St. Teresa of Avila). Open to students Pre K-12. <http://www.seecelebrateandlive.org/site/content.php?1066-2012-Youth-on-Mission-Contest-Mission-Possible>

January is Poverty in America Awareness Month



Today, 37.3 million Americans—and 1 in 6 children (that's 18 percent of all American children)-are living below the poverty line. They live in families who are of necessity making hard choices between food, health care, heat and rent. To bring attention to this national crisis, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development

(CCHD) has designated January as "Poverty in America Awareness Month." For more information, go to



<http://old.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa/povamer.shtml>.

The Relationship Between Advent and Christmas



Busted Halo has put together a great two (3) minute piece on Advent. The teaser states “Not quite sure about the relationship between Advent and Christmas? Check out this two-minute video that describes why we celebrate Advent and wait to celebrate Christmas.” Check it out at

<http://www.youtube.com/user/bustedhalovideo#p/u/0/S02KOlw7dIA>.

A New Perspective This Advent Season



April Gutierrez is one of the bloggers at *Young Voices*. Her blog this month offers a perspective on Advent from those of a mother and a sister to an “Ironman”.

Here are several excerpts. If you like them, you can read her entire blog at

<http://ncronline.org/blogs/young-voices/new-perspective-advent-season>.

.... These athletes are great teachers on the season of Advent, the season of preparation and waiting for the Lord's coming. Each athlete has a story of devotion, confidence and sacrifice. I know for my sister, more than a year of preparation went into this day, including sacrifices of her and her family, training with five others together regularly, and staying dedicated to the process, the sport and the goal.

.... When I was pregnant with my son, a friend told me to train as if I was getting ready to run a marathon. This advice, coming from a professional West African dancer, was incredibly refreshing, as it was in stark contrast to the many who encouraged my pregnancy as an opportunity to indulge and pamper myself.

.... Pregnancy can be lonely and comes with a great humility that my body is no longer mine. In God asking Mary to carry and raise Jesus, God invites her into co-creating, an accompaniment worth meditating on during this beautiful and complex season.

.... As we embrace the season of Advent, may we engage in active preparation rather than passive appreciation. May we tread gently as we reflect on the various seasons of our own lives, preparation with achievement and without. May our imaginations color and craft our story of Mother Mary -- pregnant, strong and empowering the doubtful.

As we make ready for Christ's birth, may this season be one of blessing -- in the excitement of expectation, as healing for the goal that never came to fruition and of rest for the marathon birth-ers and runners.

Pope Supports Elimination of the Death Penalty



Pope Benedict XVI voiced support Wednesday for political actions around the world aimed at eliminating the death penalty, reflecting his stance as an opponent of capital punishment. He said he hopes “your deliberations will encourage the political and legislative initiatives being promoted in a growing number of countries to eliminate the death penalty.” Benedict, like his predecessor Pope John Paul II, has appealed for commutation in a number of death penalty cases, many in the United States. In the late 1990s, the Roman Catholic Church hardened its opposition to the death penalty

in a revised statement of its teaching. It said the death penalty is permissible only in the narrowest of circumstances, and only when there is no other way to protect the public.

Prayer as Seeking Depth



Last Monday, Fr. Ron Rolheiser started a four-part Advent series on Prayer. Below is an excerpt from the first in this four part series. If you wish to read the entire article or continue to read the four part series, just go to his website each week at <http://www.ronrolheiser.com>.

In our more reflective moments we sense the importance of prayer; yet, we struggle to pray. Sustained, deep prayer doesn't come easy for us. Why?

First of all, we struggle to make time for prayer. Prayer doesn't accomplish anything practical for us, it's a waste of time in terms of tending to the pressures and tasks of daily life, and so we hesitate to go there. Coupled with this, we find it hard to trust that prayer actually works and brings about something real in our lives. Beyond that, we struggle to concentrate when we try to pray. Once we do settle in to pray, we soon feel ourselves overwhelmed by daydreams, unfinished conversations, half-forgotten melodies, heartaches, agendas, and the impending tasks that face us as soon as we get up from our place of prayer. Finally, we struggle to pray because we really don't know how to pray. We might be familiar with various forms of prayer, from devotional prayers to different kinds of meditation, but we generally lack the confidence to believe that our own particular way of praying, with all its distractions and missteps, is prayer in the deep sense.

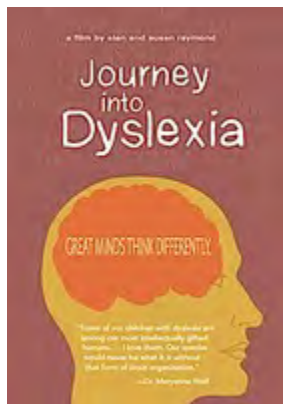
One of the places we can turn for help is the Gospel of Luke. More so than any of the other Gospels, this is the Gospel of prayer. In Luke's Gospel there are more descriptions of Jesus in prayer than in all the other Gospels combined. Luke gives us glimpses of Jesus praying in virtually every kind of situation: He prays when he is joy-filled, he prays when he is in agony, he prays with others around him, and he prays when he is alone at

night, withdrawn from all human contact. He prays high on a mountain, on a sacred place, and he prays on the level plane, where ordinary life happens. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus prays a lot.

And the lesson isn't lost on his disciples. They sense that Jesus' real depth and power are drawn from his prayer. They know that what makes him so special, so unlike any other religious figure, is that he is linked at some deep place to a power outside of this world. And they want this for themselves. That's why they approach Jesus and ask him: "Lord, teach us to pray!"

But we must be careful not to misunderstand what constituted their attraction and what they were asking for when they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. They sensed that what Jesus drew from the depth of his prayer was not, first of all, his power to do miracles or to silence his enemies with some kind of superior intelligence. What impressed them and what they wanted too for their own lives was the depth and graciousness of his soul.

Journey Into Dyslexia



The following article appeared in the latest issue of YES! magazine. Realizing that most of us have had students in our faith formation programs that have dyslexia, this may be of interest to you. Since it's estimated that 1 in 10 people in the United States have dyslexia.

So, what's it like to have dyslexia? And, how can students with dyslexia successfully learn?

Dyslexia is a learning disability that is neurologically based—it results from differences in how the brain processes information. It is not a mental disorder or related to intelligence. It straddles all levels of education and economic class. While people with dyslexia see words differently, they also see things that others miss.

In the HBO film, “Journey Into Dyslexia,” award-winning filmmakers Alan and Susan Raymond visit schools throughout the U.S. that have programs specifically designed for different ways of learning. Students—elementary through college—teachers, researchers, and successful adults candidly speak about their school experiences, why different is good, and how they have learned to navigate the world.

Check out the “Journey into Dyslexia” [website](#) to view the trailer and to explore its many resources on dyslexia, including facts, biographies of notable adults with dyslexia, and educational resources. See if your library has the film available for check-out, or you may purchase the film at [Journey Into Dyslexia](#).



Here are other excellent websites that advocate positive, forward-thinking insights and actions on dyslexia:

Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand

(<http://www.dyslexiafoundation.org.nz>)

Like the U.S., nearly 1 in 10 New Zealanders have dyslexia. The foundation offers resources to recognize and understand dyslexia, and take action with solutions and assessments.

Children of the Code (<http://www.childrenofthecode.org>)

Look beyond this website's colorful disarray and you'll find an abundance of videos and interviews with neuroscientists and others on "the code," and the challenge of learning to read it.

Dyslexic Advantage (<http://dyslexicadvantage.com>)

Dyslexic Advantage is a gathering place for people with or interested in dyslexia. Established by two neurolearning specialists, it houses stories, podcasts, forums, and articles on dyslexia, testing, teaching methods, and more.

Christmas Pageants

From generation to generation, adults and children have reenacted the story of the humble origins of Jesus and conveyed the Christmas message. This piece was originally shown last year. If you have a Christmas pageant, you may find this interesting. Check it out at <http://video.pbs.org/video/1699761501>

A Story – A Blazer, Red Scarf, and Fifty Bucks from HelpOthers.com

Like the author of this piece, I believe it is worth considering the actions of Eric and how his actions affect our own personal belief systems as well as our understanding of Catholic social teaching though I am pretty sure he is not Catholic.

I have this college friend, Eric. One thing used and still does always intrigue me about him is how he deals with the poor.

We have a lot of poor homeless people that come walking around our neighborhood day in and day out, either collecting stuff from our trash to recycle or physically coming to the door to ask for anything. Walking to and from class you pass by at least 4-5 of them daily. Most of the time, the constant rush against time makes me pass by them without noticing, but Eric would always take the second (even if he's in the middle of an important conversation!) to take out his wallet and give him/her a dollar.

This may not seem like a big deal, because most students are USC have a dollar to give away. Sure, Eric also isn't dead broke, but like all of us film school students, he doesn't have money to squander either. What's more is that he doesn't just give them the dollar and walk away -- he makes sure he says a good word or sometimes actually sits down and has a conversation with them. His sincerity is moving.

The reason I decided to sit down and write this, though, is because of what happened last night.

Last night, another one of these homeless individuals came up to the house next door. Four-five of us ignore him but Eric tells him to hold on a second. He goes up to his room, grabs a blazer, a beautiful red scarf his sister gave him for Christmas and fifty dollars. He runs outside, dresses the man in the blazer, the scarf and then hands the man the money!

I watched from inside the house, and I was brought back to my own life experiences where I understood the capacity for human compassion. As you might imagine, the homeless man was beyond grateful, and he simply said, "There must be a God."

Eric walks back in, and I'm totally dumbfounded. I asked him, "You just said you were broke. Don't you need that money?" He says, "I have to read something to you." I go upstairs to his room and he pulls out this book he's been reading -- Gandhi's *Experiments with Truth*. Then, he reads me this quote:

"Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to have control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away."

He shuts the book and says, "See it all makes sense."

I've been thinking about the experience and the quote all day today.

Kindness: A Way of Living



They call it a "**kindness internship**." (<http://interns.charityfocus.org/>)

Viral Mehta's 14-yr-old cousin and his best friend have decided, of their own accord, to spend much of their summer creating spontaneous and mostly anonymous opportunities to grow in kindness. So at summer camp, he was on the lookout. He's a popular kid, and being kind is not always "cool," so that made his reflection afterward all the more poignant:

"I noticed that there was one kid who no one was really talking to. He had a serious kind of disability, and some of the kids were kinda scared to approach him. So I went up and introduced myself. And you know what? He taught me some amazing dance moves!"

Sharing his presence was a wonderful thing to do, in and of itself, but his perspective was even more remarkable. Someone asked him, "What if he wasn't able to teach you anything? Would you still have done it?"

"Well, everyone is good at something. You just have to listen long enough."

You can read the full article at <http://www.dailygood.org/view.php?sid=132>. These students, Neil and Dillan, created their video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnQXh_n6UOc after being Inspired by the Video: "Be Selfish, Be Generous" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzSgn0LYW8g>

Creation Calls – I Believe...

Utilizing footage from the BBC Planet Earth Series, this video takes a look at the wonder and majesty of God's creation. Set to the song, "Creation Calls" by Brian Doerksen, this stunning glimpse of God's masterpiece is meant to glorify Him and draw the mind to new places of intimacy with Him.

The video was used in conjunction with the series of messages, "Blueprint" from Chris Seidman. You can watch and listen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwGvfdtI2c0&feature=youtu.be>.

Divine 2 x 4

As a teenager, Fr. Don Calloway lived a pretty rough life. He spent time in jail, got kicked-out of a foreign country, and went through drug rehab (twice). But God rocked his life and, in his own words, "smacked him across the face with a divine 2x4". His story and experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation shows just how persistent, patient, and powerful God is. **Divine 2x4** can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ed95ejulF20>

Taize – *When the Night Becomes Dark*

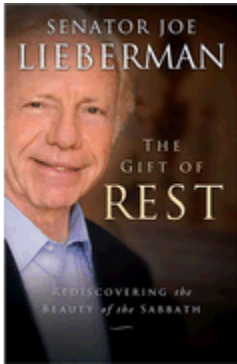
An excerpt from the track "When The Night Becomes Dark" from the album "In God Alone", featuring chants from the Taize Community, recorded in the chapel of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge . Watch and listen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJUIqheBLzI>. You can purchase the album [In God Alone](#).

How Great Thou Art

How Great Thou Art as performed by Carrie Underwood Vince Gill - Detroit Church of Christ Examiner.com

Watch it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2T1csHUGF4>

The Gift of Rest: Rediscovering the Beauty of the Sabbath



I heard a wonderful interview with Senator Lieberman about this book and his wisdom about honoring the Sabbath is worth our reading. Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York wrote “Senator Lieberman’s *The Gift of Rest* is itself a *gift of faith*. In these few pages, Senator Lieberman reminds us that the God-given day of rest—whether we call it Sabbath or Sunday—should be honored by all believers. As Pope John Paul II taught: we cannot work with God all week, if we do not rest with God on His Sabbath! Senator Lieberman’s reflections help each of us to remember just how to rest in God’s presence on His day.” You can order [*The Gift of Rest*](#).

Let's Talk is cross-referenced to YouCat.



Ken Ogorek has notified us that Let’s Talk has now been cross-referenced with [YouCat](#). This resource <http://www.emmausroad.org/Product.aspx?ProductID=11299> now has cross-references to [YouCat](#) in the free downloadable users guide.



The references in this document are offered in hopes that *Let's Talk* can be used as a resource that not only provides a comprehensive and engaging catechesis in it's own right, but also encourages teens to begin exploring [YouCat](#). When Let's Talk is used in conjunction with [YouCat](#), by the time a teen completes the four Let's talk booklets she or he will also have seen the entire [YouCat](#). Please consider Let's Talk an excellent resource to help supplement a teen's use of Sacred Scripture and various resources that help articulate, with authority and clarity, the Deposit of Faith as it comes to us in Sacred Scripture. You can order [YouCat](#)

The Carpenter's Gift: A Christmas Tale about the Rockefeller Center Tree



It's historical fiction but it carries a powerful truth. It also affirms the work of many housing programs that helped the poor and Habit for Humanity, in particular. It's a great story that starts in the depression and ends today.

In my mind, it is not surprising that Joseph of Nazareth was a carpenter too. I think you'll enjoy [*The Carpenter's Gift: A Christmas Tale about the Rockefeller Center Tree*](#).

The Little Drummer Mouse



If you are one of those people who walk around singing “*pa rum pa pa pum*” when you hear *The Little Drummer Boy*, you will probably enjoy this book about a little mouse who loves doing that as well. The pictures by Mercer Mayer, especially of the three kings, are among my favorite. If interested in purchasing, check out [*The Little Drummer Mouse*](#).