

Mission Connections: Special Catechetical Leaders Edition

Youth Connecting in Mission

Mission Office, Catholic Diocese of St. Cloud
11—8th Avenue South, St. Cloud, MN 56301 (320) 251-1100

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<http://mission.stcdio.org>

All I Want for Christmas is...

A youth minister recently stopped by my office and shared about a great event they are planning for their parish's youth Christmas party—an "All I Want for Christmas is Bacon" party, complete with activities, fun and enough tasty bacon-themed snacks for any bacon lover! But the catch is that youth would also be asked to bring donations that when gathered would be used to purchase a pig(s) from CRS's Gift of Hope catalog to help a family in need in our world have a source of food and income. What a great idea!

It is ideas such as this—ways of combining the fun and giving-nature of the season, with our call to charity, service, humility and sharing in the God of all gifts. Her event got me thinking about what other ideas along these lines parishes, schools and groups could do. Perhaps an "All I Want for Christmas is Caffeine" party in which participants give up their favorite coffee or soda drink and donate the funds towards providing safe water to those in need. Or an "All I Want for Christmas is an Ugly Sweater" party (everyone loves those ugly sweater parties!), where you pay a dollar to wear your most atrocious duds, and then use the funds to buy clothing for a family in need, or school uniforms for our young Kenyan brothers and sisters. Or an "All I Want is Gingerbread" party to gather and make gingerbread houses, while raising funds to counteract homelessness or providing aid for those who are displaced throughout our world. So many fun ways you could go with it!

It is the season of both gathering and of giving. This year, as we await the coming of our LORD, I invite you to think hard about the ways that He is already present—in the poor, the hungry, the sick, the homeless, the unemployed, the marginalized, the lonely, the needy. *What might this Christ say He wants for Christmas?* And as you gather together with families and friends and as a faith community in these coming weeks, are there ways that you can use your gatherings and activities to share that gift.

There are many things on my wish list this year; but all I *really* want for Christmas, is what *Jesus* wants for those he loves!



A Christmas Prayer

Dear loving Lord,
You didn't come to a perfect world.
You came to a people full of
complexity and confusion.
Your birth itself, surrounded by
conflict, doubt and fear.
You came humbly, oh Lord,
Born of a virgin,
To a simple family,
To walk a journey of tears, and
glory.
Now come again, dear Jesus,
Come to my fragile heart.
Let my heart be your manger.
Prepare that quiet place,
Where peace and joy are born again.
Oh lord, let me be humble,
Receiving and giving,
Your ever-loving mercy.
May my soul sing praises to only
you.
For you alone are holy,
You alone are the Lord,
The Most High,
Jesus Christ!
Amen.



Give it a Try!

Try incorporating these resources and activities into your ministry.



Mission Education Resources & Ideas:

Don't forget to invite your K-12 students to build a homemade toy or game this Advent season as a reminder of those who go without fancy wish lists. A reminder that schools' Toy Contest submissions are due to the Mission Office by December 21st.

If you liked the idea of the bacon party, or at least the gift of food and income to those in need around the world, consider visiting Heifer International or Catholic Relief Services' Gift of Hope catalogs to make a donation or give an "alternative gift" to someone on your list this year. Visit: www.heifer.org or <https://gifts.crs.org>

Looking ahead, be sure that January 7-13th is

on your calendar and in your lesson plan! This is National Migration Week, an opportunity to recognize the contributions of immigrants, refugees, migrants and survivors of human trafficking in our communities as well as to highlight the work of the Church to serve and accompany newcomers of all kinds. Like the Holy Family, 65 million people in our world today are forced to leave their homes. Learn more and find resources to help at: <https://justiceformigrants.org/take-action/national-migration-week>

Once again CRS is teaming up with NCEA for Catholic Schools Week, by providing a "hunger toolkit." Get it for free at: <http://education.crs.org/core-programs/catholic-schools-week>

Don't Forget:



Dec 12: Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Dec 21: Submission deadline for the Advent Toy Contest

Dec 22-January 2: Mission Office closed. **Merry Christmas & happy new year!**

Jan 7-13: National Migrant Week

Jan 28-Feb 3: Catholic Schools Week

"Who is this who lives with the lowly, sharing their sorrows, knowing their hunger? This is Christ, revealed to the world in the eyes of a child, a child of the poor."