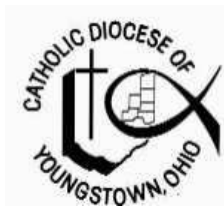


Advent 2006

*We wait together  
for the Lord.*

Resources for  
Discussion and Reflection



Lutheran-Catholic Covenant Commission

Northeastern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Catholic Diocese of Youngstown

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Jeremiah 33: 14-16

1 Thessalonians 3: 12-4: 2

Luke 21: 25-28, 34-36

**Leader:** Today we are reminded of our fragility. We hear about the second coming of Jesus. Why does this reading frighten us? For those of us who believe in Jesus and love him, Jesus comes as the fulfillment of our deepest dreams and longings. But at the same time this reading informs us that everything we are used to, everything we take for granted – the very ground we walk on – will cease to exist. It isn't just that our own personal lives will someday end, but that everything material that we have worked for will no longer exist. So with this Advent we are again asked to examine the theme of life with its beginnings and endings.

**Leader:** Now, take a few minutes in your group to silently reflect on these questions and share your thoughts with those around you.

1. What am I hoping to accomplish in the time I have left on earth?
2. What is it right now that seems to be giving meaning to my life?
3. How does what I hope to accomplish and what gives me meaning affect others?

**Leader:** Ultimate holiness is God. Imagine for a minute a "holiness" magnet with its two opposite poles. One pole pulls you toward ultimate holiness and the other towards a life absent of all meaning.

1. Where do you find yourself on this continuum?
2. What are some specific things that pull you in either direction, towards the Holy Spirit or the world?

## SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Baruch 5:1-9

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6

**Leader:** John the Baptist preaches a baptism of repentance in a world where the rough way would need to be made smooth. Jesus was born into a world of light and darkness, a world of cultural delights and problems. We are born into the same world. Our attitudes and values begin at birth to be shaped by our environment. Our values, though sometimes very good, are still in some ways distorted. This is a result of original sin.

Imagine a time line with your birth date at the beginning left of the line. Imagine further that this is the early years of your life, up to age 10. Good things and bad happen to you.

1. Can you remember a few things/events that could have led you into the darkness of sin?
2. Can you remember some life-giving circumstances that allowed you to grow in holiness and wellness?
3. Discuss how your choices after age 10 have influenced your walk with God.

## THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:10-18

**Leader:** The crowds came to John with a longing and expectancy and asked him what they needed to do for salvation. John answers with a basic morality that we've heard all our lives. He speaks of a morality of justice and charity. The person in a position of authority is to use power justly. People are never to abuse their power. And to the people in general, he says, "If you have two cloaks, give one to the poor. Share your food with the hungry." After hearing this, the crowd is still full of anticipation and asks if he is the Christ. John answers that he is not, that one greater than he is coming.

**Leader:** Imagine John the Baptist is talking today (like Dr. Phil) and giving you some "straight talk". "Here is what you need to do. Don't abuse power. If you have extra material goods beyond your needs give them to others. Trust in God to fulfill you."

1. If you heard these "straight talking" words, how would they call you to live life differently, live life more in line with the level of God's kingdom?
2. What things would you have to change in your life?

**Leader:** A good coach enables you to improve your game. A great coach enables you to improve your life. John the Baptist is a good coach. He tells his followers what to do; he gives them a deeper way to live the game of life. John then points the way to Jesus. Jesus is a great coach. He doesn't just want his followers to change a few things about their lives. As with his followers, he calls us to a whole new level of life. He wants our whole life – all of it. If we lose our life we will find it.

1. What would you have to do to give your whole life over to Jesus?
2. What keeps you from this life of radical trust?

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Micah 5:1-4

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1:39-45

**Leader:** The gospel tells us “that as soon as Elizabeth heard the voice of Mary at her door, the baby in her womb leapt for joy.” Ideally this is the effect the Incarnation should have on us all. God loves us! God likes us! God has chosen to become one of us! We need today, no matter where we are at on our faith journey, to leap for joy.

Jesus took flesh 2,000 years ago and lived with us and saved us. Jesus again takes on humanity in our baptisms. He says, “You are mine, I love you and I’m going to make my dwelling in you. From now on, you are a new creation. It is not only you acting or talking but also me acting and speaking in you. You are my eyes, my hands, my feet, my compassion to the world.” The hardest thing to believe about the Incarnation is that our God, Emmanuel, is still with us. We have to believe in His presence in the continued life of His Church and in us individually. We need to hear Him speaking through the Scripture, the words of our liturgies, our sacraments and our ordinary lives.

**Leader:**

1. Have I ever thought about my baptism as a way that Jesus’ presence is incarnate in the world today?
2. How do I see Jesus acting through my hands or my mouth to others who need Jesus?
3. Can I think of a time that Jesus has ministered to me through the actions of another person?

**Leader:** For this Advent and Christmas season make a commitment to spend time with Jesus the way we do with our friends, listen to His words and act in concrete ways to show Him our love.

## Suggested Stewardship Bulletin Inserts for November / December

November 5, 2006 (31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

What percentage does God ask of me as a good steward? **All** of my heart, **all** of my soul, **all** of my mind, and **all** of my strength!

November 19, 2006 (33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

The readings today speak of the end of the world and the coming of the Kingdom. The bishops' pastoral on stewardship says clearly that "the 'life to come' is in continuity with this present life through the human goods, the worthy human purposes, which people foster now." May our good stewardship cause us to be numbered among God's chosen on the last day!

December 3, 2006 (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

"Be on guard," Jesus warns in today's Gospel, "Lest your spirits become bloated with indulgence." Let us heed His warning and follow the advice of St. Paul, conducting ourselves in a way pleasing to God, overflowing with love for one another.

December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006 (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

Today's Gospel provides a blueprint for good stewardship: "Let the man who has two coats give to him who has none. The man who has food should do the same."

December 31, 2006 (Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

The first reading today provides a challenging guideline for the good stewardship of our family relationships. How do I measure up?

November 12, 2006 (32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

Both widows in today's readings gave all they had to the work of the Lord, one using all her remaining food to feed Elijah and the other offering her two copper coins to the temple treasury. Faithful stewards give all that is asked and trust the Lord to be faithful to His promises.

November 26, 2006 (Christ the King)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

Today's second reading reminds us that the sacrifice of Christ frees us from sin and makes us a royal nation of priests in the service of God. How am I using my gifts to serve God and others?

December 10, 2006 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

Good stewards believe that God, who has begun this good work in them, will carry it through to completion. In words and deeds, they can sing with the Psalmist, "The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy!"

December 24<sup>th</sup> (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent)  
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

The Gospel today tells of the Virgin Mary, pregnant herself, hurrying off to help her cousin Elizabeth. The model of good stewardship, she who had given herself to bear the Savior gave her time and love to others as well.

# Intercessions for Life

NOVEMBER 2006

---

## **5 THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

For the members of our Supreme Court,  
that they may sustain and promote  
the right to life of every little child  
from the first moment of conception;  
We pray to the Lord:

## **12 THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

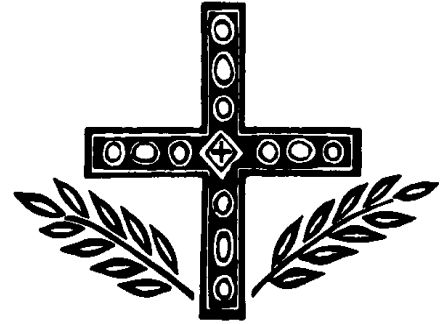
For newly married couples,  
that their love for each other might nourish their faith  
and strengthen their commitment to do God's will;  
We pray to the Lord:

## **19 THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

For those who await death in prisons, hospitals, and at home:  
that we might remember them in prayer,  
beg God's mercy for their sins,  
and love them as Christ loved us;  
We pray to the Lord:

## **26 OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST THE KING**

That all government leaders might recognize and promote  
the inalienable right to life of every person  
from conception to natural death;  
We pray to the Lord:



The problem of procured abortion and of its possible legal liberalization has become more or less everywhere the subject of impassioned discussions. These debates would be less grave were it not a question of human life, a primordial value, which must be protected and promoted. Everyone understands this, although many look for reasons, even against all evidence, to promote the use of abortion. The Church is too conscious of the fact that it belongs to her vocation to defend man against everything that could disintegrate or lessen his dignity to remain silent on such a topic. Because the Son of God became man, there is no man who is not His brother in humanity and who is not called to become a Christian in order to receive salvation from Him. (*Declaration on Procured Abortion*, no. 1 Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1975)

## **Respect Life Bulletin Briefs**

### **USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities**

#### **November 4-5**

We urge our fellow citizens “to see beyond party politics, to analyze campaign rhetoric critically, and to choose their political leaders according to principle, not party affiliation or mere self-interest.”

“Faithful Citizenship”, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

#### **November 11-12**

What the Church, as the conscience of society, calls for is moral and ethical reflection on the use of human embryos for stem cell research. No scientific, technological or medical advances should take place divorced from moral and ethical consideration.

Given the force of demonstrable physical data, science cannot deny that we are dealing with continuum of human life. Therefore, we are not free to treat embryos the same way that we would treat a cancer tissue, or even a laboratory rat.

*“Ethical Reflections on Embryonic Stem Cell Research,” Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl, Catholic Standard, July 20, 2006*

#### **November 18-19**

A Christian's outlook cannot be limited to the horizon of life in this world. He knows that during the present life another one is being prepared, one of such importance that it is in its light that judgments must be made.

*Declaration on Procured Abortion, no. 1 Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1975*

#### **November 25-26**

The argument that “excess” embryos may be discarded by clinics anyway is morally deficient. Such arguments have been rejected by our government in all other contexts, as when harmful experiments have been proposed on death-row prisoners or on unborn children intended for abortion. The fact that others may do harm to these nascent lives gives Congress no right to join in the killing, much less to make everyone else complicit in it through their tax dollars.

*Cardinal William H. Keeler, Letter to Senate regarding H.R. 810, “Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act,” July 12, 2006*

**NFP Bulletin Briefs**  
**Diocese of Youngstown**  
Office of Pro-Life, Marriage and Family

**November 4-5**

Today, NFP, which should not be confused with the old rhythm method, is safer and more reliable than any other means of family planning. Couples who have used NFP also discover that it fosters an appreciation for the gift of fertility and strengthens the marriage bond.

*“Natural Family Planning” Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio  
From The Catholic Star Herald, the newspaper of the Diocese of Camden, NJ, March 23, 2001*

**November 11-12**

Therefore, we who have been blessed by God with the gift of the Catholic faith can have no doubt about the immorality of contraception. The Catholic Church clearly teaches that the use of contraception in all its forms, including direct sterilization, is gravely immoral, is intrinsically evil, is contrary to the law of nature and nature's God. This is and always has been the uninterrupted teaching of the Catholic Church from the beginning.

*“In Obedience to Christ” Bishop Glennon P. Flavin, The Southern Nebraska Register, 11 October 1991*

**November 18-19**

NFP today is not the calendar-rhythm method of the 1940s and '50s. Natural Family Planning refers to scientifically proven, morally acceptable methods by which a couple determines the woman's fertile and infertile periods, with a view either to conceiving a child or postponing conception.

*“A Pastoral Letter on Chastity” Bishop Joseph F. Martino, Bishop of Scranton, December 8, 2004*

**November 25-26**

Since God fashioned our bodies male and female to communicate both life and love, every time that husband and wife deliberately frustrate this twofold purpose through contraception, they are acting out a lie. The body language of the marital act says, “I'm all yours,” but the contraceptive device adds, “except for my fertility.”

*“Marriage: A Communion of Life and Love” Bishop Victor Galeone, July 10, 2003*

Re: Over-the-counter sale of Plan B

Dear Pharmacist,

I am requesting that you not distribute over-the-counter Plan B because of its dangerous risk to women and its abortifacient potential.

Women deserve quality health care, but over-the-counter (OTC) use of this potentially abortifacient drug will compromise informed consent and follow-up care when necessary.

The manufacturer of Plan B admits that it may prevent a newly conceived human embryo from implanting and surviving in the womb. This is properly understood as causing an early abortion. Without the benefit of a doctor's supervision, many women will be unaware of this abortifacient action and the other risks posed by Plan B.

Plan B is a powerful dose of the artificial hormone, Levonorgestrel – 40 times the amount found in comparable prescription-only birth control pills. Making the more potent dosage available to women upon request simply offends common sense – especially when the drug is not designed to treat a disease or pathological condition.

If women take the drug quickly, as advised, they may not take the time to read all the fine print and could put themselves at an unnecessary risk of potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy.

Despite exaggerated claims to the contrary, Plan B will not realistically reduce abortion rates. Research in Europe and the U.S. has shown that increased access to 'emergency contraception' has a negligible effect on the rate of unplanned pregnancies and abortions.

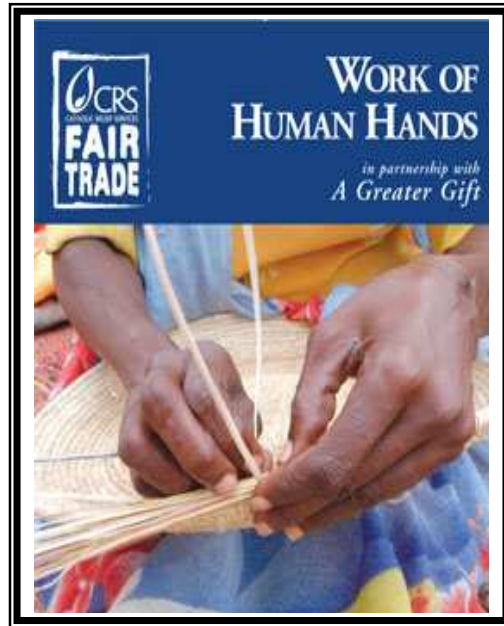
I urge you not to confuse FDA approval with a right to access and refuse to stock this potent drug for distribution on demand. I am confident that you will take this request seriously. Please inform me of your decision with regard to over-the-counter Plan B.

Sincerely,

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**WHEN: Fridays, November 3, 10, 17, and December 1  
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**WHERE: Diocese of Youngstown  
Office of Religious Education  
225 Elm Street, Youngstown, Ohio 44503**

**CONTACT: 330 744-8451 x302**

**CHRISTMAS GIFTS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

**WORK OF HUMAN HANDS EXHIBIT**

**You are invited to shop this exhibit for fair trade gifts, coffee, houswares, jewelry, and more, handmade by artisans or grown by farmers living in developing regions around the world. The sale is part of the Work of Humans Hands Program, a partnership between Catholic Relief Services and A Greater Gift, a non-profit program of SERRV International, an alternative trade and development organization. Every purchase helps the producers maintain steady work and a sustainable income so they can provide for their families. Enjoy shopping and change the world at the same time!**

# Diocese of Youngstown 2006 Catholic Schools' Report Card

Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education  
During the 2005-2006 school year, the Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education (ACRE) was given to fifth, eighth and twelfth graders in all diocesan schools. The following chart presents the **Diocesan Average (DOY)** on each domain as compared to the **National Average (NA)**.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

DOMAIN	DOY	NA
DOMAIN 1: God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit	85	82
DOMAIN 2: Church-One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic	81	74
DOMAIN 3: Liturgy and the Sacraments	80	70
DOMAIN 4: Revelation, Scripture and Faith	83	80
DOMAIN 5: Life in Christ-Personal Morality & Catholic Social Teaching	68	63
DOMAIN 6: Church History	65	60
DOMAIN 7: Prayer/Religious Practices	73	65
DOMAIN 8: Catholic Faith Literacy	82	74
OVERALL DOMAIN SUMMARY	77.7	71.4

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

DOMAIN	DOY	NA
DOMAIN 1: God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit	83	79
DOMAIN 2: Church-One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic	77	71
DOMAIN 3: Liturgy and the Sacraments	75	69
DOMAIN 4: Revelation, Scripture and Faith	80	75
DOMAIN 5: Life in Christ-Personal Morality & Catholic Social Teaching	80	77
DOMAIN 6: Church History	67	58
DOMAIN 7: Prayer/Religious Practices	80	72
DOMAIN 8: Catholic Faith Literacy	71	66
OVERALL DOMAIN SUMMARY	76.8	71.2

## 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

DOMAIN	DOY	NA
DOMAIN 1: God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit	79	79
DOMAIN 2: Church-One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic	81	81
DOMAIN 3: Liturgy and the Sacraments	76	76
DOMAIN 4: Revelation, Scripture and Faith	64	61
DOMAIN 5: Life in Christ-Personal Morality & Catholic Social Teaching	65	64
DOMAIN 6: Church History	61	61
DOMAIN 7: Prayer/Religious Practices	77	76
DOMAIN 8: Catholic Faith Literacy	69	68
OVERALL DOMAIN SUMMARY	71.3	70.8

The Diocese of Youngstown issues this report to provide accountability for its educational program. The results of one state and two national testing programs are detailed: the *Ohio Graduation Tests*, the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills*, and the *Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education (ACRE)*. The results of these tests are used by the Diocese and the individual schools to identify areas of strength and areas where improvement is needed. This engages schools in strengthening their Catholic identity and improving the conditions for student learning.

The Diocesan schools are required to administer the *Ohio Graduation Tests*. These tests cover the areas of social studies, mathematics, reading, writing and science. For reporting purposes, the performance of tenth and eleventh graders on the Ohio Graduation Tests are reported. In addition, the Diocesan attendance rate for all schools and the Diocesan high school graduation rates are provided.

The *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* is a collection of standardized tests for several subject areas. The tests are national and are taken by public, private and parochial students. In the Diocese of Youngstown, the tests are given annually in the Spring. Results are reported for students in Kindergarten through seventh grade. The purpose of these tests is to provide information that will be used to improve instruction.

The mission of the Catholic schools is to foster the formation of its students in the Catholic Faith. Catholic identity and spirituality are at the heart of the school. To assist the schools in assessing student growth in religious development, all Diocesan schools give the *Assessment of Catechesis/Religious Education (ACRE)* to students in grades five, eight and twelve. The scores listed in this report reflect the performance of both Catholic and Non-Catholic students on the Faith Knowledge section of the ACRE. Scores are reported in terms of the average percent correct for the group on the questions in each area or domain.

Office of Catholic Schools  
144 West Wood Street  
Youngstown, OH 44503  
(330) 744-8451

# Ohio Graduation Tests

## Report

**Diocesan Schools Exceed All Applicable Standards  
Information is from 2005-2006 School Year**

*Percentage of students who must score at or above the Proficient level to meet the State Standard is 75%.*

Subject	Average for Diocesan High Schools	State Average for Public High Schools
Reading	99.0	89.4
Math	95.4	82.7
Writing	98.3	88.0
Science	88.8	73.1
Social Studies	94.0	79.5

*Percentage of students who must score at or above the Proficient level to meet the State Standard is 85%.*

Subject	Average for Diocesan High Schools*	State Average for Public High Schools*
Reading	99.4	93.7
Math	97.6	88.9
Writing	99.2	91.9
Science	94.6	82.8
Social Studies	97.4	86.4

\*Results for 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students who took the test as 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>-graders

Percentage that must be met to meet the State Standard for the Attendance Rate is 93%.

***The Diocesan Schools Attendance Rate is  
96.5%.***

Percentage that must be met to meet the State Standard for the High School Graduation Rate is 90%.

***The Diocesan High School Graduation Rate is  
99.5%.***

# IOWA Tests of Basic Skills

## Report

**Diocesan Averages – National Student Norms**

**Based on Testing in Spring, 2006**

The scores below are listed in percentiles. The percentile

score indicates the performance of the typical diocesan

student in relation to other students, nationally, in the same

<b><i>Diocesan Student Performance</i></b>				
Grade	Reading	Language	Math	Composite
K	N/A	84	80	N/A
1	79	80	80	N/A
2	78	78	75	N/A
3	75	77	73	79
4	77	79	76	78
5	75	78	76	77
6	69	74	71	73
7	73	74	73	74

N/A –Non Applicable: Students in these grades do not take

***Facts about Catholic Schools in the Diocese  
Based on the 2005-2006 School Year***

Schools:	6	High Schools (9-12)	
	40	Elementary Schools (K-8)	
Professional Staff:	193	High School (9-12)	
	572	Elementary Schools (K-8)	
Students:	2,439	High School (9-12)	
	7,716	Elementary School (K-8)	
	611	Preschool	