

# St. Greg's Challenges Parish to Focus on the Reason for the Season

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Regardless of one's opinions about when it is considered acceptable to listen to Christmas music or decorate the Christmas tree, Christmas is coming. And, with it comes all the stress associated with endless holiday parties and gift exchanges — and the inevitable family drama that takes its toll.

All that stress has a way of distracting even the most devout Christian from the real reason for the season.

That is among the reasons why Michelle Zakula said St. Gregory the Great is putting a few challenges in place this holiday season.

The parish is challenging every parish family to place a nativity scene in their yard or inside their home, and there are a number of activities planned to help keep the focus where it should be.

“(The challenge) is a direct action with the intent of countering the Christmas chaos culture that happens this time of year,” said Zakula, pastoral associate at the parish. “It is a simple and concrete way to stay focused while we, as Christians, are bombarded by commercialism.”

Participants are to take pictures of their nativity and submit them to the parish, where the images will be posted on the parish Facebook page and featured in a display.

“We are really excited that everything about this multi-faceted approach to Advent is both family-friendly and child-friendly,” explained Amy Schlegel, principal at St. Gregory the Great School. “It’s a unique opportunity for our students to, along with their families, celebrate the idea of the Holy Family.”



▲ Parishioners at St. Gregory the Great are being challenged to place a nativity scene in their yard or inside their home this Advent season. (Submitted photo)

Each week, the parish will also feature one “character” found in the nativity scene and provide a prayer reflection that is focused on that figurine.

The school children and members of the parish’s ARISE and Lighthouse programs are also making crafts of the Christ Child. The goal of the various Advent activities is to involve as many people of differing ages and backgrounds as possible throughout the holiday season.

“This is an incredibly positive Advent idea that keeps our eyes firmly fixed on the true meaning of Advent and Christmas as we prepare our hearts to welcome Christ,” Zakula said. “I’m just so excited to see it all come together.”

It will, in a way, on the third Sunday of Advent. St. Greg’s will celebrate Babinelli Sunday by encouraging every family to bring their Christ Child figurine to be blessed.

“I feel like the chance to create something with their own two hands makes them so proud of it in a way that will really bring the whole experience to life for the children,” Zakula said. “It brings them into the season in a really concrete way, highlighting their creation as something pretty special.”

And, ultimately, the culmination of everything on Christmas Day will be something to celebrate as well.

“This is such an important time of year, and the little things we do for others really matter,” Zakula said. “I can’t wait to see how this unique challenge impacts the hearts and minds of our parishioners in the coming weeks.”