

Advent

Advent proffers diverse array of rituals, traditions

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

In the past five years, Karen Rinefiert has seen a spate of books appear intended to help individuals and families create personal rituals and new traditions.

These books — both religious and secular — seem to be responding to a growing hunger among people for making connections with each other, and with the past, observed the Diocese of Rochester's coordinator for young adult, adult and family faith formation.

"I think there's a real sense of longing in our society for a sense of rituals," Rinefiert said. "I think as a church, but also as a larger society, we're beginning to appreciate why traditions are important, why rituals are important."

Indeed, Rinefiert noted, in a time when families are struggling to get by and even to survive, a number of recent studies

have shown that "families that have traditions are the ones that are seen as the strong, healthy families."

But Catholics do not need to look to books for rituals and traditions, Rinefiert observed. They need only turn to the church to discover a rich history of religious and ethnic rituals and traditions.

And Advent is a season full of these rituals and traditions.

To help people rediscover these rituals and traditions — and to help foster new ones — Rinefiert last year and this has sent out fliers entitled, "Something Extra ... for families and households during the Advent/Christmas/Epiphany season."

This year's edition was sent to pastors, catechetical leaders and principals to be disseminated to parishioners and parents.

Among the ideas in the 1995 flier are:

- Make or buy an Advent calendar to help count the days un-

til Christmas.

- Rather than set up the nativity scene all at once, gradually bring out the figures over several days or weeks, and wait until Christmas Eve to add Jesus and Epiphany to include the Magi.

- Have the children add straws to the empty manger bed each time they do a good deed as a visible sign of growth and preparation for the coming of Jesus. Or, set a box on the table to represent the manger, and for each good deed add an item of nonperishable food. That food can later be donated to a food pantry for Christmas.

- Create a Jesse Tree to help recall Jesus' ancestors and to promote familiarity with the Bible. The tree can be a bare branch which is gradually decorated with homemade symbols of Jesus' ancestors, such as a rainbow for Noah, stone tablets for Moses or a hammer for Joseph. Families can add one symbol to the tree each day and read the corresponding Scripture story.

Rinefiert also included on this year's flier suggested prayers to say while lighting the Advent candle or opening gifts.

She also included this year a description of Kwanzaa, an African-American celebration from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1. Although the celebration is not Christian, the flier notes, the Kwanzaa ceremonies of lighting a candle each day and focusing on such principles as unity, self-determination and creativity can be adapted to express Catholic faith.

Last year, she included a description of the German custom of Kristkindl, in which each person draws the name of another and secretly does something special for or gives gifts to that person.

In that earlier flier, she also

explained Las Posadas, an Hispanic tradition which re-enacts the search of Mary and Joseph for lodging. As part of the recreation, family members carry candles and the figures of Mary and Joseph, and are led by the youngest child from room to room knocking on each door until reaching the last room, where the stable and animals are set up for the nativity scene.

"We're trying to expose (people) to traditions in other cultures," Rinefiert said. These other traditions are not necessarily "Christmas-related, but are part of the greater society that supports children."

Rinefiert pointed out that one goal for the flier is to encourage an appreciation of worship in the family.

"My sense is that we're starting to realize that the parishes —

whether the parish buildings or programs — are not the center of holiness, are not the main places where we encounter God," she said. People are realizing God is encountered in the home, she added.

Moreover, home-based celebrations help parents to pass on their faith to their children.

"It helps the parents to express their values to their kids," Rinefiert said.

Rinefiert suggested that families contact their parish catechetical leaders for more Advent activity ideas. She also cited two books as helpful: *Family Prayer for Family Times: Traditional Celebrations and Rituals* by Kathleen O'Connell Chesto, and *Family Rituals and Celebrations* by John Roberto.

These books — and other recent ones that have tried to foster a sense of tradition and ritual — can help individuals and families find there are many ways and occasions to celebrate during Advent and throughout the year, Rinefiert acknowledged.

"They are helping people to realize there's more to life than just plodding through it," she concluded.



Claddagh for Christmas

- RINGS
- PENDANTS
- CHARMS
- EARRINGS



- TIE TACKS
- WATCHES
- BRACELETS
- ORNAMENTS

Coming Dec. 7th. BELLEEK SIGNING
(Fairport Location) Event piece now in stock.

Irish Import Shop
3821 West Ridge Road
225-1050

Irish & Celtic Imports
Packett's Landing, Fairport
223-9070

Old Time Country



Holiday Traditions In Wayne County New York

A visit to a farm during the holidays can now be enjoyed by the whole family. On selected farms throughout Wayne County the Welcome Mat is out with holiday spirit. Come, spend an hour or a day picking out the just perfect natural Christmas tree to be the focus of your holiday festivity. Many farms will have a full array of holiday decorations and gifts to enchant friends and family.

For more information about things to do this Holiday Season in Wayne County NY call: 1-800-527-6510



May You and Yours Family
find this Advent Season
to be the perfect opportunity
to Prepare for His Birth!



Quality Sausage & Meat Products Since 1880

ZWEIGLE'S INC.

651 Plymouth Ave. No. • Rochester, NY 14608
716-546-1740

Learning to give
can be the
greatest gift
of all.



Good values make great kids.