



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#153 - November 1, 2021

A Best Practice: Journey to the Nativity

During the early days of Covid-19, many people in their neighborhoods organized an outdoor Stations of the Cross – an opportunity to pray the Stations set up at fourteen different homes. (See [GEMS #133](#).)

A group of faith-filled and energetic parishioners at Saint Raphael Parish in Bay Village, OH did a Driving Stations of the Cross on Good Friday 2020. It was a great success. The people who were able to travel the Stations enjoyed them; the families that hosted a station really saw the project as a bright spot in their Lenten journey during a pretty bleak spring of 2020.

When Advent 2021 came around, a group of parishioners (again) thought it would be fun to organize a Journey to the Nativity. This time, thirteen families participated as host sites. Each family was assigned a part of the Advent/Christmas story and were invited to make an outdoor display that would represent that story.

The Journey took place in the evening (4:30-9:30 p.m.) to take advantage of the beautiful light displays at that time of the year.

Each car that completed the Journey was given an electric candle at the last station. They were invited to take their light to the creche outside of Saint Raphael on Christmas Eve.



Katie Kelly, one of the parishioners who organized this effort, created a website to go along with the Journey stations. The website included a

- painting
- reflection
- prayer and
- song for each stop.

An example of the website: Station 3 – The Visitation

STATION THREE, THE VISITATION

The Visitation - 31301 Walker Rd. Bay Village, OH 44140

Song - "Visitation Song" by Aly Aleigha and Jessica Schissel



Jump for Joy- Mary and Elizabeth by Corby Eisbacher

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." Luke 1:41-45

Prayer

Your world is filled with glimpses of the pure love and joy awaiting us in heaven. Open my eyes to the joy in this world even when it seems dark, lonely and scary. Help me to be a joyful witness of your love to my friends, family and my neighbors.

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People could access the website on their phones while traveling so that they could reflect and pray along the way. A Spotify playlist (including all of the songs) was created and was accessible from the website.

Several parishioners were unable to actually drive to all the stations. However, they were able to use the website as a "virtual journey" that they could access at any time during the Advent and Christmas season.

- The website: Journeytothenativity.blogspot.com
- The Spotify playlist:
<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5kjqTvwBzgi8ABjmySEcwo?si=dd089f5203dc4fc8>

The 13 stations included the following. (The list given to the participants contained the address for each station and a map.)

- The Jesse Tree
- The Annunciation
- The Visitation
- The Magnificat
- The Birth of John the Baptist
- Gabriel Visits Joseph
- The Journey to Bethlehem
- No Room at the Inn
- The Birth of Jesus
- The Angels Announce Jesus' Birth
- The Presentation
- The Epiphany
- The Flight to Egypt



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Station 4: The Magnificat



Station 7: The Journey to Bethlehem

Katie Kelly reflects, "It was so fun to see people put themselves out there with a public display of their belief.

Some even learned new skills to prepare their displays. We had a young mother who bought wood and a saw to cut out her life size Mary, Joseph and donkey for her station! She had no carpentry experience but figured it out with her dad. It was a great chance to learn a new skill and spend time as father and daughter!"



Station 6: Gabriel Visits Joseph



Station 8: No Room at the Inn

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Station 9: The Birth of Jesus

GEMS Suggestions

As we look at this creative experience, think about:

- This event occurred during the Advent season. What other feasts, rituals, and celebrations within our liturgical year might lend themselves to something similar?
- We have relied on technology during the stay-at-home time (and will need to look at the continued reality of using technology in the future blended with face-to-face gatherings).

This offering used technology as well as a real-life hands-on experience. As we go forward, how will you continue to use both in-person events and the advantages of technology?

- What was fascinating – and heartening – in this experience was that the parishioners themselves created this opportunity; they didn't wait for their parishes to come up with the possibilities. How – as parish leadership – are you/can you encourage and support your parishioners in their faith, their creativity, their leadership?



Janet Schaeffler, OP
www.janetschaeffler.com
jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org

Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*
o <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/books.html>
o https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/seasons_of_aff_-_journal_special_issue.pdf