

THE SPIRIT

CHRISTMAS EDITION
9TH DECEMBER, 2012



DONT LEAVE CHRIST OUT OF CHRISTMAS

UPCOMING EVENTS

St Nicholas Youth Hafleh

Black And Yellow
Friday 11th January, 2013
Anthony | 0406 450 963

Paintball Skirmish

15th December
Michel | 0434 210 733

Nursing Home Visit

16th December
Isabel | 0414 959 129

Carols By Candlelight

23rd December
Isabel | 0414 959 129

I was walking past a large retail store a few months ago and was completely taken aback with what I saw inside. There, sanctioned near a stand of Halloween confectionary, was a Christmas tree decorated with iTunes gift cards and a table piled with 'great gift ideas for the entire family!'

People were feeling the Christmas cheer and it wasn't even October.

Shopping has become such a predominant part of Christmas tradition that people are losing sight of why we celebrate it in the first place. Take me for instance. I would spend weeks scavenging for the perfect gifts for my family. I'd find it so stressful that I would classify it as a chore that merely needs ticking off my to-do list.

I got a wake-up call last year in December, during one of my long shifts at Tarjay. As I was counting down the minutes at the check-out counter, a man and his two children wheeled over a trolley overflowing with every possible toy you can imagine. At the end of the transaction, I realised he purchased over five hundred dollars-worth of toys. I asked him whether these were all for his kids and he smiled at me and said:



"Instead of giving presents to each other this year, we decided to give gifts to kids less fortunate than us."

And just like that, the empty UniCare Christmas tree at the front of our store was surrounded by donated gifts from this generous family. You see, Christmas is the time of year when we should invite Jesus into our hearts. He should constantly be in our minds and in our actions during the holidays or, as us Christians like to put it – 'Holy-days'. Christmas is, after all, the day God bestowed upon the world a gift much greater than the presents under our tree.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Don't let the busyness Christmas cloud your mind of a greater celebration. Rejoice, for Jesus Christ our Lord is born!

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23)

A Christmas Tree Tale

Legend has it St Boniface started the Christmas tree tradition in 722 AC. He cut down an oak tree to prevent heathens from sacrificing a young child at its base. The tale says that a fir tree instantly grew in its place. To the heathens, this became the Tree of Life and represents Christ's eternal life.

OUR BEAUTIFUL CHURCH

November last year, our parish threw a party to raise money for our church's reconstruction. It's amazing what can be achieved in a year! The inside of our church is now spacious and adorned with beautiful icons. We were so proud of our community's generosity, we decided to get them together for a grand celebration! On the 23rd of November, everyone put their dancing shoes on and came to the Grand Royale for a night of support and fun. This time it wasn't focused on how much money we could raise, how many people we can pressure into coming or even the physical building of the church. This time it was focused on our communal spirit and the greater church that is our community.



Although fundraising was not the main focus of our celebration, our community was still very generous and we managed to raise \$100, 000, with a profit of \$80, 000! We would like to give a special thanks to all our sponsors for their support.

Thankyou to all who donated, attended and purchased raffle tickets. All of your efforts contributed to what is to come
Jomana Daher

THE LEGEND OF THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING



*"The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
in hopes Saint Nicholas would soon be there"*

There was a kindly nobleman whose wife had died of an illness, leaving him and his three daughters in despair. After losing all his money in useless and bad inventions, the family had to move into a peasant's cottage.

The father was distraught after realizing he's daughters could not marry without dowries (money and property given to the new husband's family).

One night, after the daughters washed their clothing, they hung their damp stockings over the fireplace to dry.

Saint Nicholas stopped by the father's house one night after hearing of his and the daughters' despair. He looked through the window and noticed the daughter's stockings. Inspiration suddenly struck Saint Nicholas. He pulled out three small bags of gold from his pouch, went onto the roof and tossed the bags of gold down the chimney, landing each one into a stocking.

The next morning, the daughters awoke to find enough gold in each of their stocking to get married. The family was overjoyed and the father was able to see his three daughter's get married

Thanks to Saint Nicholas' self-less deed, the tradition of hanging stockings is continued by children all over the world.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The 40-day fasting period before Christmas is meant to be a preparation for the coming of Jesus! The messages on television and in magazines tell us generally to "rejoice" and "be merry" (which they usually equate with material gifts) but, as Orthodox Christians, we must remember the reason for the rejoicing and the merriment comes from the birth of God the Word—Jesus. Once the Christ child enters this world, then, we have something to celebrate!

12 Days of Christmas

We all know the song of the twelve days of Christmas. You know, the one with the partridge in a pear tree and what not. But do you know the story from a Christian point of view?

The 12 days of Christmas refer to the period between Christmas and the Eve of Theophany/Epiphany (January 5). This is a time of celebration—rejoicing in the birth of our Lord and Savior! As the angels proclaimed to the shepherds, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

The First Day of Christmas is the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

The Second Day is a two-day celebration of the Synaxis of the Theotokos, a celebration for Mary because she gave birth supernaturally to the Son and Word Of God and thus became the instrument of the salvation of mankind.

On the Sunday after Christmas the Church commemorates the Brother of our Lord James, David the King, and Joseph the Betrothed.

Eight days after the Nativity, is the feast of our Lord’s Circumcision.

And on the final and twelfth day, we celebrate the Theophany, the baptism of Christ in the Jordan River.

During the 12 days, it is custom for some Christians to greet each other with: "Christ is born!" and the response: "Glorify Him!"
Jomana Daher

Did you know?

- On Christmas Eve, observant Orthodox Christians fast until the first star appears. When it’s seen, people lay the table for Christmas supper.

- Kriss-Kingle is a name derived from Christ Kindi (Christ-Child)

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR

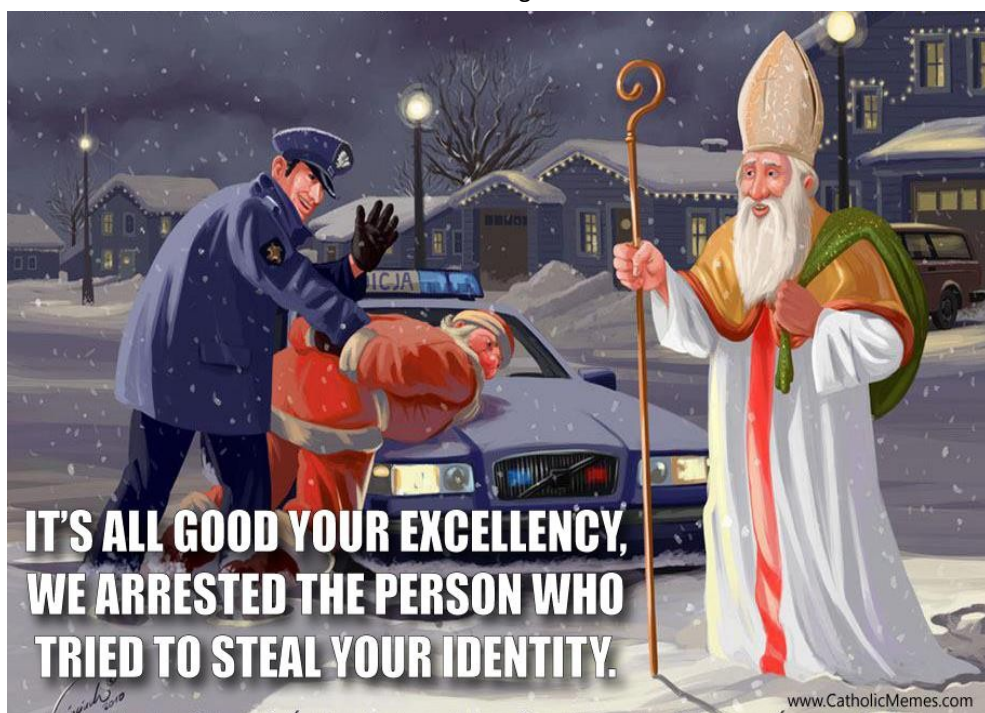
Just a week before Christmas I had a visitor. This is how it happened. I just finished the household chores for the night and was preparing to go to bed, when I heard a noise in the front of the house. I opened the door to the front room and to my surprise, Santa himself stepped out next to the fireplace.

"What are you doing?" I started to ask. The words choked up in my throat and I saw he had tears in his eyes. His usual jolly manner was gone. Gone was the eager, boisterous soul we all know. He then answered me with a

He again reached into his bag and pulled out a brilliant STAR. "Teach the children that the star was the heavenly sign of promises long ago. God promised a Saviour for the world, and the star was the sign of fulfilment of His promise."

He then reached into his bag and pulled out a CANDLE. "Teach the children the candle symbolizes that Christ is the light of the world, and when we see this great light we are reminded of He who displaces the darkness."

He then pulled from his bag an ORNAMENT of himself. "Teach the children that I, Santa Claus, symbolize the generosity and good will we feel during the month of December."



simple statement . . .

"TEACH THE CHILDREN!"

I was puzzled. What did he mean? He anticipated my question and with one quick movement brought forth a miniature toy bag from behind the tree. As I stood bewildered, Santa said,

"TEACH THE CHILDREN!"

Teach them the old meaning of Christmas. The meaning that now-a-days Christmas has forgotten. "Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a *FIR TREE* and placed it before the mantle.

"Teach the children that the pure green colour of the stately fir tree re-

Next he pulled from his bag a *GIFT* and said, "Teach the children that God so loved the world that he gave his begotten son."

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a *CANDY CANE* and hung it on the tree. "Teach the children that the candy cane represents the shepherds' crook. The crook on the staff helps to bring back strayed sheep to the flock. The candy cane is the symbol that we are our brother's keeper."

Santa looked back and was pleased. He looked back at me and I saw that the twinkle was back in his eyes. He said,

"Remember, teach the children the true meaning of Christmas and do not put me in the centre, for I am but a humble servant of the One that is, and I bow down to worship him, our LORD, our GOD."

GETTING TO KNOW YOU-TH

Name: Sayde Daoud

Age: 23

Favourite Colour: Coral (pinkish- orange)

Favourite Food: Mongolian Lamb

Favourite Day of the Week: Friday

Favourite TV Show/Movie: A Walk to Remember

Favourite Quote: "People are often unreasonable and self-centred. Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. Be kind anyway....The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway. For you see, in the end, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway." ~ Mother Teresa

If you could do one thing that will help make a difference to people's lives, what would it be?

If I could do one thing, I would teach children with special needs. It is my dream to be the eyes for those who cannot see; the ears for those who cannot hear; the mouth for those who cannot speak and the legs for those who cannot walk.



Q&A- Why are icons used in the Orthodox Church?

Where are the paintings and statues?

The use of icons is one of the most unique characteristics of the Orthodox Church. You can simply walk into a church and see the whole bible unfolded onto its walls. But where are the realistic statues and colourful paintings of our holy saints you ask? As beautiful as they are, Orthodox Christians don't believe in worshipping the paintings or statues that takes the form of our beloved deities. Rather we should pray, respect and venerate the saint the imagery represents. The icons that adorn our church are not meant to be pieces of aesthetical art nor objects of sentiment. The icons' two dimensional imagery represent holy figures and tell stories of their godly works. They surround the church to inspire us, educate us and to engross us in prayer and contemplation.

The Orthodox Church is one of tradition, and its use of icons is a representation of this tradition. Their use dates back to the earliest days of the Christian Church and was found in the catacombs, grave sites and other places of ancient Christian worship. They included: the cross, the fish, the lamb and other symbols that represented Jesus Christ. In this instance you can see that they weren't praising the imagery itself, rather they praised the figure it represented. The Church defended its use of icons by stating that if God became man in the person of Jesus Christ, then He can be depicted. And, if Jesus can be depicted, His holy Mother and saints can be depicted as well.

As we bow our heads and kiss the icon with a sign of the cross we are not worshipping the image of the saint, but the saint the image represents. It is important to remember that the faith of the person in prayer is above the aesthetic qualities of the icon.



"O heavenly Master, fervent architect of all creation, light the gaze of your servant, guard his heart and guide his hand, so that worthily and with perfection he may represent Your image."