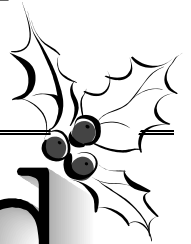




Sts. Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church

Serving Orthodox Christians in Butler and Warren Counties



The Word

DECEMBER 2004

VOLUME 6 NUMBER 4

A CHRISTMAS GIFT LIST

By Fr. Anthony Coniaris

A little girl was saying her prayers a few nights before Christmas. She stopped suddenly and asked her mother a question. She asked with a



worried look, "What are we giving God for Christmas? After all, it's His birthday isn't it? What does God want for Christmas?"

At Christmas we often prepare a gift list. Such a list includes parents, grandparents and favorite friends. One Person we sometimes forget is Jesus, even though Christmas is His birthday. What would you think if someone planned a birthday party for you and everyone received a gift but you?

One reason for bringing gifts to Jesus is that He first gave a gift to us. He didn't stop with a little gift, but He gave all He had – Himself. The Bible says:

"Though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich."

Why not discuss your Christmas list with your children? What gift or gifts can you give Jesus at Christmas? One Sunday school class took a poll and found they were spending 25 hours a week watching TV and an average total of only one hour a week in daily prayer, church, Sunday school, and reading the Bible. Can we give Him more time? How?

What are some of the best gifts we can give Jesus? Is love a gift? Repentance? Obedience to His will? Helping someone in need? Visiting a lonely person or a shut-in? What special gift can we give Jesus as a family this Christmas?

We share with you below what one family did for Christ at Christmas.

A priest tells of spending Christmas Eve with a family in Illinois. After the Christmas Eve service in the church, the family gathered around the Christmas tree and opened their gifts.

When all the gifts had been opened, the mother said to her

three sons – all in their early teen – "Now I want each of you to select the best gift, the gift you like the most."

As each lad made his selection, she nodded her head in approval and directed. "Wrap it in new paper and tie it with a new ribbon."

When this had been done, she further directed, "Now write the name and address of some less fortunate boy in our congregation on the package."

Again, the boys complied.

Then, turning to the priest, she said, "Now, Father, you must deliver these packages to the three persons named. Don't tell anyone who sent them. Just deliver them, please."

Surprisingly, the boys didn't grumble or argue – even though this was the first time their mother had ever taken such an action.

Years later the pastor met one of those boys – now a young man in college – who recalled that Christmas Eve. He said, "It was one of the most dramatic experiences I've ever had. That event caused me to understand in a small way what it must have cost God to give His best gift."

Byzantine Chanting Class

When: Saturdays

Time: 12pm – 1pm

Where: Sts. Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church

Who: Anyone who wishes to learn more or how to chant

Contact: Vassilios Gatiatsatos at vgaliatsatos@att.net

Adult Greek School

When: Saturdays

Time: 11am – 12noon

Where: Church Hall

Who: Anyone who wishes to learn to Greek

Contact: Vassilios Gatiatsatos at vgaliatsatos@att.net

Children's Greek School

When: Sundays

Time: After Father's sermon

Contact: Vassilios or Niki Gatiatsatos at vgaliatsatos@att.net

Planning on hosting Fellowship Hour for a Memorial or for a Special Occasion?

Please contact
Les Hock
at lesliehock@att.net
or 859-630-2556.
Thank you.

ATTENTION MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF STS. CONSTANTINE & HELEN

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP THE CHURCH IMPROVE ITS FINANCIAL HEALTH AND ENSURE THAT IT WILL BE A PLACE FOR FUTURE WORSHIP?

Please then consider donating items which can be auctioned on the Internet to raise much needed funds.

In addition to the items currently being auctioned for the Church, Al Price is willing to auction higher value items (items greater than \$100) for parishioners on a percentage basis. The Church would get 25% of the gross and the parishioner the remaining 75%, less fees.

Who do I contact?

Contact Al Price, by telephone at (937) 689-7579 or email: invent4hir@aol.com

We have had wonderful success with this fundraiser – please help us continue it by donating items to be auctioned on Ebay.

St. Basil Tree

Reminder- all gifts and stockings need to be returned to the Church no later than Sunday, December 5, 2004 for the children of St. Basil Academy in Garrison, NY.

We have a carpool driving to Garrison, NY in December. If you would like to drive/ride with us to bring the gifts to the children, please contact Fr. Christos immediately.

Fr. Christos,

Greetings in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I just received my September packet for the Department of Outreach & Evangelism which included a ministry profile on S.H.A.L.O.M. Though I do not believe we know each other please allow me a moment of your time to thank you for making the effort in getting your parish involved as one of the founding members of the network. I pray that our Lord grants you and all that are involved the strength to continue this ministry.

In Christ's love,
Fr. John Alexandres



Parish Christmas Card

Once again our community will sponsor a Parish Christmas Card. This is a gracious and unique way to extend holiday greetings to friends and members of the community.

Join the many families of our parish in expressing your Christmas greetings to the members and friends of Sts. Constantine & Helen

Greek Orthodox Church. To be included, simply write your name(s) on a sheet of paper exactly how you would like it to appear on the card and return it with your money or check for \$25 (made payable to the church) to the Church Office or Kiki Demetron-Gordon **no later than Sunday, December 5, 2004.**

NEWS FROM AFGHANISTAN –

Carl wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year !
Here is some information in regards to Carl:

Carl has been in Afghanistan since September in a province called Khowst which is on the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. Carl will be back in the U.S. in March of 2005 for two weeks. At the end of the two weeks, he must return to Afghanistan. In July of 2005 he will return for good to the U.S. and his tour of duty will be completed.

Below is Carl's e-mail address and regular snail-mail address. All mail is a welcome sight!

Carl's E-mail Address: carl.hollister@us.army.mil

Carl's Address in Afghanistan. Just 37 cents to mail him a letter!

Carl Hollister
Log Cell South
PRT: Khowst
APO AE 09354



December Services

Saturday, Dec. 4 –	
Vespers	5:00pm
Sunday, Dec. 5 –	
Vespers	7:00pm
<i>At Holy Trinity-St. Nicholas in Cincinnati</i>	
Monday, Dec. 6 –	
Divine Liturgy	10:00am
Sunday, Dec. 12 –	
Matins	9:30am
Liturgy	10:00am
Sunday, Dec. 19 –	
Matin	9:30am
Liturgy	10:00am
Friday, Dec. 24 –	
Christmas Eve	
Liturgy	5:30pm
Sunday, Nov. 28 –	
Matins	9:30am
Divine Liturgy	10:00am

Fellowship Hour Schedule for December

December 5th -
H.O.P.E. & J.O.Y.

December 12th -
Spyro Terezis
*In honor of her son's
nameday, her nameday, and
her son's birthday*

December 19th -
H.O.P.E. & J.O.Y.

December 26th -
Fofi Constantinidou



Glimpses from Sister Magdalen's Visit



Fr. Steven & Sr. Magdalen



Bookclub at Fr. & Pres. Home



Sr. Magdalen & Fr. Christos



Sr. Magdalen & Our Children



ON FASTING BY Metropolitan Maximos

Fasting, in our days, has become one of the most neglected spiritual values. Because of misunderstandings regarding the nature of fasting, because of confused and reversed priorities in its use, many of today's Orthodox Christians fast very little, or disregard fasting altogether.

The Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church which is scheduled to be convened in the near future has placed the problem of fasting as one of the first items on its agenda. It is hoped that through this Council the age-old practice of the Church to use fasting as one of the important means of spiritual growth will regain its proper place in the life of the Church.

Fasting was practiced by the Lord Himself. After prayer and fasting for forty days in the wilderness, the Lord victoriously faced the temptations of the devil (Matthew 4:1-11). The Lord himself asked the disciples to use fasting as an important spiritual weapon to achieve spiritual victories (Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37). The example of the Lord was followed by His disciples (Acts 14:23; 27:9; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 2 Corinthians 6:5, 11:27, etc.). What is fasting? Why is it so important? Why does fasting precede such important feasts such as Easter and Christmas?

The importance of fasting depends on its meaning. Many of the Fathers have written on fasting. Among others, St. Basil has left us with most inspired comments on fasting. St. Basil tells us that fasting is not abstaining from food only; it is first of all, abstaining from sin. Grounded in the teaching of the Fathers, the Church in its hymnology describes fasting as the mother of chastity and prudence, as the accuser of sin and as the advocate of repentance, the life worthy of angels and the salvation of humans (The Lenten Triodion, trans. Kallistos Ware, London 1978, p. 195). Fasting becomes all of these when observed in the proper spirit.

First of all, fasting is abstinence from food. By detaching us from earthly goods and realities, fasting has a liberating effect on us and makes us worthy of the life of the spirit, a life similar to that of angels. Second, fasting, as abstinence from bad habits and sin, is the mother of Christian virtues, the mother of sound and wholesome thinking; it allows us to establish the proper priority between the material and spiritual, giving priority to the spiritual.

Fasting is the advocate of repentance. Adam and Eve disobeyed God; they refused to fast from the forbidden fruit. They became slaves of their own desires. But now through fasting, through obedience to the rules of the Church regarding the use of spiritual and material goods, we may return to the life in Paradise, a life of communion with God. Thus, fasting is a means of salvation, this salvation being a life we live in accordance with the Divine will, in communion with God.

Because of the liberating effect of fasting, both material and spiritual, the Church has connected fasting with the celebration of the major feasts of our tradition.

"to fight the good fight, to walk the way of fasting, to crush the heads of the invisible dragons, to prove ourselves victorious over sin, and without condemnation to reach our goal of worshiping the Holy Resurrection" (Prayer of the Presanctified Liturgy).

SHALOM UPDATE –

Our parish will be hosting SHALOM on January 2 – 8th.

Please contact Mary Raab to volunteer.

Confession

If anyone would like to go to Confession in preparation for Christmas, please contact Fr. Christos to make an appointment.

Sunday School News!

On Sunday, December 5 we will be decorating our Christmas tree in the hall.

On Sunday, December 19, we will be having our annual Christmas Play in the Church. Hope you can join us!



Help An Orphan Child Find The True Meaning Of Love This Christmas



God gave us the greatest gift of love by giving us His Son Jesus Christ. At Christmas, we celebrate that love with our family and friends. Some children, however, have never experienced the real love of a family or known the true meaning of love. The boys who come to St. Innocent Orphanage have been abused, neglected and orphaned. Some have never received a present of their own. Award-winning St. Innocent Orphanage offers these boys a loving and caring home, but your support can help these boys experience the true meaning of love this Christmas.

Operating under the blessings of SCOBA (The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas). All gifts are tax deductible. Donate at www.projectmexico.org or send a check payable to Project Mexico.

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Address _____

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Email Address _____

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My employer will match my gift. I have enclosed the matching form.



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Yours could be the world's most important job.

When you support IOCC through a workplace giving campaign, you're helping to buy nutritious lunches for school children, rebuild homes for refugee families, and provide job training for widowed mothers. For just pennies a day, your pledge to IOCC through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) or United Way can make a real difference for children and families affected by poverty, war and natural disasters.

Workplace Giving Code #0348

Or, on the campaign form, write in:
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P.O. Box 630225 • Baltimore, MD 21263-0225
Toll-free: (877) 803-4622 • www.iocc.org



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

Local Church Welcomes Spiritual Visitor from English Monastery

Sister Magdalen talks about the Orthodox Church

Tuesday, November 23, 2004

Her parish is her family, and God is her Father.

Sister Magdalen, who visited the Middletown area from her monastery, St. John the Baptist in Essex, England, has addressed many groups about parish life, Orthodox spirituality, and her two books, "Children in the Church Today" and "Conversations with Children."

She works with children who come to the monastery to worship.

"Children need to be reassured of God's love," she said recently while sitting at the kitchen table drinking coffee in the home of the Christakis family. "God isn't just a subject like geography. As Christians, we respect Jesus Christ as God on earth, who lived a human life. We teach about what he did and said."

On her visit, which ended last week, she spoke to groups at Miami University, the first-grade class at Mars Hill Academy in Mason and Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church.

Sister Magdalen spoke about parish life in the Orthodox Church.

"The parish is not just an institution but a family," she said. "It's not just individualistic...it permeates the whole life. The church exists as a body."

"It's not simply the individual coming to pray and receive sacraments, it is to come together as one. People don't have to do something, it's for everybody. They just have to be there to pray."

The Christakis family met Sister Magdalen on a visit to her monastery and invited her to come to the United States to speak at their church, Sts. Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church on Grand Avenue.

Sister Magdalen is the spiritual child of Father Sophrony, the founder of the monastery. He was the disciple of St. Silouan. She explained that a spiritual father or mother is someone who helps guide another through life.

Sister Magdalen said the church affects every part of a person's life; for example, Orthodox Christians essentially become vegan, eating no animal products every Wednesday and Friday and during the 40-day Lent.

"That is one example of a relatively unimportant thing that others may view as strange," Sister Magdalen said. "But everyone would be welcome in the Orthodox Church. People are drawn to the church in different ways. Some people come to see the Russian art of the icons, or to hear the beautiful singing."

The Orthodox Church used to be one with the Roman Catholic Church, until what Sister Magdalen calls the Great Schism of 1054 A.D. The major issue was Rome's claim to universal papal supremacy, which caused which caused the church to split between the east and the west of Europe, she said.

The Orthodox Church is also one universal church, even though it sometimes is connected with a certain nationality, she added.

"It became the national religion in many countries, but the nationality is secondary to the Orthodox Church," she said. Thus, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church are essentially the same except for their nationalities.

"God loves every single person," she said. "You come as you are. If you want to know the truth ...you discover it for yourself."

This article appeared in the Middletown Journal on November 23, 2004.



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 Berry, Scott & Chrissie
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 Boumis, Peter & Kimberly
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 Papakirk, Chris & Christina
 Papakirk, Steve and Toula
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 Anonymous – 27

**MARK YOUR
CALENDAR**

Dec. 4 –
 Vespers 5:00pm

Dec. 5 –
 Matins 9:30am
 Liturgy 10:00am

Dec. 5 –
 Vespers for St. Nicholas 7:00pm

Dec. 6 –
 Liturgy for St. Nicholas 10:00am

Dec. 12 –
 Matins 9:30am
 Liturgy 10:00am

Dec. 19 –
 Matins 9:30am
 Liturgy 10:00am

Dec. 24 –
 Christmas Eve 5:30pm

Jan. 6 –
 Theophany Liturgy 10:00am

Jan. 9 –
 Blessing of the Waters

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