



THE GRRAPEVINE

"I am the Vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15:5)

Number 55

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 2, 2007

CHRISTIAN CHILD CARE INTERNATIONAL

Deacon Larry and Barbara Gorman write: "On behalf of "Christian Child Care International" please let the parishioners know that we were quite impressed with the response we received from your faith-filled community in sponsoring sixteen children and the one adult. They are a living example of their "Parish Mission Statement." They certainly know what it means to participate in the mission of the Church—the restoring of dignity to the forgotten members of the Body of Christ. It's a credit to you and your staff. Blessing to all of them and may your ministry always reflect your love of Mother Church."

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all the members of St. Mary's Parish who have been so gracious and supportive during these past days. Your words of condolence, your prayers and all the Masses you had offered for my mother's repose are greatly appreciated. While it was a relief in some ways when Mom died – she is finished with the suffering of the past year and a half – the loss is still difficult. I count on your continued support and understanding. It is wonderful to be part of such a supportive and caring community. Richard, OMI

DOING SOMETHING NEW

We start a new liturgical year with the beginning of Advent. In Isaiah 43:19, God says: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" We, as Church and as individuals, are called by God to look at the new thing that God is doing (or wants to do) in our world and to co-operate with God in that enterprise.

What is this new thing that God is about to do? In the first reading for this weekend, again taken from Isaiah, there are many wonderful "new" things spoken of by God: all the nations are invited to gather to God; all are invited to learn God's ways and to walk in God's paths; the Word of God is to be taken to all, swords are to be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, we are all to walk in the light of the Lord.

As we look around our world, listen to the news, walk our streets and recognize that state we are in today, God's call is even more urgent and poignant that it was 2700 years ago. The call has been given over and over down through the ages, but so often we have not responded. And when we do respond, sometimes it is only lip service and a half-hearted yes to God's call and challenge. The world will not change until individuals begin to change; as individual change, their attitudes and actions will touch the hearts of others, and gradually the prophecy spoken through Isaiah will become reality.

Going to God's mountain to learn from God means leaving something behind. What are the things, attitudes, actions, attachments and concerns that each of us must let go of, leave behind in order that we can make this journey? What is it that God is inviting us to hear and learn? How are we called to grow in our relationship to God and to others? What good do we take with us as we make this journey? Jesus' promise of the Spirit and of his own continued presence among us assures us that the journey will not be too difficult or impossible, that that we will be able to respond if we but trust in the gifts given to us. What are the swords and spears that we need to have refashioned? We need to look beyond the obvious and begin to recognize some of the biases, prejudices, negative attitudes, the anger, thirst for revenge and other attitudes that bring death into our relationships and our world. As we recognize those "swords and spears" and see their destructive impact on the world around us, we can truly be open to learning from God, to repentance and conversion. In what ways are we called to be constructive and life-giving through our attitudes and actions in everything that we do?

God invites us to walk in God's light. We pray this Advent that the darkness will be banished and that we will learn to walk in God's light each day.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

We are in the process of finalizing our topics and schedule for the next season of Theo-Tidbits. But before we cast everything in stone, we want to know what you think! Perhaps Theo-Tidbits aren't your bag? Perhaps you would enjoy more parish retreats, or different forms of prayer. Maybe you'd like us to offer family activities? We wish to know what you think! So, next week, we invite you to complete our Needs Assessment survey. We need your honest opinion!

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: Life has its twists and turns, and all the plans for the week of November 18 were put on hold! Although we knew it could happen any-time, Mother's death was still a shock and surprise. She fooled us all and died quietly in her sleep when she seemed to be on the mend once again. The time home with family was comforting and we also managed to take care of a lot of the details and business that needed attention. Thankfully my siblings are all at home and will take care of the rest. As we move into Advent, everything is in high gear and I am in even higher gear trying to catch up!

Giselle: Advent is upon us and the challenge for me this year is to slow down! You would think that slowing down would be easier than speeding up, but it doesn't seem that way. Over the last few weeks, I've encountered several quotes from one of our Christian mystics from the 1300s, Julian of Norwich. I think Ron Rolheiser quoted her in the article that we included in the last issue of the Grapevine. So, my plan this year, is to spend time during Advent with some of our Christian mystics. Who knows, a Theo-Tidbits might come out of it!

Other than that, this past week was a whirlwind of meetings with Finance Council, Parish Pastoral Council, Central Region and Diocesan Appeal. I am all meeting-ed out! I did manage to visit my niece (8 mos) in Vancouver last weekend though!

IT TAKES STRENGTH TO SWALLOW PRIDE AND REACH OUT IN UNDERSTANDING

(Article by Ron Rolheiser, published in the Nov 21, 2007 edition of the Prairie Messenger)

We are rarely at our best. Too often what shows forth in our lives is not what's best in us: love, generosity, a big heart. More often than not, our lives radiate irritation, pettiness and a small heart. Too often, we find ourselves consumed by petty irritations, conflicts, frustrations and angers. Each of these might be small in itself but, cumulatively, they take the sunshine and delight out of our lives, like mosquitoes spoiling a picnic. Then, instead of feeling grateful, gracious and magnanimous, we feel paranoid, fearful and irritable and we end up acting out of a cold, irritated, paranoid part of ourselves rather than out of our real selves.

Why do we do that? Because we are asleep to who and what we really are, asleep in a double way: When St. Luke describes Jesus' agony in the garden, he tells us that after Jesus had undergone a powerful drama, sweating blood so as to give his life over in love, he turned to his disciples (who were supposed to be watching and praying with him) and found them asleep. However, he uses a curious expression to describe why they were asleep. They were asleep, he says, not because they were tired and it was late, but they were asleep "out of sheer sorrow."

That says a couple of things: First, that the disciples are asleep out of depression. Depression is what is preventing them from seeing straight. But they are also asleep to what is deepest inside of them, namely, that they carry the image and likeness of God. Jesus was not asleep to that and, because of this awareness, was able precisely to be big of heart.

As Christians we believe that what ultimately defines us and gives us our dignity is the image and likeness of God inside us. This is our deepest identity, our real self. Inside each of us there is a piece of divinity, a god or goddess, a person who carries an inviolable dignity, with a heart as big as God's. And that great dignity is not meant to be a source of wrongful pride and a justification for making an unhealthy assertion with our lives. Sadly, too often it does and a rather simple commentary on the state of our planet might be to say that this is what things look like when you have six

(Continued on page 6)

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Dec 22—7 pm
Dec 23—9 & 11 am

Christmas Eve
Dec 24—7 & 9 pm
Midnight Mass (12:00)

Christmas Day
Dec 25—10 am

Feast of St. Stephen
Dec 26—8 am

Holy Family
Dec 29—7 pm
Dec 30—9 & 11 am

New Year's Eve
Dec 31—7 pm

Mary the Mother of God
Jan 1—10 am

REJOICING & REMEMBERING

We welcomed the following in the Sacrament of Baptism:

Alaina Grace Goodlet

In faith and in the sure hope of the resurrection, we bid farewell to

Jacqueline Plante

WEBSITE

Check out our website! We have photos of past events!

www.geocities.com/saintmaryspg

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Are you planning to get married in 2008? Check out the poster on the bulletin board for the different marriage preparation options offered in the Diocese. We are offering a 6 week session starting Jan 24 (Thursday evenings). Phone Fr. Richard for more info.

ADVENT...

begins December 1/2, 2007



What are you doing for Advent this year?

Advent is not Lent. The season does not call for prayer, fasting, almsgiving. It is not a penitential season, nor is a season of preparation for baptism. Advent is a time of waiting and longing, a time of reflection and preparation – the focus is different than that of Lent. Because the focus is different, and we are so accustomed to the focus of Lent, we often miss the season of Advent. It comes and goes and we arrive at the celebration of Christmas with no sense that we have been engaged in any kind of preparation for this great feast.

Even though Advent is not Lent, the Church still invites and calls us to make some special effort to celebrate this season and to allow it to enrich our faith lives. So, what can we do during Advent? What are you planning to do for Advent?

These are some of the opportunities for Advent here at St. Mary's:



Family Reflection and Prayer, each week in the Sunday bulletin, you will find an insert (Welcome, Yule!) to help you reflect and pray during the season of Advent. Take some time together or alone to read, pray, reflect, using this resource

Vespers will be celebrated on Wednesdays, December 5, 12 and 19 at 7:00 p.m. and on Sunday, December 16 at 4:30 p.m. in the Church. Take a half hour to gather with the community to pray this ancient prayer of the Church. This can be wonderful opportunity to step back from the hectic pace of life for a half hour, to relax in God's presence, to build community, to nourish our souls. If you haven't tried Vespers as a way of prayer, take the time to come and explore this Advent.

Reconciliation Service will be held at St. Mary's on Monday, December 3 at 7:00 p.m. Celebrating Reconciliation is always a wonderful way to prepare to celebrate any major feast or season. Again, we take the time to step back from the busyness of life and spend some time reflecting on life, eternity, faith, our response to God's love. The other Prince George parishes will also celebrate Reconciliation services during Advent. Check the bulletin for times and places.



Domano Renewal Centre—Advent Prayer Evening on Tuesday, December 4 at 7:30 pm in the Chapel. Come and centre yourself.

Domano Renewal Centre—Taizé on Saturday December 15 at 7:00 pm in the Chapel. Come and experience this contemplative and centering prayer form.



Watch the bulletin and GRRAPEVINE for other opportunities to do something out of the ordinary this year – it might be attending the Pasta Supper to support St. Vincent de Paul, or delivering hampers with St. Vincent's, attending a session at the Domano Renewal Centre, checking out a new ministry, helping to build community -----the opportunities are many. Will you choose some?

ADVENT WREATH BASICS

HISTORY



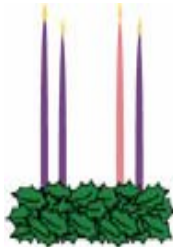
Like many customs of the season of Advent, preparing and lighting the Advent wreath probably has its roots in an ancient pagan custom. The very survival of these ancient people depended on the success of their crops.

So it may be that during the shortest days of the year, these people lighted candles on a wheel in the hope that the one who controlled the sun would turn the wheel of the earth's orbit to the sun once more. It seems natural that the Christian Church should adapt the lighting of candles as a Christian custom, since humanity was brought into the light of life by the Son of God.

The very first Advent wreaths were probably used in the home, where a spray of evergreen was placed near the hearth to remind everyone of the everlasting life found in Christ. In the heart of winter, while most of nature slept, the greenery symbolized the continuation of life. Soon the boughs of the spray were bent and bound together in a circle, which symbolized life without end.

ADVENT WREATHS TODAY

The wreath of today, used in Church and home, combines the circle of evergreens with four candles that are lighted progressively on each Sunday of Advent. When used in the Church, the candles are the liturgical colors of the season - purple or deep blue, with the exception of the third candle, which may be rose.



In home, however, the candles may be these colors, or white, or even red. The significance of the four candles lies in their progressive illumination - light out of darkness. Lighting the candles helps us remember the one who said, "I am the light of the world."

Still, new customs have grown up around the lighting of the candles, with each candle being given an attribute (light, hope, joy, peace), or symbolizing a character from the Christmas story (prophets, angels, shepherds, Magi). (If you have small children, it might be best to use this symbolism). One way to think of the candles is to relate them to the scriptures used during the week. At the same time, bring meaning to the lighting of the candles by using the ancient hymn "O Come, Emmanuel" with one person singing or reciting the verses and everyone joining in the refrain. (See column at right)

CANDLE SYMBOLISM

The First Candle: The Candle of "Hope"

This candle symbolizes the hope of Israel for the Messiah and the Christian hope for the coming again of Christ in final victory.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

The Second Candle: The Candle of "Preparation"

This candle symbolizes the preparation for the comings (past, present, future) of Christ.

O come, thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home.

The captives from their prison free,
and conquer death's deep misery.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

The Third Candle: The Candle of "Joy"

This candle symbolizes our joy at the coming of Christ. Sometimes it is rose colored, in contrast to the purple of the other candles.

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thy justice here;

Dispense the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

The Fourth Candle: The Candle of "Love"

This candle symbolizes God's love for the world in giving his only Son to be our Savior.

O come, Desire of nations bind
all peoples in one heart and mind.

From dust thou brought us forth to life;
deliver us from earthly strife.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

USING THE ADVENT WREATH

Gather around the Advent Wreath weekly, or better yet, daily. Choose appropriate scripture passages to read and decide who will read the passage aloud and who will light or snuff out the candles. After reading the passage, take time to discuss the passage and reflect on the meaning of the passage in your daily life. Sing an Advent song such as the one above.

HOW TO MAKE AN ADVENT WREATH

Making an advent wreath is as easy or as complex as your artistic talents make it! The primary symbols are the four candles and the circular shape. The colours of the candles are secondary. Real evergreens (a symbol of life) would be ideal, but are slightly tricky when they dry out and are placed in proximity to lit candles. Fake evergreens are not the greatest symbol of life, but do reduce the fire hazard to some extent. Remember, simple is sometimes better!

METHOD 1

Tools and supplies you will need are:

- Styrofoam base form. These are usually available in craft shops and come in various sizes. The most popular size is 10" in diameter and 1" thick.
- Several evergreen branches.
- Sharp thin blade (knife).
- Scissors.
- Three (3) Purple and One (1) Rose Long Stem Candles

Assembly - the fun part:

- Using the styrofoam base, mark off four (4) equally spaced points approximately 1" from the edge where the candles will be inserted.
- Trace the circumference of a candle's base at each of these points.
- Using a sharp thin blade, cut vertically through the styrofoam on the line you previously traced out representing the base of the candle. Be careful not to cut the holes oversize. Otherwise, your candle will not stand vertically, nor will it be very secure.
- Insert a candle into each of the holes you created.
- Using evergreen sections, decorate your Advent Wreath.
 - Cut perhaps 15-20 short (approximately 4" each) sections of evergreen using scissors. Each stem base will be substantially easier to insert into the styrofoam, if the cut is on a bias to produce a relatively sharp point.
 - Insert the evergreen sections at approximately a 45 degree angle and at equally spaced intervals (approximately 2-1/2 inches apart) around the periphery of the styrofoam surface and also around the sides.
- Add purple & rose colored ribbon as well if you desire

METHOD 2

A simpler version may be made by using a ready made evergreen wreath. Arrange the boughs so that you can place four small candle holders among them and then decorate with ribbon or holly berries.

METHOD 3

- Take a large flat shallow bowl (at least 9 inches in diameter) and fill it with sand or coarse salt.
- Place the four Purple candles around the outside with the large candle in the center. Stick them down into the sand or salt so that they are placed securely.
- Place a circle of evergreens and around the bowl.
- Place the wreath and candles in a prominent place (at the center of the table, on a mantle, etc.) where they can stay through Christmas.

METHOD 4

- Cut a disc of wood from a log (birch works well)
- Drill 4 equidistant holes along the edge of the disc
- Insert a candle taper into each hole
- Decorate with greenery

METHOD 5

- Visit the Dollar Store
- Buy some tea lights
- Buy 4 glass votive candle holders: 4 purple, 3 purple & 1 pink, 4 red, or 4 white
- Place tea lights in candle holders
- Arrange candle holders in a circle

METHOD 6

- Same steps as Method 5
- Place votive holders within an artificial evergreen wreath, or within a pottery bowl filled with sand, or place a small potted plant in the middle of the circle

The important thing is to actually use your Advent Wreath! The first week of Advent, you light one candle. The second week of Advent two candles. The third week of Advent three candles (the pink one gets lit this week). The fourth week of Advent all four candles are lit. Simple!!!

VESPERS

Vespers is a Latin word and refers to Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours. Although it used to be considered the sole reserve of monks and religious. Vatican II, offered the rich prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours to the entire Church as a way of consecrating the entire day.

The beauty of it is that it is the prayer of the whole Church and at any given day or time, somewhere in the world, others are praying the same prayer. If you're interested in learning a bit more, take a look in the Sunday Missal book on page 587 and following. There, you will see abbreviated versions of Morning and Evening prayer.

Vespers is actually a sung version of evening prayer, and if you find that a bit daunting, relax! We have music ministers who sing most of the really serious stuff. Vespers is a wonderful way to close out your day, to come and sit in the silence, to pray with the community, and to offer praise and thanks to God.

During the season of Advent, we will celebrate Vespers on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. We will continue to celebrate Vespers on the third Sunday of the month, in this case, December 16, at 4:30 pm.



(Continued from page 2)

billion people walking around with each one of them thinking himself or herself as God. But our great dignity, the Imago Dei inside each of us, is meant rather to be a centre from which we can draw vision, grace and strength to act in a way that, ironically, precisely helps us to swallow our pride.

We see this in Jesus. In a famous text, St. John tells us that at the last supper, Jesus got up from the table and began to wash the feet of his disciples, against their protests. That gesture, washing someone else's feet, has classically been preached on as an act of humility. It was that, but in the context of the Gospel of John, it is something more. It was a particular kind of humility, one that requires having a huge, huge heart and swallowing a lot of pride. When Jesus washes his disciples' feet in John's Gospel and tells us he is setting an example for us to imitate, he is inviting us to have the strength to bend down in understanding and wash the feet of those whom, for all kinds of reasons, we would rather not have anything to do with. It is akin to having pro-life and pro-choice, strident conservatives and strident liberals, fundamentalists and atheists, wash each others' feet. Normally we don't have the strength to do that - there is too much pride and desire for righteousness at stake.

So how could Jesus do it? He could do it because he wasn't asleep to who and what he was. In a stunning description of what is going on inside of him when he got up and took the basin and towel to do this. John writes: "Jesus, knowing that he had come from God and was returning to God, and that the Father had put everything into his hands, got up from the table and removed his outer garments" (Jn 13, 3-5).

Jesus took off his outer garments (which symbolize precisely all those things, including our everyday irritations and angers, which block the view of our deeper selves) to show us his deeper reality, namely, the fact that he had come from God and was going back to God. On the strength of that awareness, he could swallow all the pride he needed to in order to reach out in understanding, forgiveness and love, beyond wound, irritation and moral righteousness.

When we are in touch with the fact that we too have "come from God and are going back to God," then, and only then, can we too swallow enough pride to be genuinely loving.

ST. NICHOLAS—DEC 6

The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who was born during the third century in the village of Patara in Asia Minor. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to the those in need, his love for children, and his concern for sailors and ships.

Widely celebrated in Europe, St. Nicholas' feast day, December 6, kept alive the stories of his goodness and generosity. In Germany and Poland, boys dressed as bishops begged alms for the poor—and sometimes for themselves! In the Netherlands and Belgium, St. Nicholas arrived on a steamship from Spain to ride a white horse on his gift-giving rounds. December 6 is still the main day for gift giving and merrymaking in much of Europe. For example, in the Netherlands St. Nicholas is celebrated on Dec 5, the eve of the day, by sharing candies, chocolate initial letters, small gifts, and riddles. Dutch children leave carrots and hay in their shoes for the saint's horse, hoping St. Nicholas will exchange them for small gifts. This simple gift-giving helps preserve a Christmas Day focus on the Christ Child.

PRISON MINISTRY

Jesus told us that whenever we visit or care for those in prison, we are visiting or caring for him. While visiting prisoners may not be feasible for many people, there are ways in which we can still minister to those in prison.

Frank Jamin is the chaplain at the local correctional centre. He has expressed a need for bibles and other spiritual reading (e.g. prayer cards, booklets, Catholic Digest, etc). We have a basket on top of the Food Bank cabinet to collect material.

TABLE FOR TWO

We're taking a break over Christmas and our next Table for Two will take place sometime in the New Year.

We are planning another *Table for You... and Your Friends* for the UNBC/CNC crowd on January 25. Hungry students need to be fed!

If you're interested in helping out with Table for Two, please give Fr. Richard a call at the Parish Office. We'd love to have help, either with cooking or with cleanup.

NEW TO THE PARISH??

Are you new to the parish? Have you filled out a parish registration form yet? They're available on the bulletin boards at the entrances of the Church. Better yet, introduce yourself to Fr. Richard or Giselle after Mass. We'd love to meet you and get the chance to know you.



HOW DO YOU PRAY??

MUSICAL INTELLIGENCE—MUSIC SMART

In a previous issue of the *Grrapevine* (#52), we introduced the idea that different prayer forms may be more comfortable for us based on our giftedness in the areas of multiple intelligence. We were also invited to take a Multiple Intelligence Survey (link on our website) to discover where our intelligence strengths lie (verbal, numeric, images, music, movement, nature, etc). Over the next few issues of the *Grrapevine*, we'll take a look at the different multiple intelligences and draw connections with different prayer styles.

Those who have a strong musical intelligence (music smart) have an ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch and timber. They generally have a love of music and rhythmic patterns. They are sensitive to sounds in the environment: the chirp of a cricket, rain on the roof, varying traffic patterns. They often study and work better with music in the background and can often reproduce a melody or rhythm after hearing it only once. They often like to create music or enjoy listening to a wide variety of music. They are often good at mimicking sounds, language accents and others' speech patterns.

Those who have a strong musical intelligence, will enjoy prayer forms that focus on music and rhythms. Taizé Prayer, a meditative singing of short phrases, might appeal to those who have a strong musical intelligence (Domano Renewal Centre: Sat Dec 15 at 7 pm in the Chapel—Evening of Taizé Prayer!). Others might enjoy listening to and then meditating on the lyrics of a song, teasing out what the song conveys to them about God and their relationship with God. Others might enjoy singing hymns or writing new words to a familiar tune..

Those of us who are not strong in the musical intelligence, might find such prayer forms tedious and difficult. It's all a matter of finding out what works best for us. We just need to try some of them!

SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM: CANDLE

We were eating lunch and discussing the Easter Vigil we had celebrated in our parish just a few days before. She had sung in the choir, and I had taken my place in a pew, squirming as the solemn rituals were celebrated in a manner that I thought was just a bit too casual. "We didn't even begin in darkness," I lamented. "We just started with mood lighting and lit the candle almost as an afterthought."

She replied, "We brought it up to date. You're just too tied to that old stuff in the books."

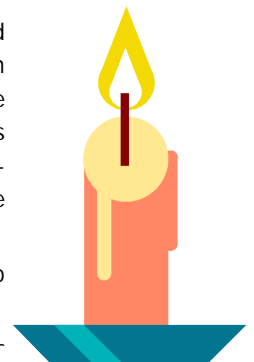
Rather than argue, I changed the subject. I asked about her husband, who had recently undergone treatment for alcoholism.

"You know," she said, "the difference between what life was like before he went to treatment and what life is like now is the difference between night and day."

I paused and said, "You know, the difference between what life was like before Christ came into our lives and what life is like now is the difference between night and day. That's why we light a candle in the darkness, to remind ourselves."

"Oh," she said.

Light of Christ. Thanks be to God.



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HAVE LESS, LIVE MORE: BUY NOTHING CHRISTMAS

Those of us who shiver at the thought of hour-long line-ups and \$5 gift tags finally have something to rejoice about over the holidays: fed-up citizens and social activists from across the world are inviting everyone to take part in Buy Nothing Christmas.

Inspired by the international successes of Buy Nothing Day, and disgusted with the personal debt, spiritual emptiness, and ecological damage that the holiday season now entails, writers and activists began to heavily promote the idea of a downshifted Christmas in the late nineties. Since then, the idea has been taken up by individuals, community groups, churches, and schools in at least a dozen countries, with strongest support in Canada, the USA, the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

Despite the name, the Buy Nothing Christmas campaign is not really about refusing to spend a dime over the holiday season. It's about taking a deep breath and deciding to opt out of the hype, the overcrowded malls, and the stressful to-do lists. It's about reminding ourselves to really think about what we are buying, why we are buying it, and whether we really need it at all.

"First and foremost, it's about restoring authenticity to one the world's great religious and secular traditions," said Kalle Lasn, editor-in-chief of Adbusters magazine and long-time advocate of holiday restraint. "Christmas has been warped beyond recognition by commercial forces. It's about time we took it back."

Most participants will still exchange gifts, but will opt for recycled, homemade, locally produced, or fair-trade items. Some will excuse themselves from gift-giving altogether, and focus instead on valuable time with family and friends, on charitable works, and on rediscovering older, non-commercial holiday traditions as they also invent a few new ones. (www.adbusters.org)



Why not think outside the box?

www.buynothingchristmas.org

ALTERNATIVE GIFT IDEAS

Many of the ideas here were borrowed from the website for the Hundred Dollar Holiday www.newdream.org

1. Create coupons for a massage, spring cleaning, child-minding, manicure, etc.
2. Create a menu of various culinary delights (e.g., Tantalizing Thai, Mexican Fiesta, etc.) and have the gift recipient choose one of the options.
3. Collect meaningful photos for the gift recipient, make colour photocopies and create a collage.
4. Write and illustrate a book for the young people in your life.
5. Knit a stocking, hat, socks, etc.
6. Do something exciting and challenging together (e.g., long walk, bike ride, hike, art course).
7. Compile a list of memories and arrange them in a creative fashion.
8. Videotape and interview your elderly parents about childhood memories, how they met, etc., and give to siblings or children.
9. Paint an empty wine bottle with non-toxic paint and fill with olive oil. Top with an oil pour spout that can be found at a gourmet cooking shop.
10. Bake your favourite holiday treat and pack in a recycled tin.
11. Fill a basket with home-made goodies.
12. Frame a piece of your artwork.
13. Make a mixed cassette tape and choose songs that make you think of that person. Under each title, explain why you chose that song.
14. Give away a valued possession.
15. Make a puppet from a sock.
16. Fill an old trunk or suitcase with fun clothing, hats and gaudy jewelry for your children to play dress-up.
16. Wrap gifts in newspaper, maps, scarves or clothing.
17. Make a calendar with pictures of family members and/or scenery.
18. For the elderly people in your life, research newspaper and magazine articles from their youth and present in a creative fashion.
19. Stamp and address postcards for family members.
20. Collect quotes that make you think of someone.
21. Make a soothing, herb pillow filled with lavender, rose, etc.
22. Make a birdseed ball.
23. If you are skilled in a particular area, offer a lesson or class.
24. Make hand-made soap or candles.
25. Purchase gifts at a fair-trade shop, garage sale or thrift shop.
26. Make tree ornaments out of old CDs.
27. Buy a used book and in the inside cover explain why you chose the book for that person.