

IC XC
NI KA

St. Catherine's Newsletter

Assumption Greek
Orthodox Church

December, 2012



Christ is Born, Glorify Him!

Sunday Church
School students
produce, direct and
star in this year's
pageant: The
Christmas Box



The Candy Cane

Fr. Timothy G. Bakakos



The candy cane is a long-time Christmas tradition. Everywhere we look we see them. They are used as decorations on Christmas trees. They are one of the most popular of all Christmas treats. I have heard several stories about the history and meaning of the candy cane, and I don't really know if they are true. But I do think that the candy cane can teach us a few things about the true meaning of Christmas.

1. First of all, if you look at the candy cane like this  , what letter does it look like? Yes, it looks like the letter J. **Jesus** starts with the letter J, so that should remind us of Jesus, and help us to remember that Christmas is Jesus' birthday, and the true reason why we celebrate Christmas.

2. However, if you look at the candy cane like this  , what does it now look like? If your answer is that it looks like a shepherd's crook (an old man's cane), you are right again. The shepherd used his crook to keep the sheep from wandering away from the flock and getting lost or eaten by a wild animal. In our Bible, we find the passage in the Book of Psalms that reads, "***The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.***" (Psalms 23:1) So, boys and girls, we can look at the candy cane and see religious meaning by it...that it should remind us that Jesus is our **Shepherd**, and He will keep us from wandering away and getting lost or hurt.

3. Thirdly, usually there are two distinct colors found on a candy cane?? What are they? Yes, one of the colors is white. In the Church, what do we traditionally associate the color 'white' with?? White is a symbol of purity. That should remind us that Jesus was the spotless '*Lamb of God*', and that because He came to be the *sacrifice* for **our** sins, we should try and be as pure and white as we possibly can.....as white as snow.

And what other color do we usually see on a the candy cane? Yes, that's right.....**red!** The Bible tells us that before He was crucified, Jesus was beaten with a whip which made blood-red stripes across His back. "***He himself bore our sins in His body on the Cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His stripes you have been healed.***" (1 Peter 2:24). And the Bible goes on to tell us that we are healed by those stripes. The stripes on the candy cane should remind us that Jesus suffered and died, so that we can have everlasting life.

To many people, the candy cane is a simple and meaningless decoration used at Christmas time, or just a piece of candy to be eaten and enjoyed. But this year, it is my hope that every time you see a candy cane, I want you to remember our little talk, and be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas....and what a big difference a candy cane can mean to us when we place Jesus in Christmas!

*May our Lord Jesus Bless you and your family always
Merry Christmas, and may He bless us all!*





Christmas Message

by Fr. Athanasios Papagiannis

What would you do if you attended a friend's birthday party and witnessed that when it was time for the friend to blow out the candles, another friend stepped in and blew them out for him? What would you do if, a few minutes later, when it was time to open up his gifts, someone else began to open them up and claim those gifts as being his?

Don't these scenes sound a little rude and maybe even foolish?

Every year we celebrate the gift of Christ. We celebrate the fact that God, who existed before all of us, entered into the human race and became a human being. If we really think about it, it was something He didn't have to do. God could have spoken to us in a loud voice from Heaven and instructed us. He could have said, "Boys and girls, I want you to love each other and be as nice to each other as you can." God didn't have to be born to do that, but he did. No God ever did so much for His people, not Buddha, not Mohammed.

Christmas is about remembering what God did for human beings. If all we think of when we think of Christmas is getting presents, or spending time with our family members or going to the mall to shop, then we're missing out on the real meaning of the holiday.

We should never celebrate Christmas without understanding what God did.

If we celebrate Christmas for the wrong reasons, then we look as rude and foolish as the kid who opened up those gifts at his friend's birthday.

Sometimes children wonder what kind of gift they can give God. The answer to that is simple: Our lives are our gift to God. How we live them is our gift back to Him. If we appreciate what God has done in giving us His Son, then we'll forgive more, love more and pray more; and each and every day we'll draw closer to God by doing these things. This is how we say "thank you" to God. And yet the Christmas season is a lonely and depressing time for so many people. Statistics show that way too many people are saddest around the Christmas season. This only means that we don't understand the gift we received.

So this Christmas season and the Christmas seasons that follow, let us commit ourselves to loving God and others more. Love is always the gift God prefers.

May our good and loving God continue to bless all of His children this Christmas season, and may we always remember how special that wonderful gift he gave humanity really is.

St. Jude's Walk

By Theo and Stephen Kozil



There were 29 walkers of all different ages from our church including Father Athanasios and Presbytera, several of our Sunday School children and even our Yiayia, as well as others. We walked 5 laps around the inside of the Yorktown Mall to raise money for St. Jude's. On our walk we got to sample Cinnabons and there were people cheering us on and passing out water. Every lap we finished we got a different colored silly band. Our Assumption team raised closed to \$1100 for the St. Jude's research organization. It was a good experience for us since we had never done that before. There were a lot of people walking for St. Jude's. We would try and encourage even more of our church members to come and join us next year. It is a great cause.

Metropolis Youth Choir Conference

By Madeline Szubert

This year about 40 kids, between ages 6 and 18, compiled together at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church in Elgin in October to make up a choir that would sing during church service. This conference took place over a full weekend, and on Sunday morning we put all our hard work together and helped out in the service in which Bishop Demetrios was present. Starting early Saturday morning, our group (St. Nick's of St. Louis, St. Sophia, and Assumption) meshed together real well and went up into the choir loft and started running through hymns. We were under the directory of St. Nick's director, and accompanied by Assumption's very own organist, Ms. Maria. We went through day and worked on our parts (we were split into soprano, alto, tenor, and bass), and sang different versions than what we were used to. At lunch break, all three churches went outside and played volleyball and soccer in the parking lot/field and then we got back to work. Later in the evening, I had to leave but my new friends told me that they had played fun games and had races and a bonfire. On Sunday, we got there bright and early and ran through service and we sounded amazing; we got multiple compliments and were a success. Following, there was a luncheon where the families could eat and the kids got to hang a little more before having to leave. Bishop Demetrios and Father Andrew (St. Sophia) dined with us, as well as their families. It was a very beautiful weekend and I am definitely going to do it next year. I also think everyone should join me! You make new friends, and you even learn more about your faith and about yourself.

Winter Fitness

By Sophia Szubert

Hello all, and Merry Christmas!!! I have found a few ways that can help all of us stay fit during the winter and I would like to share them with you. If it is too cold to go outside, try going to an indoor pool or a bowling alley. If you have a gaming console like Wii, research shows that games like Boxing and Dancing Games are a good way to keep fit. Take the stairs instead of an elevator or escalator when you're at a store, the mall, or for adults, at work. Finally, you could sign up for yoga or Pilates.

If you're able to go outside for a little while, try to take a walk, a hike, or a short run. Skating, skiing, or snowboarding also provide good exercise.

Remember to keep your snacks healthy, like apples, yogurt, wheat crackers, and veggies. Drink plenty of water and save drinks like hot chocolate for a special treat. I hope these ideas sound interesting to you. I know I am definitely going to try them myself. Merry Christmas and have a happy and healthy New Year.



Where's Cardboard Dean?

By Marisa Arvanites

One Friday morning a few months back my sister and I woke up to find a cardboard cut out of Mr. Sarantos in our family room. My parents adopted/purchased him at the Grand Raffle. We still don't really know why.

However, we have come to enjoy him and actually think it's quite fun to have him around. My mom thought it would be cool to adopt him as our Sunday School mascot and have him visit classes, which means we have to take him on our car ride to church, this also means our ride is not as roomy.

We have also taken him to various events and there's even been mention that he will be in our family Christmas card. I figure if I have to put up with all that, then I could use him to my own advantage too. So, when my parents tell me that I need to make my bed or clean my room, I just ask "Cardboard Dean" if he agrees, he doesn't answer, so I guess that means no.

So far he's visited my class as we packed goodies for our Seminarian friends. He's even been to our Decorate the Hall. I wonder where he will visit next, maybe your class???

Adopt A Seminary Student

By George Sarantos

The Church adopted students from the Holy Cross Seminary to send a box of stuff to so we could make them feel better because we were thinking about them. To fill the box, we made chocolate chip cookies on a Sunday during Sunday School. Some of the 7th and 8th grade class students also made cards. We put candy in the box too. It was fun making the cookies and it was rewarding to do the right thing and make someone feel good.



A Season to Help Others

By Jayne Jurasek

There are lots of ways to help out others during Christmas time. Our church recently has helped out others by donating toys to DCFS and Loretto Hospital. It made me feel good to buy a gift for a girl my own age; I hope it makes her feel happy. Also, we are having a food drive which will collect food and donate it to the families in need. We always have a great dinner at my Yiyia's house on Christmas day. Bringing food for others will help them have a nice Christmas meal too. When you think about what we are celebrating during the holidays, the birth of Jesus Christ, we remember how much He has given for us. I think by helping others we are taking a step up the ladder, closer to Jesus. Try to help someone in need during Christmas time and all the time so we can be good Christians. Happy Holidays and God bless everyone!!!

INFO

Assumption Greek Orthodox Church
601 S. Central Avenue
Chicago, IL 60644

Phone: 773-626-3113
Fax: 773-626-3141

HOURS
MATINS — 8:30 AM
DIVINE LITURGY—
9:45 AM

We're on the web!

www.assumptionchicago.org

The St. Catherine's Newsletter was created in 2007 by a Sunday School student. It serves to inform, educate, and entertain the children of the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church community. All are welcome and encouraged to contribute to the newsletter. If you are interested in writing an article, sending in a self written piece of work, or just for more information... PLEASE CONTACT:
Very Rev. Fr. Timothy Bakakos —
FrTimothy@assumptionchicago.org
or Dr. Evie Maggos — demags@aol.com

Merry Christmas!

Artwork by
Georgia Becker

MAIL TO:

