

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

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St. Raphael School Journal



Newsletter
Special Christmas Edition 2019

A Note From the Newsletter Team

Dear Readers,



Christ is born! Glorify Him! We pray this season is filled with joy and gladness for you and your family. As the world is being filled with Christmas lights, we must prepare our hearts to be filled with the glory of Christ's Light.

Last year, the newsletter team created a special Christmas edition of the newsletter in order to introduce themselves and talk about their Christmas traditions. The team has changed in the past year, and so we decided to write another Christmas edition. Because the team members come from various states, we thought it would be nice to take a moment and talk about each of our Christmases from around the country. In this Christmas edition, we have included a section for each person as well as a couple of joint columns. Each team member has an autobiography, a topic of interest, and a Q&A section. Our hope is that our readers will get to know us better and help spread the popularity of the Newsletter!

We would also like to dedicate this special edition to all the wonderful people who have provided their approval, opinion, and support. We thank Ms. Joelle Hodge for her assistance with the Journal, Mr. Adam Lockridge for his assistance in beginning the newsletter (nearly two years ago!), Presbytera Maria Koulianos for her exceptional editing skills and input of suggestions, and Fr. Noah Bushelli for presenting supporting the idea of a newsletter as a Service Project all the way back in 2017, and for his priceless and much appreciated prayers and guidance. Lastly, we would like to thank our beautiful and extraordinary St. Raphael School teachers. You have taught us so very much through your instruction, and deeply blessed and enriched our lives. Thank you to all for offering your support and encouragement.

Also, thank you to our readers who make writing the Newsletter so much more enjoyable! God bless you all, and Blessed Nativity!

~Samantha Woolman, John Dye, Thea Frederick, Andrea Woolman, and Elyse Hawkins

St. Raphael School Journal

The Nativity of Our Lord



Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has
been opened to all!

Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the
tree of life blossoms forth from the
Virgin in the cave!

Her womb is a spiritual paradise
planted with the Divine Fruit: If we eat
of it, we shall live forever and not die
like Adam.

Christ comes to restore the image
which He made in the beginning!

- Troparion, Tone 4

Homily for Christmas

It was fitting that the Giver of all holiness
should enter this world by a pure and holy
birth. For He it is that of old formed Adam
from the virgin earth, and from Adam
without help of woman formed woman.

For as without woman Adam produced
woman, so did the Virgin without man this
day bring forth a man. For it is a man, saith
the Lord, and who shall know him [Jer.
17:9]. For since the race of women owed
to men a debt, as from Adam without
woman woman came, therefore without
man the Virgin this day brought forth, and
on behalf of Eve repaid the debt to man.

That Adam might not take pride, that he
without woman had engendered woman,
a woman without man has begotten man;
so that by the similarity of the mystery is
proved the similarity in nature. For as
before the Almighty took a rib from
Adam, and by that Adam was not made
less; so in the Virgin He formed a living
temple, and the holy virginity remained
unchanged. Sound and unharmed Adam
remained even after the deprivation of a
rib; unstained the Virgin though a Child
was born of her.

St. John Chrysostom

Note From the Editor

Dear St. Raphael students, parents, and everyone else, thank you for checking out our newsletter. We have been greatly blessed to have such amazing support from SRS teachers and staff. We couldn't have done this without them. Thank you!

Elyse Hawkins
Managing Editor & Website Coordinator
St. Raphael School Journal

Andrea's Column

A Christmas Interview

Q. What is your favorite Christmas scent?

A. My favorite Christmas scent is the warm smell of baked goods and greenery combined!

Q. What is your favorite Christmas story?

A. The original Nativity story, as well as A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens.

Q. What is your favorite Christmas movie?

A. White Christmas! The music score is delightful and never grows old.

Q. What is your favorite Christmas song?

A. It is impossible to choose a favorite Christmas song, but to name a few special ones: I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day, I Wonder As I Wander, and, of course, the Nativity hymns.

Q. What is your favorite Christmas dessert?

A. Kringle!

Q. What is the best Christmas gift you have ever given?

A. Shhhhh! You know it is against the rules to tell what a gift is before it's given!!

Q. Do you have a favorite church or community activity that you enjoy around Christmas?

A. My church always has a potluck after the Nativity liturgy, and it is always fun to celebrate and try everyone's favorite Christmas specialties!

Andrea Woolman



Column Writer

"...and music is before all other arts the awakening of the heart."

- Baroness Marenholz-Bulow

Get to Know the Team

On January 10th, 2004, Mr. and Mrs. Woolman were blessed with the arrival of their second daughter, a happy, if slightly scrawny, child. They named her Andrea Woolman. Over the first few years of her life, Andrea developed a passionate love for books. Like the Hobbits she so adored, Andrea quickly acquired the skill of quietly and stealthily disappearing for hours at a time with a book in-hand. Eventually, when her family would look for her, she was usually tucked away in some corner, bleary eyed and content to the highest degree.

Although it took some time, Andrea's interests eventually expanded to things other than books, and she uncovered her love of music. She began to take voice lessons and joined her church's choir. Several years later, Andrea also started taking violin lessons. Music became an integral part of her life; a part that would prove itself to be as rewarding and wonderful as it was frustrating.

Andrea's plans for the future are unclear and foggy. As with many youths her age, it is anyone's guess what she shall choose to do. Only one thing is clear: "Live Long and Prosper!"



Andrea's Column



Kringla



By Andrea Woolman

Each year, the Christmas season is filled with the wonderful aroma of baked goods and sweets. For as long as I can remember, my grandma has always baked kringla for Christmas. This wonderful Norwegian cookie is a great favorite among my family. Although the recipe can be a bit tricky and time consuming, the difficulties all pay off in the end!

1 1/2 cups sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 cup butter (room temp.)
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 egg
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup buttermilk
2 teaspoons vanilla
4 cups flour

Blend well together. Leave in bowl. Cover with wax paper and leave in refrigerator overnight. Roll dough in walnut size balls and roll long enough to form a figure eight. Place on parchment paper covered baking sheet. Bake at 400 degrees for 10-12 minutes. Brush with cold water after baking. Makes five to six dozen...depending on how much dough you eat! ;)

Serve with butter.

John's Column

John Dye



Column Writer

“Behold, I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be cowardly or fearful, for the Lord your God is with you in all things, wherever you go.”
- Joshua 1:9

Get to Know the Team

Hello! My name is John Dye. I have a wide variety of interests and hobbies, including but not limited to, playing piano and guitar, very amateur photography, basketball, watching and playing football, and hanging out with friends. If you ever need any advice or a friend, my email is listed on my Schoology bio. Blessed Feast! Merry Christmas!



A Favorite Christmas Tradition



By John Dye

One favorite thing of mine about the Christmas season is the many decorations my family brings out annually. Besides the vast array of collectible Santa dolls scattered around the room, there are also several medium-sized trees, upon which we hang “special ornaments.” These are usually more fragile and important than ordinary ornaments. Every year we receive one, so one can imagine the sheer number of ornaments collected over twenty years and ten children of various ages. Something about them is special, whether it is just the tradition of having them each year or the noteworthy place they hold, I do not know., but a year without them would be incomplete.

John's Column

A Christmas Interview

Q. What does Christmas and the Nativity Season mean to you?

A. For me, Nativity is a season of cleansing, giving, and togetherness. I recently heard a homily about how we are to give our sins to Christ, so that we may be healed. In the same way, it is imperative (for me at least) to give time, appreciation, and any number of things to others.

What is your favorite Christmas movie?

A. Without a doubt, Elf is my favorite holiday movie. It's hilarious and lighthearted, making it the perfect family movie. No matter what time of the year it is, my siblings and I recall scenes from it, considering it has become an annual tradition to watch it as a family.

What is your favorite Christmas activity that you do with your family?

A. There isn't really a specific activity that is a favorite- the best thing, in my opinion, is everyone just being together. I have five siblings in college, and one who's married and has his own family, so it's nice to reunite with siblings from all over!

Do you have a favorite church or community activity that you enjoy around Christmas?

A. The services of Nativity are a particular favorite of mine. The late-night services have a charm about them that hearkens to a sweeter time from long ago that can't quite be pinpointed.

Thea's Column

Get to Know the Team

My name is Thea Frederick. I am fifteen and I live in Denton, Texas where I also go to church at Saint Maximus OCA church. I have been taking classes from Saint Raphael's for three years and have greatly enjoyed it! When I am not doing school I like reading (Dickens, Austen, Lewis, L. M. Montgomery, and L. M. Alcott are some of my favorite authors), rock climbing at our local gym, baking, and daydreaming about the English and Irish countryside. I also enjoy playing violin and singing in our church choir.



Thea Frederick



Column Writer

"If you have the strength to be thankful in troubles then that is when the Holy Spirit shines through you."

- Elder Arsenie

Book Review and Reflection on the Story of *The Snow Queen*

The Snow Queen by Hans Christian Anderson is a story about love and our battle against Satan. The story starts by telling how the devil created a mirror that distorted the appearance of things and made what is good seem bad and bad seem good. When the demons were carrying this mirror it fell and shattered. Now in a city there lived a boy and girl by the names of Kai and Gerta. They were the best of friends. But one day two slivers of the mirror entered into Kai. One in his eye, the other in his heart. This distorted his sight for things beautiful and turned his heart to ice. After that he was no longer kind to Gerta. Once, when playing with the other boys he tied his sled to the snow queen's sled and she carried him away to her palace. Everyone thought Kai dead but Gerta did not believe it. She started on her journey to find him and went through many hardships to do so, but she never gave up. Finally, she reached him and unfroze his heart with her tears of love and he washed the glass out of his eye with his own tears. When they finally reached home together they had grown up. This story is a beautiful testimonial to the strength of love and how we must resist the evil and perverted thoughts that Satan puts in our minds. With love we can resist those thoughts.

In *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives*, Elder Thaddeus says "Our life depends on the kind of thoughts we nurture. If our thoughts are peaceful, calm, meek, and kind, then that is what our life is like. If our attention is turned to the circumstances in which we live, we are drawn into a whirlpool of thoughts and can have neither peace nor tranquility." And Saint Porphyrios says "When a bad or gloomy thought, fear or temptation threatens to afflict you, don't fight it to try and get rid of it. Open your arms to Christ's love and He will embrace you, then it will vanish by itself." *The Snow Queen* seems to reflect this. Satan takes great joy in distorting our understanding of what is good, true, and beautiful. He never ceases trying to bring us down to his level and sin against God and our fellow man. But we must not give those thoughts a resting place in our minds and hearts, because as Elder Thaddeus puts it "It is not good to dwell on every thought that comes to us; otherwise we lose our peace."

Thus, the story of Kai and Gerta can serve as a reminder to us, to not let shards of Satan's mirror enter our hearts, eyes, and minds, so that we may continue in love, joy, and peace. I would definitely recommend reading this story.

Ghea's Column

A Christmas Interview

Q. What does Christmas and the Nativity Season mean to you?

A. The Nativity Season is a good time for me to reflect on God's infinite love for mankind by sending His only Son to die for us, it is really quite sobering to realize the greatness of His love.

Q. What is your favorite Christmas scent?

A. I think my favorite Christmas scent is either the Christmas food and drinks being prepared (the pies and cookies and apple cider, etc.) or it is the fresh cold winter air when I step outside...or the Christmas tree... :-D

Q. What is your favorite Christmas Story?

A. I like *The Snow Queen* and *A Christmas Carol*.

Q. What is your favorite Christmas movie?

A. Well, I can't think of many movies that are our family's traditional Christmas time movies, so I guess I would just say *A Christmas Carol*. But if I am being completely honest I don't really have one. :-D

Q. What is your favorite Christmas song?

A. That's hard...very hard...I really like *Star in the East* and the Nativity troparion (in Byzantine chant).

Q. What is your favorite Christmas dessert?

A. I think my favorite desert for this time of year would have to be either pie or panatone.

Q. What is the best Christmas gift you have ever given?

A. Hmm...I don't know. Probably a photo book of our trip to New York City which I gave to my godparents (with whom we went).

Q. What is your favorite Christmas activity that you do with your family?

A. On Christmas my family and I go to my grandma's but the day after that we relax and open presents at home and have a big Christmas dinner, which I really enjoy.

Q. Do you have a favorite church or community activity that you enjoy around Christmas?

A. Our church has a children's choir and we go caroling at a nursing home but also at the houses of some of our senior parishioners.



Samantha's Column

Samantha Woolman



Column Writer

And so let us be glad and bear with patience everything the world throws at us, secure in the knowledge that it is then that we are most in the mind of God.”

- St. Basil the Great

Get to Know the Team

My name is Samantha Woolman. I live in the Midwest, am the eldest of my siblings, and am a senior in high school. While completing my schooling at home, I'm simultaneously studying to become a Certified Nurse Assistant by the time I graduate. My favorite subjects in school include theology, philosophy, literature, history, logic, and medical terminology.

I've been taking classes within St. Raphael School for six years. In this, my final year, I'm taking the senior thesis class along with being enrolled in Schole Academy.

My dream is to one day become a midwife, and I love studying herbology, alternative medicine, and anatomy. My hobbies are, I presume, pretty typical and include reading, gardening, and cooking.

A Christmas Interview

Q: What is your favorite Christmas scent?

A: My favorite Christmas scent is the homey aroma my grandparents' house takes on during the time we celebrate Christmas there...greenery, cinnamon, and delicious cooking.

Q: What is your favorite Christmas story?

A: My favorite Christmas story is the Nativity Story, but A Tale of Three Trees is second.

Q: What is your favorite Christmas movie?

A: My family has a tradition of watching White Christmas each year on Christmas Eve. By now, it's nearly memorized!

Q: What is your favorite Christmas song?

A: All of the Nativity hymns!

Q: What is your favorite Christmas dessert?

A: My favorite Christmas desserts is kringla, a Norwegian cookie. It's soft and fluffy, slightly sweet, and baked in the shape of a figure 8.

Q: What is the best Christmas gift you have ever given?

A: It's to be given this year, and the reader might see this. So onward to the next question!

Q: Do you have a favorite church or community activity that you enjoy around Christmas?

A: The choir practice, Nativity service, and feast afterwards.

Samantha's Column

The Tale of Three Trees

Beginning when I was very small and young, my parents read books out loud to me and my sisters. They began with very simple books, of course, and eventually moved to more complex stories. There were a few beloved Christmas stories which I loved, and *The Tale of Three Trees* was one of those. It is an old folktale, and the original author is unknown.

The story relates the tale of three little trees that, while growing up upon a mountain, think about what they want to become when they grow into tall, strong trees. The first desires to become a treasure chest to hold precious and beautiful treasure. The second wants to be a ship and carry mighty kings across swift waters. The third wishes to grow into the tallest tree and stay on the mountain so that people would be reminded of God when they looked upon it.

The saplings grow into big trees, and on day three woodcutters come to the mountain. Commenting on how beautiful the first tree was, the first woodcutter chops it down. Noting how strong the second tree was, the second woodcutter fells the second tree. The third woodcutter doesn't look at the third tree as he cuts it. The first two trees look forward expectantly, eager to see their dreams come true. The third tree, however, is disappointed that it is not going to stand on the mountain forever.

The first tree is made into a plain feedbox for animals. The second tree is made into a fishing boat. The third tree is made into beams and left alone. Time passes, and the three trees almost lose sight of their dreams. Then one night a newborn baby is placed in the first tree. The feed box, or manger, knew he was holding the most precious treasure in the world. Sometime later, the second tree carries a load of men onto the sea when the water becomes stormy. One of the men tells the waters to quiet, and the storm subsides. The second tree knew he was carrying the most powerful King. On day the third tree is carried through the noisy streets by a man. The man is then nailed to its beams. The tree felt ugly and severe. Three days later, the sun rose and things were changed. God's love made first tree beautiful and the second tree strong. When people looked upon the third tree, in the shape of a cross, they thought of God.

Besides the actual Nativity story, this is my favorite children's book. I shan't say too much about it, because I find there is a lovely, mysterious element to it. It brings back memories of Christmases gone by, and I think it's a nice way of showing how the simplest, plainest things can bring the most beauty. The perfect and glorious Son of God walked the earth as a humble man; let us do our best to follow His example.



Elyse's Column

Get to Know the Team

My name is Elyse Hawkins, and I live in a fairly small college town in rural Oklahoma. I am the oldest of 6 kids, the youngest being only a year old. I am in my senior year of high school, and will soon be turning 18.

As for extracurricular activities: I have a number of them. I do enjoy spending time working on projects at Church. I also spend a lot of time helping my mom operate our private homeschool library.

I have a number of hobbies, the majority which I imagine would be extremely dull for most people, not to mention other teenagers. I love to read and enjoy writing, playing the piano, cross-stitching, quilting, studying, and cooking for my family.

We will see what God leads me to do in my life. I'd like to say that I have it figured out, but I don't. I'm in the process of deciding on a college and there's no telling where I will be a year from now.

Elyse Hawkins



Managing Editor
Website Coordinator

“Acquire the Spirit of Peace and a thousand souls around you shall be saved.”

- St. Seraphim of Sarov

Homemade Hot Chocolate Mix – In a Jar

By Elyse Hawkins

- ¾ cup dry milk powder
- ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ¾ cup powdered sugar
- 2 Tbl. milk chocolate chips
- 2 Tbl. crushed candy canes and/or mint baking chips
- ½ cup mini marshmallows

Instructions:

Layer the dry milk powder, cocoa powder, and powdered sugar in that order in the bottom of a pint-sized wide-mouth mason jar (or any other jar you have on hand).

Next, add the chocolate chips and candy canes. Place the mini marshmallows on top to fill the rest of the jar (you can add more marshmallows if necessary). Add a lid and attach **this** printable recipe card. I actually used Mod Podge to attach the label directly to the jar, but there are many different ways you can attach it. Add some ribbon and decorations that will make this a great present for any friends or family around the holiday season.

You May View the Photos From This Project [Here](#)

Elyse's Column

A Christmas Interview

Q. What is your favorite Christmas scent?

A. Of course there are all the good scents from candles, baking, and more, but I would definitely have to say the scent of cinnamon. Around the holidays my family will put a pot of orange peels, cinnamon sticks, lemon juice, and cloves to simmer on the stove, which gives even the simplest tasks a very festive air.

Q. What is your favorite Christmas story?

A. Of course, you mean aside from the most original Nativity story of all;) Going on that assumption, it's so hard to pick just one story because there are so many good ones! *An Amish Christmas*, *The Polar Express*, *The Candymaker's Gift*, and *The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey* are all picture books that I'm not ashamed to admit that I look forward to every year. Then, of course, there's *Hercule Poirot's Christmas*, *The Christmas Carol*, *Little House on the Prairie Christmas*, and so many others. Even with all these options, I would have to say that *The Gift of the Magi* is definitely my favorite.

Q. What is your favorite Christmas movie?

A. *Miracle of 34th Street* and *White Christmas* are my favorite Christmas movies. These are both movies that are usually watched multiple times throughout the holidays in my family.

Q. What is your favorite Christmas song?

A. *Good King Wenceslas* or *We Three Kings*.

Q. What is your favorite Christmas dessert?

A. Monkey bread, which we make on Christmas Eve and eat as a Midnight snack after returning from Church.

Q. What is the best Christmas gift you have ever given?

A. I gave an Orthodox friend of mine a notebook that had just about every Ryan Gosling Orthodox pickup line meme pasted into it that exists. It was SUCH a fun gift.

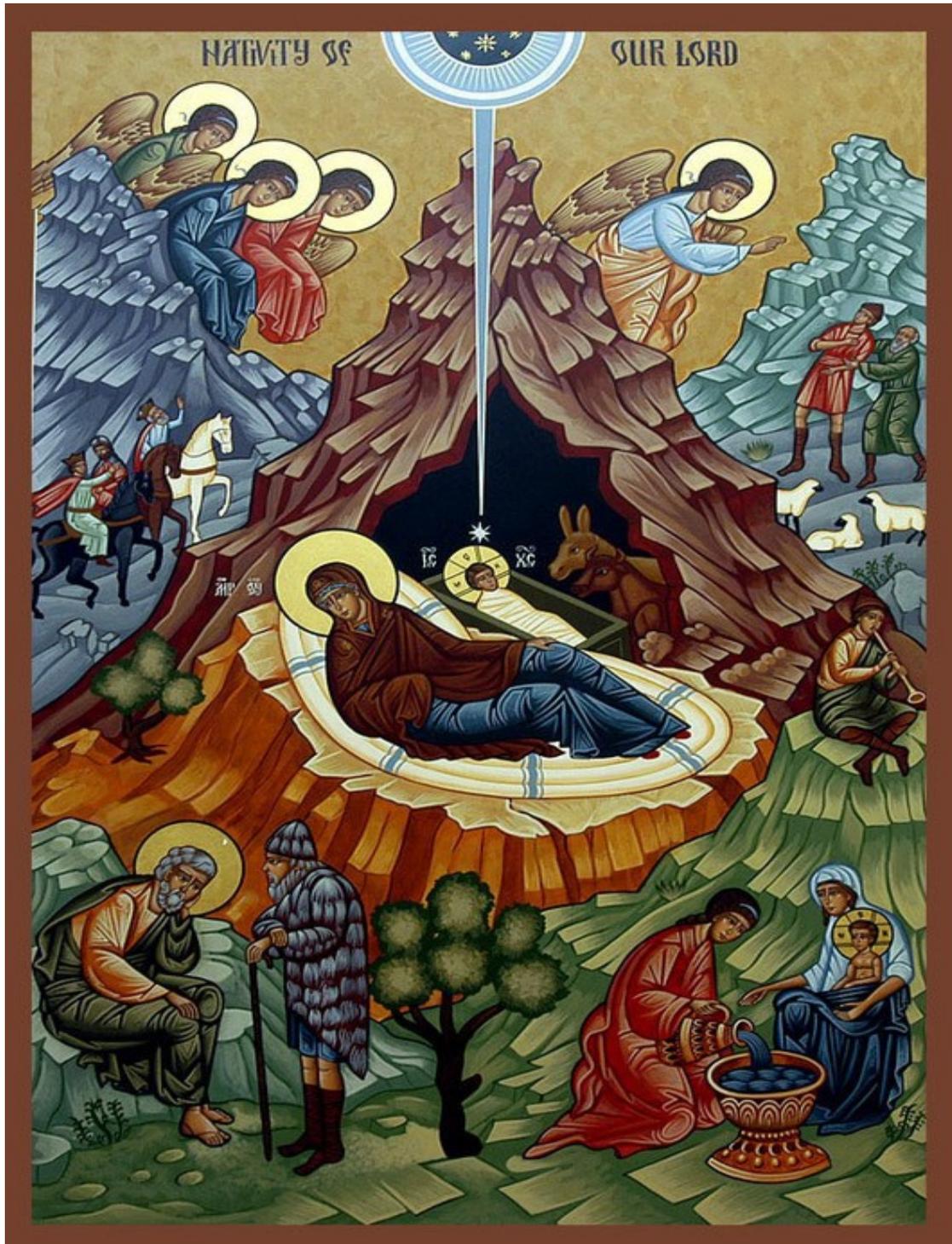
Q. What is your favorite Christmas activity that you do with your family?

A. Every Christmas Eve my parents give each of us kids a Christmas ornament. This ornament is personal to that person and year. As an example, for one of my ornaments, I was doing ballet that year so I received a ballet slipper ornament. This is something my siblings and I continue to look forward to every year.

Q. Do you have a favorite church or community activity that you enjoy around Christmas?

A. Every year my family takes plates of Christmas cookies to all of our local friends as well as members of the community like the police department, the fire department, the local library, among others. This is always a very fun and interesting experience. Another thing I look forward to is our church's Christmas service that is held late the night of Christmas Eve. My parish also always plans a very large feast for after the Christmas service to break the Nativity fast.





A Special Note From the Editor

Thank you for checking out this special Christmas Edition of St. Raphael's Newsletter. The Newsletter Team would like to wish you all once again a Blessed Nativity and a very Happy New Year.

Christ is Born! Let Us All Glorify Him!