

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

St. Raphael School Journal

Visit our
Website here

Newsletter
December 2023



Kontakion of St. Raphael the Bishop of Brooklyn

You were a guardian and a defender of the Church's teaching: you protected your flock from false doctrines and confirmed them in the true faith. O holy father Raphael, son of Syria and glory of North America, always intercede before the Lord that our souls may be saved.

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Welcome to the December edition of the newsletter! Inside you will find beautifully written columns, two outstanding student submissions and so much more to spread the Christmas cheer! **Furthermore**, look for the exciting **poll** open to **all** our readers on page **FIVE!** We look forward to your feedback!

The Newsletter is open and ready for submissions!

Do you have questions for a spiritual father, a piece of artwork for the Fine Arts page, or an assignment you are proud of? Send it on in! We'd love to see what you've got.

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Praying List

Living

Fr. Peter

Eleousa

Phyllis

Lynn

Joseph

Linda

Andrew

Departed

Barbara Joy

Suzan

Elliot

Timothy

Fr.

Porphyrios

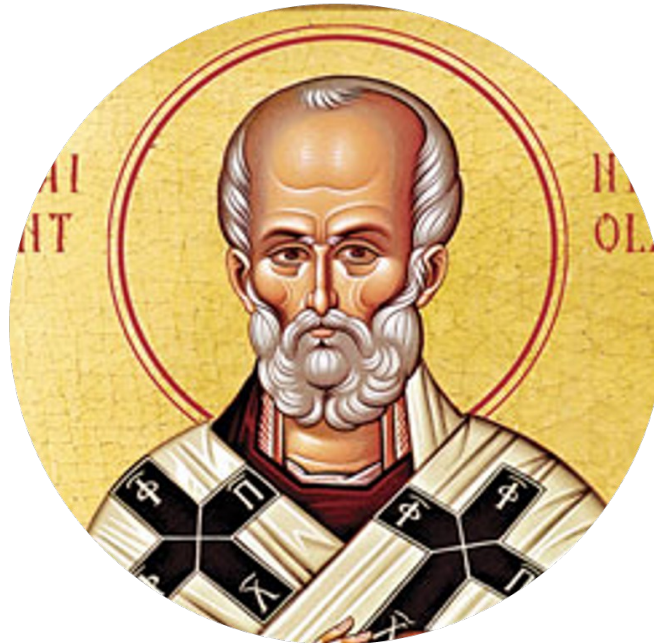
Fr. Abraham

Anna

“God is a fire that warms and kindles the heart and inward parts. Hence, if we feel in our hearts the cold which comes from the devil - for the devil is cold - let us call on the Lord. He will come to warm our hearts with perfect love, not only for Him but also for our neighbor, and the cold of him who hates the good will flee before the heat of His countenance.”

-SERAPHIM OF SAROV

SAINT NICHOLAS THE WONDER-WORKER



Troparion

The truth of things revealed you to your flock as a rule of faith, / a model of meekness, and a teacher of temperance. / Through humility, you attained the heights; / and through poverty, riches. / O Father and Hierarch Nicholas, intercede with Christ God that our souls may be saved.

Feasts of the Month

December 2

St. Solomon,
Archbishop of
Ephesus.

December 6

St. Nicholas the
Wonder-Worker

December 12

St. Spyridon the
Wonderworker of
Tremithon.

December 23

St. Paul, Bishop of
Neo Caesarea.

December 25

The Blessed
Nativity

December 30

Virgin Martyr
Anysia at
Thessalonica.

Note from the Editor

Dear St. Raphael Journal readers, thank you for checking out our newsletter! It wouldn't be possible without all the amazing support from SRS teachers and staff. If you would like to see more student submissions, please explore the St. Raphael School Journal Website. *To submit names for the prayer list or a student submission, email the Newsletter team* here.

Gen Bell
Managing Editor & Website Coordinator

The Christmas Rush

By Anastasia Fahey

“What do you want for Christmas this year?”

“I still have Christmas shopping to do.”

“Are the guest rooms ready?”

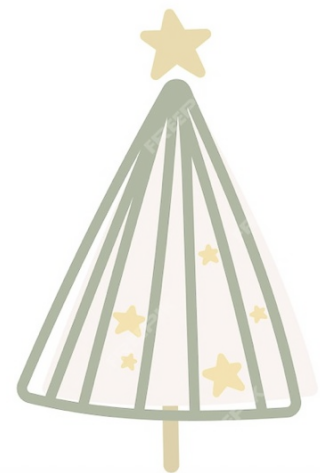
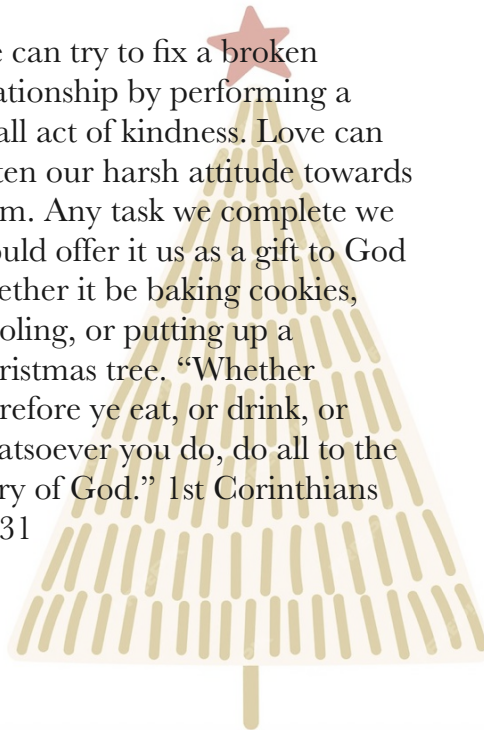
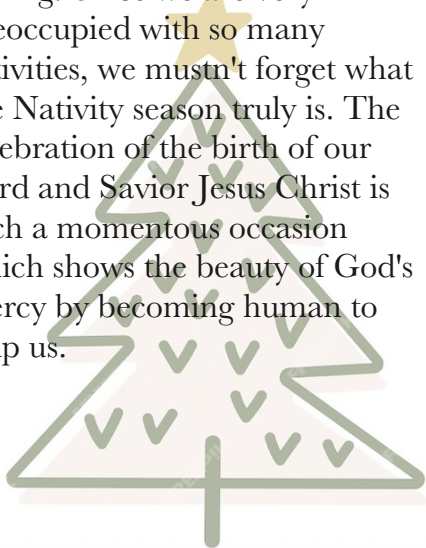
These are some comments we hear around this time of year. With this festive season in progress we get whirled about everything that must be done. It all starts before Thanksgiving when Christmas products begin popping up in stores. Next, are bombarded with ads to get ahead on Christmas shopping. If you have a large family then purchasing gifts can be a daunting task. Hosting for families or friends coming into town takes some strategic planning. And with so many flavors associated around the holidays it seems we never stop baking. Since we are very preoccupied with so many activities, we mustn't forget what the Nativity season truly is. The celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is such a momentous occasion which shows the beauty of God's mercy by becoming human to help us.

We should do everything in accordance with His birth, so as to be prepared for this feast. It is the season of giving. We should take any opportunity available to help someone less fortunate than ourselves. If a family is struggling financially we could offer assistance. Cooking a meal for a mother who just had a child is another way to sacrifice. I'm sure we have all seen a homeless person or two. Now is the chance to feed and clothe the hungry. Maybe some of us aren't on the best terms with one of our family members.

With the rest of the nativity fast in our hands let us help our neighbors, put aside our selfish desires, and prepare ourselves for the upcoming feast. Enjoy time spent with friends and family, rather than stress how we will arrange everything. Remember that we are not promised tomorrow. Most importantly anticipate the wondrous birth of Christ!

“Love can soften our harsh attitude towards them.”

We can try to fix a broken relationship by performing a small act of kindness. Love can soften our harsh attitude towards them. Any task we complete we should offer it up as a gift to God whether it be baking cookies, caroling, or putting up a Christmas tree. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1st Corinthians 10:31



Once Upon A Time

Once Upon A December

By Mary Kjendal

Once upon a time there was a little girl. Mila shivered as the biting wind that blew around the corner cut through her thin clothes and torn coat as if they weren't there at all. Her teeth chattered and she sat on her hands to keep them out of the cold as best she could. People bustled by her as she sat in an empty doorway. Though she looked up into all of their faces, not one glanced back at her. Most of them walked with their heads down, dreary frowns on their faces. Mila sighed. Look how easy it is to be unhappy when you have everything, she thought. And how hard it can be to be happy when you have nothing.

She looked across the busy street that resounded with the noise of horse hooves and carriage wheels, and she gazed longingly into the glowing windows of the bakery that sat on the other side of the rushing road. Even though the smells of the city were overpowering, Mila still caught a whiff of freshly baked bread and sweet pastries as the door jingled and a customer stepped out.

The customer was dressed in a wine-coloured velvet dress, and a fur cape was draped around her shoulders. Her hands were nestled in a white muff, and her black hair cascaded out from under a large hat that had a red rose tucked into its brim.

Mila gasped as she caught sight of the lady. "She's an angel," she whispered, in awe. She imagined feeling the soft velvet touch her fingers. She closed her eyes and sat, forgetting for just a moment how cold the stone doorstep was and how wet the softly falling snow was making her. Her nose was running and she sniffed. Mila smiled as she imagined the smell of flowers and a trace of vanilla. She opened her eyes and saw in front of her the lady that had come out of the bakery a minute before. The lady drew a smooth, ivory hand out of her muff and reached into her handbag. She held out a delicate lace handkerchief that sparkled along the edges and was embroidered with the letters VHS. Mila blinked and shook her head. "I can't take it, miss. It's too lovely." Her voice came out hoarse and she coughed as she finished speaking.

She looked down at her grubby hands and sniffed again from the cold.

The lady said nothing but let go of the handkerchief and Mila watched in fascination as it danced and glittered as it fluttered down to the dirty sidewalk. Just before it could touch the ground, Mila reached out her hand and caught it with her numb fingers. "Thank you, miss," she breathed. She wiped her dirty nose with the lace handkerchief and smiled up at the lady. The lady looked down at Mila and frowned. "That won't do." She reached for her handkerchief that was crumpled in Mila's hand but hesitated and dug in her bag for another one, and with this she wiped Mila's face clean. "I suppose it's a bit better. I'll be off now, or else I'll be awfully late. Your name?"

"Mila, if you please, miss."

"It's Mila whether or not it pleases me. I am Victoria." She turned to walk away; her velvet dress rustled, and the heels of her shoes clicked resolutely on the pavement.

Before the lady disappeared, Mila cried out, "Miss! If you please!" Victoria turned around to look back at her.

"Please, miss," Mila began shyly, "Could I just feel your skirt? It looks so soft and lovely and..." Mila trailed off as she looked down at her own coarse clothing. Victoria gazed softly at the small figure huddling on the doorstep and drew her hands once more out of her muff.

"Here, child," she said, handing Mila her muff. "Lord knows you need it more than I do."

Mila was speechless as her rough fingers caressed the soft muff and stroked the white fur. Her tired eyes shone with happiness as she touched the only Christmas gift she'd ever gotten.

Victoria's heart warmed ever so slightly when she saw the upturned face looking at her with such love and adoration. She tried to shake the feeling, though, as she turned away without a word. But as she looked back at the penniless girl, her lip quivered ever so slightly.

Student Submissions

Advertisement

Graphics By **Mary Kjendal & Theodora Ciuca**

*Hello
Our Beloved Readers!*

As Christmas approaches, we wanted to do something special for you, so our team has come up with a Christmas Poll in which we have some questions for you to answer. We will then release the Poll results in the Christmas Edition. We look forward to your responses!



Here is the poll:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfykkFk0ZNNqIsL2qf3JCU3a_Ni_CBOVZm8KfLxgMXlqrJOG/viewform?usp=sf_link

Can't wait to see your responses!

Student Submissions

Advertisement

CLASS ADVOCATE POSITION

IF YOU ARE IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CLASSES:

February (Sciences):

Astronomy and Holy Scripture: The Heavens Declare

March (Arts and Theater):

Iconography Apprenticeship

Byzantine Chant

Poetry Explorer

Christian Theatrical Arts

Fundamentals of Carpatho-Rusyn Plain Chant

Christian Theatrical Arts

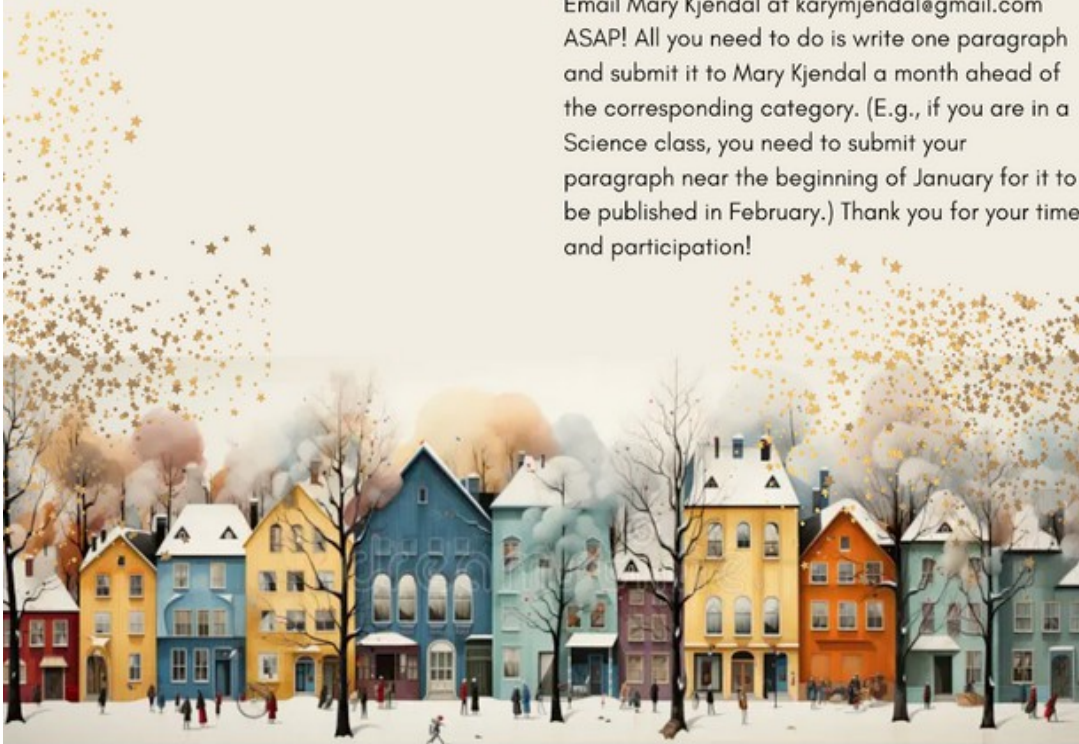
Christian Themes in Popular Films

April (Languages):

Greek, Russian, and Arabic, any level

If you are in any of the classes listed above, we would love for you to send in a paragraph about your class to be published in the newsletter.

Email Mary Kjendal at karymjendal@gmail.com ASAP! All you need to do is write one paragraph and submit it to Mary Kjendal a month ahead of the corresponding category. (E.g., if you are in a Science class, you need to submit your paragraph near the beginning of January for it to be published in February.) Thank you for your time and participation!

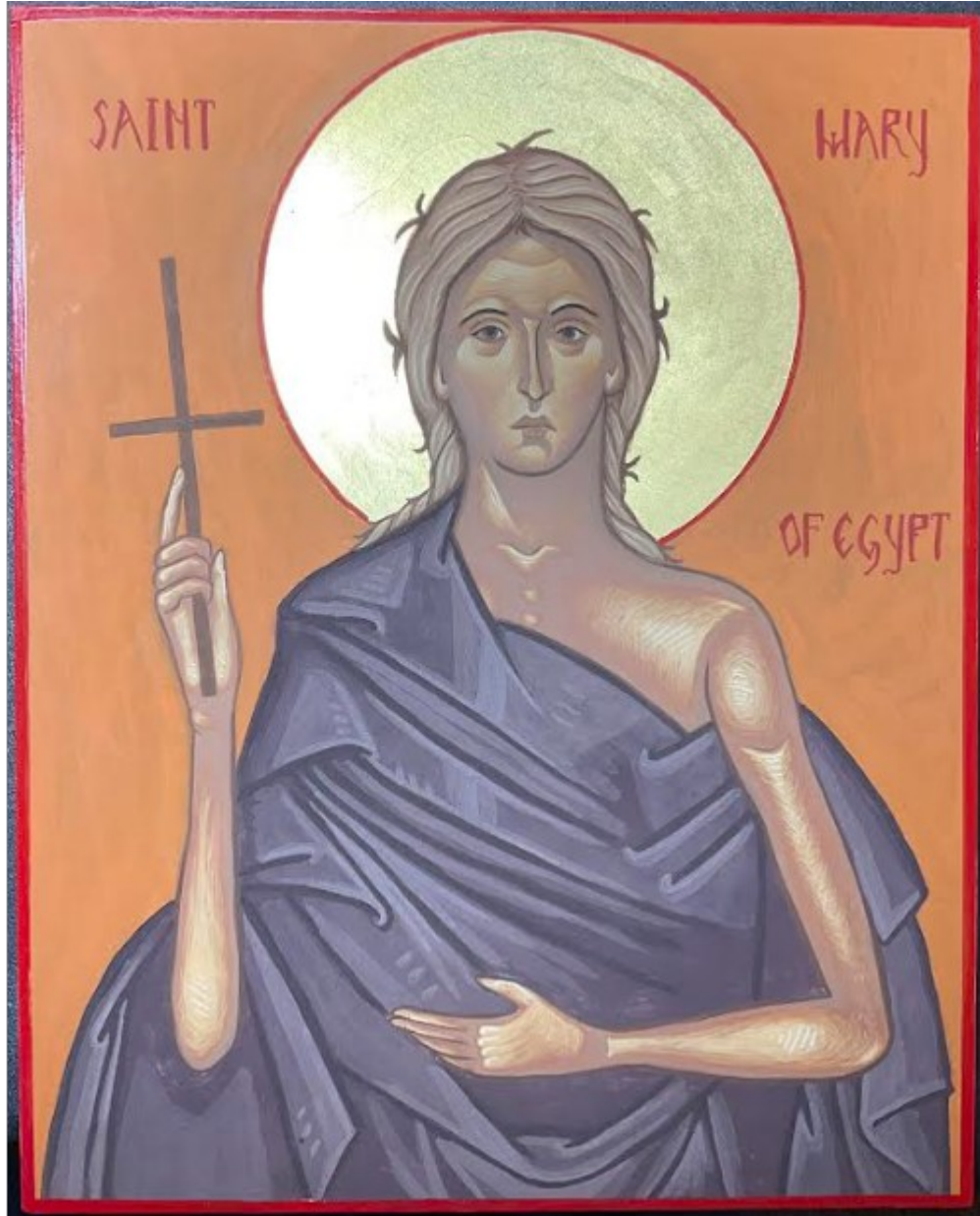


Student Submissions

Fine Arts Page



Painted By Anastasia Fahey



Student Submissions

Writing Page

Written By **Mary Reese**

Loyalty:

I have taken lots and lots of those weird 'Which Disney Princess are You?' test and when they get to the 'what trait would you have your Prince possessed?' I always say loyalty. That is what matters most to me. I think that is the most important trait. He could have super powers or whatever but none of those things really matter, at the end of the day. I want to be able to have the Happily ever After story. I don't want my prince to decide to leave me or his faith for that matter. It matters most to me that my prince is loyal not only to me but also to his beliefs and faith.

I want him to be strong and good, kind and encouraging. I want him to always stand up for what he wants and believes in. I want to be able to trust him and lean on him when everything gets tough.

I want to be able to look into his eyes and not only see love but also endurance and strength. Nothing is ever perfect, I know that. But some things can be just right!

I want my prince to be my example, my motivation to deserve him and to be with him. I guess, depending on if I become a nun or get married, my Prince could be God or a simple mortal man. I'm not saying that God would be a prince. Because He is a King; the King. He is the ultimate guide and strength in hard times. And if my mortal prince can lead me, hand in hand, to God then I will be happy. I want to enjoy life with him and struggle with him. But I want to come out in the end together so that we can spend eternity together with Christ, the Prince of Peace, in heaven.

Stump the Priest!

Answered by Fr. Timothy Hojnicky

Q. *Why did God create us if he doesn't need us? -Anonymous*

A. It's a good question! And I think it comes down to the basic premise of God's action: Love. For God so loved the world...

Before time the Trinity existed from all eternity in a communion of loving and being loved, Each to the Other.

Then God decided to create that which was not God - simply put: us - for the simple reason to have more to love! Let's face it, when we have children, what do they "give" us in those early years!? Stress, anxiety, sure they are cute, but they don't really "give" us anything. Yet we still work with the Lord to create new life for the continuation of the race, as the wedding service says. Why then do we do it?

Because of love.

So, why did God create us if He doesn't need us? Because of love.

Poetry Corner

Christmas

By Natasha Richart

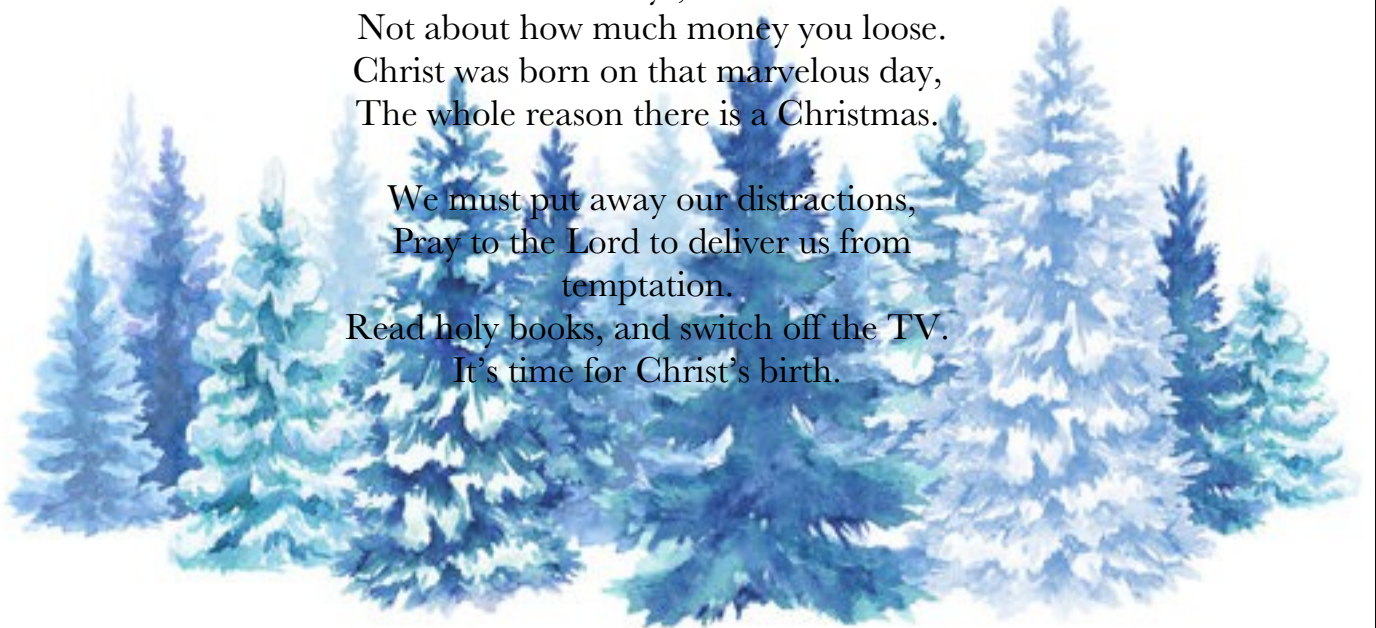
Sugar plum fairies dance in children's
minds,
Toy stores prepare for the rush,
Of anxious parents trying to get toys for
their children.
Has nobody remembered??

A Nintendo, a doll that cries, cash,
Children fill out their wish lists,
And dream of all the candy they're
gonna eat.
Has nobody remembered?

Scrunchies, chocolate, toy cars,
Toy stores sell out.
Wallets slowly get thinner.
Has everyone forgotten?

That Christmas isn't about candy and
toys,
Not about how much money you loose.
Christ was born on that marvelous day,
The whole reason there is a Christmas.

We must put away our distractions,
Pray to the Lord to deliver us from
temptation.
Read holy books, and switch off the TV.
It's time for Christ's birth.



Theosis of the Arts

Goodbyes

By Theodora Ciuca

For the very last time, Good morning! Good Afternoon! Good Evening! And welcome to the Column “Theosis Through The Arts”! This will be the last time I write for you, my beloved readers. While I will not be leaving the newsletter, I will no longer be writing this column. Writing to you for the last two years has been my greatest pleasure and joy, and I look forward to perhaps writing for you all in a different opportunity. But for now, I shall leave it to my successor, Sofia!

Now, if you will all do me the honor, I will write to you all one more time. Today’s subject is Goodbyes. Sometimes goodbyes, no matter the kind, are difficult but through prayer and gratitude, we can take our experience and move forward.

- 1. Embrace Change:** Goodbyes often accompany change, and change is a natural part of life. Instead of focusing on the loss, view goodbyes as opportunities for growth, learning, and new experiences. Embrace the challenges and possibilities that come with change.
- 2. Celebrate the Journey:** Reflect on the positive aspects of the time spent together and the experiences shared. Celebrate the memories, lessons learned, and the personal growth that occurred during the relationship or experience. Recognize that goodbyes don't erase the value of what has transpired.
- 3. Express Gratitude:** Take a moment to express gratitude for the time spent together and the positive impact the person or experience had on your life. Gratitude can shift the focus from the sadness of parting to the appreciation for the moments you shared.
- 4. Stay Present:** Rather than dwelling on the future without the person or experience, focus on the present moment. Cherish the time you have together before the goodbye, and be fully present in your interactions. Mindfulness can help reduce anxiety about the impending separation.
- 5. View Endings as Beginnings:** Every goodbye marks the beginning of something new. Recognize the potential for growth, new opportunities, and fresh experiences that can arise from saying farewell. Embracing this perspective can make the goodbye feel less like an endpoint and more like a transition to the next chapter.
- 6. Allow Yourself to Feel:** It's normal to feel a range of emotions during goodbyes, including sadness, nostalgia, or even relief. Allow yourself to experience and process these emotions. Sometimes acknowledging and accepting your feelings can be a crucial step in moving forward. Thank you so much for giving me the gift of writing to someone. I’m so grateful for the last 2 years and I wish my readers the best. Thank you so much and farewell! God bless you!

Course Spotlight on Liberal Arts

Collected by: Mary Kjendal, Edited by: Mary Kjendal and Theodora Ciuca

Liberal Arts Level 5 with Mrs. Sarah Fothergill

By Anna Tsikouris

This year the students of Liberal Arts Level Five have a list of amazing books to read on our agenda. So far, we have read *Watership Down* and *Beowulf*, and we have learned about character development, leadership, what it means to be a hero, and so much more. There have been many engaging projects, some of which are dioramas, short stories, children's books, comic strips, board games, and movie posters. We all eagerly await "presentation day" when we have the opportunity to listen and view everyone's unique projects and present our own. These projects are a phenomenal way to wrap-up each book before moving on to a new one! We are currently reading *The Song of Roland* and discussing what we believe a true hero is. Our conversations of the stories don't stay on the surface; instead, we are able to dive deeper into the stories, to levels we wouldn't achieve if we read it alone. We are also making timelines which will follow the story, *The Song of Roland*. We have a wonderful group of students who are hardworking and talented. This class is special because you get to hear other students' thoughts and ideas on the books you are reading, and those thoughts can give you a whole new perspective on a book. You also get to meet other homeschoolers from around the world, who you might just meet in person someday.

Liberal Arts Level 5 with Mrs. Sarah Fothergill

By Saiah Murray

In Liberal Arts Level 4 this year I have already learned a lot! Mrs. Fothergill is my teacher, and I love the way she teaches. The books she chose for the class have been so good, and I always read ahead. So far we have read *The Tree Book For Kids And Their Grownups*, *Where The Red Fern Grows*, and *The Aeneid For Boys And Girls*. We just started *The Little Prince*. During class I enjoy when Mrs. Fothergill makes a poll, and we have to choose a side to a yes or no question. Sometimes we are given a statement and she asks us to go into breakout rooms and either agree or disagree with the statement. That is one of my favorite things to do! Every month we have a nature observation project where we explore plants, weather, animals etc. My classmates always have really interesting observations to share especially since everyone is scattered around the world. It is fun to see what nature they have around them. Now and then we watch short documentaries or videos about the subject we are talking about that day. I love my class, and each time I attend I get my daily dose of humor!

Meet the Newsletter Team!

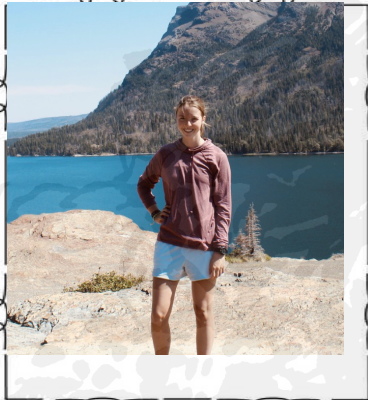
Theodora Ciuca



Assistant Editor

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

Mary Kjendal



Column Writer

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."
Winston S. Churchill

Georgia Knowles



Column Writer

"If you don't come back, sir, then I shan't, that's for certain."
- *Samwise Gamgee*

Genevieve Bell



Managing Editor
Website Coordinator

"To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world."
- *Dr. Seuss*

Thomas Bean



Column Writer

"A generation which ignores history has no past and no future."
Robert A. Heinlein

Anastasia Fahey



Column Writer

"God can't give us peace and happiness apart from Himself because there is no such thing."
C.S. Lewis

Natasha Richart



Column Writer

"All grown-ups were once children...but only few of them remember it."
- *The Little Prince*

Sevastiane

Archer



Secretary

"Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation of cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, a protection against sadness."
- *St. John Chrysostom*