

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

St. Raphael School Journal

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Newsletter
December 2024



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 back! As we embrace December and the cozy season of winter, we're excited to bring you this month's edition of the Newsletter. With winter break just around the corner, we hope you're looking forward to some well-deserved rest and relaxation.

[The Newsletter is open and ready for submissions!](#)

Do you have a winter-themed piece of artwork for the Fine Arts page, a question you'd like to ask, or something you're proud of that you'd like to share? Send it our way—we'd love to see what you've been working on.

And don't forget—we'll be featuring a special Christmas edition soon! Be sure to keep an eye out as we celebrate the season together.

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St. Raphael School Journal

Praying List

Living

Fr. Peter

Eleousa

Phyllis

Lynn

Joseph

Linda

Andrew

Departed

Barbara Joy

Suzan

Elliot

Timothy

Fr. Porphyrios

Fr. Abraham

Anna

Zane

“The goal of life is not to see and understand everything, but to live in the knowledge of God’s love.”

-St. Theophan the Recluse

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST



Kontakion

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, / and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! / Angels with shepherds glorify Him. / The wise men journey with a star, / since for our sake the Pre-Eternal God was born as a young Child.

Feasts of the Month

December 6

St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

December 9

Conception by St. Anna of the Theoktokos

December 13

Herman of Alaska, Wonderworker of All America

December 20

St. John of Kronstadt

December 24

The Eve of Nativity

December 25

The Nativity of Christ

Note from the Editor

Dear St. Raphael Journal readers, thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter! This wouldn't be possible without the incredible support of the SRS teachers and staff. To see more student submissions, be sure to visit the St. Raphael School Journal Website. *To submit names for the prayer list or a student submission, email the Newsletter team here.*

Theodora Ciuca
Managing Editor & Website Coordinator

Featured Essay

Christmas in Literature: Analyzing A Christmas Carol

By Sevastiane Archer

Christmas is truly the most wonderful time of the year. (For me at least.) I get to see my family and friends, and we exchange gifts. However, as Orthodox Christians, Christmas is more than just gifts; we prepare ourselves with a forty-day fast, and we have certain things we do that lead up to the birth of Christ, like focusing on giving to those less fortunate than us. Christmas stories are never just stories about a Merry Christmas someone had that went perfectly well. There are deeper meanings behind the stories.

One of my favorite books, even outside of Christmastime, is "A Christmas Story" by Charles Dickens. This story follows Ebenezer Scrooge as he spends another Christmas alone. He is a grumpy old fellow always known for saying "Bah Humbug," he isn't compassionate toward the poor as he is a moneylender. The Christmas that this story takes place, Scrooge goes

home and sees his dead partner, Jacob Marley as a ghost. Jacob Marley is in chains of cash registers and all things concerning money. Jacob had come to warn Scrooge about being selfish, telling him that if he didn't change his ways, Scrooge would end up like him. After that, three ghosts visited Scrooge: the ghost of Christmas past, the ghost of

"As we approach Christmas, let us open our hearts so that Christ can dwell in the mangers of our souls,

Christmas present, and the ghost of Christmas future.

They show Scrooge how he was in the past, the consequences of the present, and how he could change in the future because he didn't like what he had seen and Scrooge did change his ways, much to everyone's surprise. If you take notice of this story, it does have a happy ending, but the beginning and the middle are not just

describing a perfect Christmas.

This story has themes of changing oneself, especially around the holiday times. When Scrooge sees his partner bound up in those chains, he gets scared but does not think much of it. It is easy to get bound up in the chains of our passions, and reflecting on what we should change as we approach the season of giving and the new year to come is nice.

If we were to see our ghosts of Christmas, past, present, and future, would we like what we saw, or would we be sorrowful like Scrooge? Would we like our future, and if not, how could we change the present so we would have the future we want? As we approach Christmas, let us open our hearts so that Christ can dwell in the mangers of our souls, spend time with our loved ones, and focus on giving to those who need it. I wish you all a blessed Christmas!

Once Upon A Time

To Save You

Waiku stared at her brother's face, trying to find some meaning in his expression. His look was intense, a complex twist of thousands of emotions all swirled together. But she had seen that look before...once, when he had broken a prized vase and was honor bound to confess.

"Waiku, our money is gone. Your father's pay has not arrived, and I fear he is dead."

Waiku gasped. A painful throb pounded dully in her chest. "He isn't dead," she said with a slight tremor in his voice. "He's busy fighting." She knew that sounded naïve, but she also knew that she would never be able to admit that her father was dead.

Asahi broke in. "Waiku, sister dear, I fear our mother is right. I must now be the one to earn our family's living."

The tears that Waiku had repressed only a few moments before at the pond now threatened to fall again.

The only thing that had kept her sane in the early months after her father had died was Asahi. She couldn't lose him too.

"You won't go to fight, will you?" she asked, terrified of the answer.

Asahi smiled a kind, sad smile. "No. I have found another position."

"Oh, what is it?"

"The personal guard of Her Royal Majesty Princess Chiyo."

Waiku's mother nodded imperiously. "A noble position," she said. "It will bring honor to the family."

"But...", Waiku whispered, "but Princess Chiyo lives in Kanazawa. That is many miles away."

"A three day journey at best." Asahi nodded. "I know. But I must go."

As if that ended the conversation, he turned to leave the room. But as he left, he whispered tenderly in her ear. "I must go, to save you."

Student Submissions

Advertisement



.....
Send us your artwork, writing,
poetry, photography, and more to
be published in the upcoming
edition of the newsletter!
.....

email your submissions to
raphaelschooljournal@gmail.com

Graphics By

Mary
Kjendal



Student Submissions

Advertisement



CLASS ADVOCATES

CALLING ALL STUDENTS

If you are in an 'Arts & Theater' class, send us a paragraph about it! Tell us what class you are in, who the teacher is, and what you're learning, singing, practicing, or performing. Please email your paragraph in by 15 December, in time for publication!

EMAIL YOUR PARAGRAPHS TO US:

RAPHAELSCHOOLJOURNAL@GMAIL.COM



Student Submissions

Art

Drawn by: Saiah Murray



Theosis of the Arts

Reflection on the Nativity of our Lord, from the Prologue of Orchid

By Sophia Gheorge

.

“The Lord Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was first worshiped by shepherds and wise men (astrologers) from the east- the simplest and the wisest of this world. Even today, those who most sincerely worship the Lord Jesus as God and Savior are the simplest and the wisest of this world. Perverted simplicity and half-learned wisdom were always the enemies of Christ’s divinity and His Gospel. But who were these wise men from the east?

This question was especially studied by St. Dimitri of Rostov. He claims that they were kings of certain smaller regions or individual towns in Persia, Arabia and Egypt. At the same time, they were erudite in the knowledge of astronomy. This wondrous star appeared to them, which announced the birth of the New King. According to St. Dimitri, this star appeared to them nine months before the birth of the Lord Jesus, i.e., at the time of His conception by the Most-Holy Theotokos. They spent nine months in studying this star, in preparing for the journey and in traveling.

They arrived in Bethlehem shortly after the birth of the Savior of the world. One of them was called Melchoir. He was old, with long white hair and beard. He offered the Lord the gift of gold. The second was called Caspar, of ruddy face, young and beardless. He offered the Lord the gift of frankincense. The third was called Balthasar, of dark complexion and a very heavy beard. He offered the Lord the gift of myrrh. After their deaths, their bodies were taken to Constantinople, from Constantinople to Milan, and from Milan to Cologne.

It can be added that these three wise men were representatives of the three main races of men that descended from Noah’s three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The Persian represented Japheth, the Arabian represented the Semites, and the Egyptian represented the hamites. Thus it can be said that, through these three, the whole human race worshiped the Incarnate Lord and God.”

Poetry Corner

Wondering Why

By Mary Reese

Why am I wondering why,
When the sun spills golden fire,
And the world hums soft and sweet,
Life feels whole, almost complete—
Yet still, a whisper stirs inside?
Why am I wondering why,
When the moon's soft silver sigh
Draws out shadows deep and near,
Echoes of my every fear?
What is the question I cannot find?
In the golden hour's fleeting glow,
Where trembling leaves like lanterns
show,
I lean against a steadfast shoulder,
Hoping love will make me bolder.
But why does joy not quell this ache?

Why does my heart still quietly break?

Meet the Newsletter Team!

Theodora Ciuca



Co Managing Editor

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

Mary Reese



Column Writer

Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory.
~ Dr Suess

Lizzie Durka



Column Writer

"Let us not then be anxious about the praise of men, nor seek to display our good deeds before others, but let us bury them in the secret place of our hearts, and let God alone see them."

Mary Kjendal



Column Writer

"A rose does not speak, but its fragrance spreads far in silence."
- St. Theophan the Recluse

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

Natasha Richart



Column Writer

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

Sevastiane Archer



Column Writer

"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

Sophia Gheorghe



Column Writer

"It isn't what we say or think that defines us, but what we do."
- Jane Austen