

The Prophet...the voice of the students



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CATHOLIC CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

By Alexandra Shehigian



Giant inflatable polar bears and penguins, Mariah Carey playing on repeat, television advertisements for Coca-Cola toasting "the season." These things are at the forefront of American minds when asked to recall their nation's Christmas "traditions." However, under all the noise and lights rest several customs that carry true weight and meaning for the Catholic community, some of which date back to the earliest stages of the Church.

One of the most important features of the Catholic celebration of Christmas is that it is preceded by a season in the Liturgical year known as Advent. Unlike the secular pre-Christmas commotion, Advent is a time of waiting and preparation both for the celebration of Christ's birth on Christmas, as well as his eventual second coming. Many families today use an Advent wreath to observe the season, which typically consists of evergreen branches and four candles. Each candle symbolizes one of

the four weeks of the Advent season, as well as the light of Christ coming into the world. Throughout Advent, many feast days are celebrated, such as the Feast of Saint Nicholas, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and the



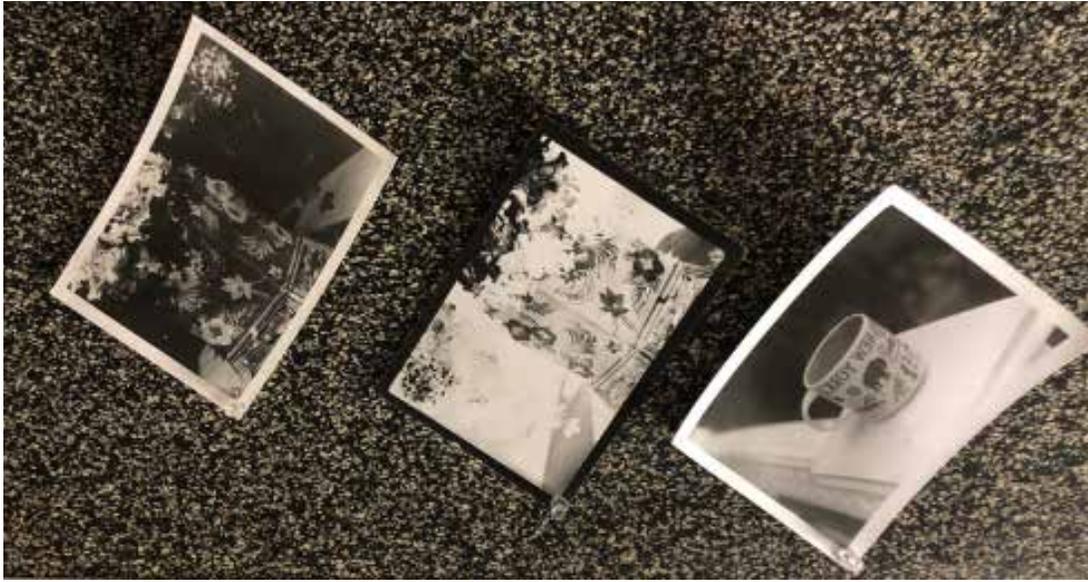
Feast of Saint Lucy (Santa Lucia). These all help contribute to the anticipatory mood of awaiting the gift of Christ's light.

Another celebrated tradition that accompanies the Advent and Christmas season is the recreation of the nativity scene. This is a way for Catholics to physically portray the Biblical depiction of the Birth of Christ from the stable setting to the cloaked shepherds. Many people have wooden or ceramic Nativities set up in their homes as a constant reminder of the season. Parishes often have living Nativities where members dress up as the characters of the Christmas story.

Many different customs exist for the celebration of Christmas Eve. One Italian-American tradition common on Long Island is the Feast of the Seven Fishes: a holiday meal made up of seven different seafood plates. Some families also take this night to exchange gifts rather than doing so on Christmas morning. One universal tradition throughout the Church, however, is the celebration of Mass on Christmas Day. Traditionally, there are three Christmas services: one at midnight, one at dawn, and one during the day. All three are conducted with a celebratory and joyous mood, as Christmas, the remembrance of Christ's coming, has finally arrived. All of these Catholic Christmas traditions allow families to come together and appreciate one another during one of the most festive and meaningful parts of the year. Beyond this, they serve a more important purpose; to prepare the hearts and minds of believers for the coming of Christ into the world, which is, in fact, the true significance of the holiday and season surrounding it. Such a remembrance of God's grace and mercy draws us nearer to him and brings joy to all, and that is a tradition worth observing year after year.



STUDENT ART WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY



Black-and-white photos taken by seniors in *St. John's University Photo*. Students were asked to craft stories by capturing ordinary objects found in their homes.



Realistic depiction of a human hand by Anthony Brown. This lead-based sketch is one of many submitted by students in *St. John's University Drawing*.



Fantastic art piece submitted by senior Ahn Nguyen in *Painting*.



Colorful, self-inspired portrait by Senior Agata Bugajezyk for the *Painting Class* offered at St. John's.

THE DRAMA SHOW

By Emilie Chiofalo



On Thursday, November 21, 2019 the Ann Frances Dunne Auditorium was teeming with excitement and wonder as the talented students of the St. John the Baptist Drama Club performed Elizabeth and Darcy, adapted by Jon Jory from Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. The performance begins as senior, Graze Cazzaniga, takes on the role of Elizabeth Bennet: a head-strong young lady with opinions unheard of by the family and townsfolk around her.

Elizabeth is disgusted by the way women are judged by men and viewed as only property to be married off. However, every other young lady in the area is in hopes to be married to a young man of good fortune. The story centers around Elizabeth and her four sisters as they experience romance and marriage. Elizabeth encounters a wealthy young man named



Mr. Darcy, played by sophomore Michael Caiola, who she is convinced has ill intentions and is controlled by his pride. However, Mr. Darcy does not possess the bad characteristic. Elizabeth accuses him of, and is, in fact, more than delighted to be in her company. The Drama Club's performance of Elizabeth and Darcy was impressive and entertaining, the members of the cast have many reasons to be proud.



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SMART PHONES: GOOD OR BAD?

By Rachelle Louis-Jacques

Smartphones are used by the majority of teens. Many of them spend hours staring down at their screens. Phones allow people to communicate with others, look up information faster, and also be used for entertainment. Since phones are commonly used, it would be helpful to understand whether they are doing more harm than good.

Many studies have shown that there is no correlation between the use of smartphones and the development of tumors, but many refute that smartphones, like the iPhone 8, have not been around long enough to record any information about the effects from daily smartphone use. It seems that electromagnetic radiation (EMR) comes off one's phone when in use. On a larger scale, electromagnetic radiation can change atoms and damage cells. On a smaller scale, however, the effects are relatively harmless. Despite it being deemed safe to use smartphones, one special case put that notion of safety into question. In 2009, a man named Innocenzo Marcolini felt very unfortunate after he applied for financial compensation from the Italian Workers' Compensation Authority. He had developed a tumor on the left side of his head after holding his phone there for up to six hours a day for twelve years. Being on the phone was a part of his job, but he probably did not expect something like this to happen to him. Although the tumor was benign, this is something to worry about when going over the daily recommended time of smartphone use.



Smartphones can be very useful tools that can benefit us when used correctly and in moderation. Besides the possible medical concern, as shown by Innocenzo, smartphone addiction is also something to worry about, since it can lead to dependency on one's phone, along with the lack of communication with others. Here is one final message: it is easier to prevent problems now than to try and fix them later.



MEETING THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT:

By Jessica Johnson & Taylor Krygier



With music ranging from vocalists to instrumentalists, the St. John the Baptist Music Department is one filled with various musical talents. There are four concerts every year: the Winter Concert, the Spring Instrumental Concert, the Spring Vocal Concert, and the Pops Concert. The students involved have the opportunity to develop and perfect their skills as musicians and performers.

St. John's offers fourteen courses in music, some for those who have never picked up an instrument before and some for intermediate students, who are strongly musically inclined. From electives to after-school clubs, there are a multitude of ways to get involved for any students who wishes to better themselves musically.



The three primary teachers are Mrs. Moir, Ms. Schnurman, and chairperson, Mr. Donohue. Mrs. Moir has been the vocal director for the past four years. She teaches classes open to all female and male students who enjoy singing. The Women's Choir is for beginning singers, Bel Canto Chorale is a class for intermediate female singers, and Himphonix is for male singers. Intro to Music Theory is open to all students who love music and AP Mu-



sic Theory is for students who are serious about the fundamentals of music, which are also taught by Mrs. Moir. She is, as well, the moderator of Notorious and Noteworthy -- the after school a cappella groups. She attended Hofstra University for her Bachelor of Science/Music Education Degree and went on to Stony Brook University for her masters. Attending school for music education entails learning how to play every instrument, but Mrs.

Moir has always placed her focus on voice and flute. Music has always been a massive part of Ms. Moir's life as she listens to and enjoys all genres of music.

Next, as the chairperson of the Music Department, Mr. Donohue is a dedicated teacher. Mr. Donohue teaches numerous classes here at St. John's; such as Symphony Orchestra, String Orchestra, Jazz Ensemble, and Liturgical Music. He attended

SUNY Purchase for his bachelor's degree and Brooklyn College for his master's. Along with teaching, Mr. Donohue plays a variety of instruments professionally. He plays the trumpet, guitar, piano, violin, viola, and bass, along with all varieties of saxophones, clarinets, and



flutes. He can also play a few other instruments, such as the melodica, bagpipes, tin whistle, and nose flute. Music has always been a significant part of Mr. Donohue's life, with his biggest inspirations being his parents, who are both musicians. Since he was a kid, he would play gigs and attend his parents' performances. His parents' dedication to their craft influenced him to work hard toward his goals. The musical greats, such as Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, J.S Bach, and Frederick Chopin, have influenced his taste greatly. When asked about what advice he would give to his students, he said, "Never stop trying to perfect your craft, but don't let it consume you so much that you miss the joys of living, loved ones, and caring for others."

Lastly, Ms. Schnurman is the newest teacher of the Music Department. Despite teaching at St. Johns for only three years, Ms. Schnurman is a valuable educator to the program. She teaches Symphonic Band, Wind Ensemble, guitar, and piano. She is also a moderator for the Pep



Band and Tri-M Music Honor Society. Ms. Schnurman attended Ithaca College, where she learned how to play every instrument and continued with her primary instrument, the bassoon. Her biggest inspiration is Leonard Bernstein. He has been an influential source not only because of his conducting and composing work, but also because of his determination to teach a diverse group of people about music.

MEETING THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT CONTINUED....

However, the music that Ms. Schnurman typically listens to tends to be modern. She loves artists such as Jason Mraz and Sara Bareilles, and bands similar to Ripe, Lawrence, and Vulfpeck. A word of advice she would give her students is, "No matter where you go in life, make sure to keep music a part of it. You don't have to be a music major to have a life-long love and appreciation for it. Never forget that!"

Entering the world of music is a rewarding experience. Whether one enjoys listening to music, writing music, or playing music; learning about it may teach people many lessons. Becoming familiar with the educators who inspire students every day is valuable and essential to our school community.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

By Rae Hill

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, also known as SVDP, is an international organization of the Catholic Church. It was founded in 1833 and is dedicated to personal service. This organization is a leading group in assisting the poor, providing for any need a struggling community may have. On September 28, 2019, members of the St. John the Baptist Media News Network attended the annual SVDP of Long Island: Friends of the Poor Walk, an event to raise awareness and

generate funds to support Vincentian service. Numerous walkers, as well as the Bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York, John Barres, were interviewed as they were all deter-



mined to serve one common goal; assisting those in need. By hosting events such as the Friends of the Poor Walk, the St. Vincent de Paul Society raises funds as well as acknowledgment. Additionally, the organization itself provides various resources in an effort to end poverty and to share a common mindset. They remind us that hard times can fall upon any one of us, and if everyone fulfills service and compassion to others, life will be much easier for all.

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

By Emma Rideout-Mann and Mia Timson

Has your day been brightened by the kind messages hung up on walls, staircases, and doors all around the school? This has been the work of the R.A.K. Club here at St. Johns! R.A.K., which stands for Random Acts of Kindness, was started this school year by Mrs. Coon from the Math Department. She believed that it would be a good idea to implement a year-round club that emphasizes the importance of spreading positivity, especially during a time when teens can often find themselves in negative situations. The club's goal is to successfully spread awareness about the importance of kindness and caring for others. They want to embrace the Golden Rule of

treating others the way you'd want to be treated. Their efforts to spread this message can be seen by the colorful poster that they've hung up all over the school, boasting positive slogans. Additionally, the members of R.A.K. have completed a calendar of



events for the month of December with random acts of kindness printed on each day leading up to Christmas, which will be available throughout the school for kids to be inspired by to be kind. The members believe that people should join R.A.K. because it promotes the culture of respecting others, which we often forget in this day and age. The club implements the teachings of Christ and helps us not only become better Catholics but better people in general - it feels good to be promoting positivity! If you're interested in learning more about R.A.K., you can join them for meetings on Mondays in room 304.