



NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER

From the Director's Desk

It is hard to believe that November is over and December is already here! Our preschool classrooms have had so much fun this past month learning about the Mayflower, Pilgrims, Native Americans, the First Thanksgiving, families and turkeys.

December promises to be very busy for all of us, children and adults alike. We will be bustling about shopping, planning, decorating, and partying. It is a joyous, yet exhausting season for most although it can be frustrating, as well, especially when trying to find the perfect gift for those on your Christmas list. In today's society we are surrounded by the attitude ME and what makes ME happy. How wonderful, indeed, this season is, as it is a season for giving and doing for the good of others instead of me, me, me! Therein is the challenge for those of us with little ones, who, by nature, are ego centered. Since it is true that children learn much from the actions and attitude (and gratitude) of the adults around them, we might consider the following gift suggestions.

To an enemy, forgiveness
To an opponent, tolerance
To a friend, our heart
To others, service
To all, charity
To every child, a good example

As we move into the month of December we will be preparing throughout the four weeks of Advent for the coming of Jesus and His birth in the little town of Bethlehem. Of course we can't forget that Jolly, Old Elf we lovingly called Santa Claus or St. Nick who arrives each Christmas in his sleigh with many toys for all good boys and girls. And what about Rudolph, Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen.

In our classrooms you will see our children doing different learning activities to supplement these topics. Such as writing a letter to Santa, playing Christmas Bingo and creating a paper chain Christmas Countdown. We will also be decorating our classrooms with traditional symbols of the holiday season. You might even hear the sound of children's voices singing their favorite Christmas songs: Rudolph, the Red Nose Reindeer, Frosty the Snowman, Santa Claus is Coming to Town. Some art projects will be: wrapping paper collages, jingle bell paintings and also a top secret one that won't be revealed until Christmas.

Ms. G



Important Dates

- 12/1: Parent/PTA Zoom Meeting 7 p.m.
- 12/2: Teacher's Meeting 8:15 a.m.
- 12/6- 12/10: New Families Registration 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- 12/6: Feast of Saint Nicholas
- It's A Small World Workshop: 12/6-12/10
- 12/7 & 12/9: Zoom Parent/Teacher Conferences Dismissal 11:30
- 12/14: Secret Santa Breakfast for Staff 8 a.m.
- 12/15: Christmas Pageant Four's
 - 9:15 Ms. Gerardi's Class, Mrs. Gonnella's
 - 10:30 Mrs. Hughes' Class, Mrs. Utschig's Class
 - Parents Only, No Siblings, or Babies. Masks and Social distancing required. Looking into "Live Streaming" the program for friends and relatives.
- 12/16: Christmas Performance Three Year Olds at 9:15 a.m. Ms. Rhiannon Gasparre's Class, Mrs. Sciacca's Class, and Ms. Katie Vallarelli's Class
 - *Same Protocols as listed above*
- 12/27 - 12/31: Christmas Vacation
- 1/1: New Year's Day School Closed
- 1/3: School Reopens

December Themes

- Advent, Nativity, St. Nicholas, Santa Claus, Frosty, Christmas, Ornaments, Stockings, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Las Posados, the colors red and green, the star shape, Community Helpers: Clergy, Postman, Sales Person, Delivery Person
- Activities: A Visit with St. Nicholas, It's A Small World Santa's Workshop, Christmas Performances



Feast of Saint Nicholas

While pretty much everyone in the United States is familiar with Christmas, one fun winter holiday you may not have heard of is Saint Nicholas Day on December 6th. Typically celebrated by leaving small surprise gifts in shoes or stockings. The day is meant to honor the generous spirit of St. Nicholas the historical inspiration for our contemporary version of Santa Claus. Nicholas of Myra now known as St Nicholas is a fourth century bishop who achieved sainthood after his death. Very little is known about the life of Saint Nicholas but stories of his generous giving to the poor forms the basis for the contemporary figure of Santa Claus (Old Saint Nick). Specifically one story about St Nick giving gold to three daughters whose father could not afford a dowry has formed the basis for Santa Claus leaving gifts on Christmas Eve Night.

Advent

Advent means "arrival" or "coming". It is a season of expectation and hope. Believers across the world spend weeks before Christmas preparing for that day of beauty and light. Traditions vary by country, but people celebrate Advent all over the world. Each country or faith contributes something unique. Celebrating Advent means joining Christians across the world ---- and through the centuries ---- to celebrate the coming of Jesus. One way to incorporate Advent on Sundays is the lighting of candles set in an evergreen wreath. Starting on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, we light a new candle each Sunday. The first candle, called the "Prophet's Candle," symbolizes hope. The Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah, waited in hope for the Messiah's arrival. The second candle, called "Bethlehem's Candle" represents faith. Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, forging a connection between King David and his coming descendent whose kingdom and throne would be established forever. The third candle, called the "Shepherd's Candle," symbolizes joy. To the shepherds' great joy, angels announced that Jesus came for humble, unimportant people like them too. The fourth candle, called the "Angel's Candle," represents peace. The angels proclaimed that Jesus came to bring peace on earth---He came to bring people close to God and to each other again. The (Optional) fifth candle, called the "Christ's Candle," represents purity and light. It is placed in the middle of the wreath and lit on Christmas Day, commemorating the arrival of the Light of the World. The best Advent traditions will peel away the distractions that prevent people from seeing the immense glory of Christmas.



Zoom Parent/Teacher Conferences: December 7th & 9th

A Parent-Teacher Conference is a face to face meeting between one teacher and one or both parents (or guardians) of a student. It is an opportunity to discuss a student's academic progress and social behaviors. Parent-Teacher Conferences can boost family involvement in our classrooms and help promote positive outcomes for our teachers, their students and our school. It is a great opportunity to share academic progress and growth based on classroom observations, testing data, and assessments. Parents or guardians can help us be better informed about student's strengths, needs, behaviors and learning styles.

It's A Small World Workshop December 6th to 10th

Christmas is a magical holiday for everyone, especially for kids. One of the popular things that happens during the Christmas holiday is Santa's Secret Small World Workshop, where kids can visit and purchase gifts for family and friends in the security and safety of our school. There's something here for everyone. Our students are also learning the importance of saving their money by planning their purchases in a positive learning environment. Santa's elves will greet our shoppers from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Check out the great selection, adorable gifts, and child friendly pricing. We will provide "shopper helpers" to walk you child through the workshop. Savings abound! Order forms will be coming home shortly.

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception

December 8th is the commemoration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin. Our great country is placed under her protection. The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, located in Washington, D.C. is dedicated to our Blessed Mother and is truly a magnificent structure that honors her.



School Closings

In the event of severely inclement weather or mechanical breakdown, school may be closed or the starting time delayed. The same conditions may also necessitate an early dismissal. School closing, delayed start time or early dismissal will be determined by Ms. Gaudelli, the Preschool Director

- Posted on the scroll bar of Channel 12 News
- Parental Contacts through Blackboard Connect phone and e-mail service.

If there is a two hour delay then morning classes here at St. Gregory's will be cancelled in addition to all morning extracurricular activities. The full day programs will begin at 11:30 a.m.

If weather conditions are very bad, we will be closed for the full day. Reports in the morning will be between 6:30 a.m. and 8 A.M.

Important Reminders:

1. Make sure that your child's extra clothes are complete and that they are appropriate for the weather. With the weather getting colder, it is imperative that your child have adequate clothing for the changing weather conditions.
2. Please make sure that you send you child to school with outdoor clothing that includes: a warm coat/jacket, mittens, boots when necessary. Make sure that all clothing is clearly marked. We do go outside every day, unless the temperature is below 30 degrees. If your child cannot go outside, please keep him/her at home, until he/she is able to participate in all of the school activities.
3. Please make sure that you arrive at school on time for drop off and pick up.



Christmas Pageant: December 15th 9:15 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

St Gregory the Great Preschool will host its traditional, annual Christmas Pageant on December 15th with a cast of our four year old young people. Our pageant requires no words, just costumes and songs. Ms. G will narrate the recounting for all present the Christmas story from the Gospel of St. Luke. Mary, Joseph, shepherds, sheep, angels, and wise men will provide musical accompaniment that illuminates the story. The finale is a photo op for parents to snap preening students. This is no professional production; it is gloriously unpredictable chaos, and you'll love it. I guarantee parents will watch misty eyed as their children tug at costumes askew over Christmas finery. The message of the manger, the lowly birth in a stable, the gathering of misfit shepherds, angels and wise men is that they are all called to Christ----who they are, as they are. Our pageant captures the holy chaos, the miracle, the surprise, the mystery and the joy of the Savior's birth.

Christmas Show December 16th 9:15 a.m.

During December our three year old preschoolers have been preparing for their simple Christmas Show to present to their parents. This Christmas performance relies less on the acting abilities of our students and more on their joy of song and personalities. All our children will sing various versions of all their favorite Christmas melodies much to the joy and delight of their parents.



The Twelve Days of Christmas

A popular theory is that the lyrics of this song are references to Christianity. Many believe the song was written to help Christians learn and pass on the tenets of their faith.

- Partridge in a Pear Tree: Represents Jesus
- Two Turtle Doves: Represents the Old and New Testament
- Three French Hens: Represents Faith, Hope, and Love, the three theological virtues
- Four Calling Birds: Represents the Four Gospels and/or the Four Evangelists
- Five Golden Rings: Represents the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, which gives the history of man's fall from grace
- Six Geese A-Laying: Represents the Six Days of Creation
- Seven Swans A-Swimming: Represents the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the Seven Sacraments
- Eight Maids A-Milking: Represents the Eight Beatitudes
- Nine Ladies Dancing: Represents the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Ten Lords A-Leaping: Represents the Ten Commandments
- Eleven Pipers Piping: Represents the eleven Faithful Apostles
- Twelve Drummers Drumming: Represents the 12 points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed

A Letter From Jesus At Christmas:

If you look for Me at Christmas
You won't need a special star...
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem,
I'm right there where you are.
You may not be aware of Me
Amid the celebrations...
You'll have to look beyond the stores,
And all the decorations.
But if you take a moment
From your list of things to do
And listen to your heart, you'll find
I'm waiting there for you.
You're the one I want to be with,
You're the reason that I came,
And you'll find Me in the stillness
As I'm whispering your name.
Love, Jesus

