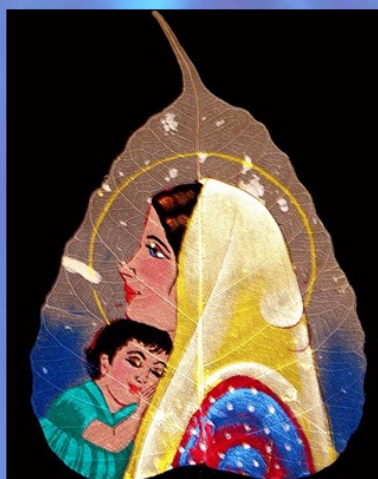


Catholic Engaged Encounter of Trinidad and Tobago



BLESSED
CHRISTMAS
TO ALL
2012



A WEDDING IS A DAY A MARRIAGE IS A LIFETIME CHRISTMAS GREETINGS



Greetings to the CEE community in Trinidad and Tobago, The first edition of your "E" magazine! What an accomplishment, what a wonderful way to keep current and to keep in contact with one another. Kudos to the publishers and to the participants. May your relationships with one another flourish and grow in and through this media.

We want to take this moment to wish each and everyone of you the blessings and JOY that comes in the wail of a new born child, the PEACE that comes in seeing that child sleep in the comfort and security of his parents arms and the HOPE of all the potential and growth in this new life.

May the Holy spirit whisper the best direction for your life in 2013 and may you have the wisdom to listen and follow that path.



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year !!

Bernard & Ginette Charbonneau and Fr. Kevin Maloney

International Executive Team, International CEE

As we enter the Christmas Season, many of us are busy with the shopping and cleaning of our homes, in preparation for the commemoration of the Birth of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. May we not forget that He, Jesus, is the reason for the Season. We take this opportunity to wish our entire EE Family God's richest blessings on you and your family, and may your New Year fulfill your wishes, as we all draw closer to Our Lord Jesus Christ.



May the Peace of Christ reside in our hearts now and forever.

Lester & Aura Victor & Fr. Wilfred John. (Caribbean EE Coordinating Team)

The joy of brightening other lives, bearing each others' burdens, easing other's loads and supplanting empty hearts and lives with generous gifts becomes for us the magic of Christmas."

~ W. C. Jones

A most Blessed and Holy Christmas time to all our EE community! As Jesus came to us in humility, compassion and holiness, may we also go out to others with the same disposition, to share the most sacred, precious and eternal gift ever given to us, Our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Rejoice! Emmanuel! God is with us.....



This was spoken in outer space on Christmas Eve ~~~~

Give us, O God, the vision which can see Your love in the world in spite of human failure. Give us the faith to trust Your goodness in spite of our ignorance and weakness. Give us the knowledge that we may continue to pray with understanding hearts. And show us what each one of us can do to set forward the coming of the day of universal peace.

Frank Borman, Apollo 8 space mission, 1968



A WEDDING IS A DAY A MARRIAGE IS A LIFETIME

The Meaning of Christmas

Author Unknown

Just a week before Christmas I had a visitor. This is how it happened. I just finished the household chores for the night and was preparing to go to bed when I heard a noise in the front of the house. I opened the door to the front room, and to my surprise, Santa himself stepped out from behind the Christmas tree. He placed his finger over his mouth so I would not cry out. "What are you doing?" I started to ask him.

The words choked in my throat, as I saw he had tears in his eyes. His usual jolly manner was gone. Gone was the eager boisterous soul we all know. He then answered me with a simple statement, **TEACH THE CHILDREN!** I was puzzled: What did he mean? He anticipated my question, and with one quick movement brought forth a miniature toy bag from behind the tree.

As I stood there bewildered, Santa said, Teach the Children! Teach them the old meaning of Christmas. The meaning that a now-a-day Christmas has forgotten!

Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a **FIR TREE** and placed it on the mantle. Teach the Children that the pure green color of the stately fir tree remains green all year round, depicting the everlasting hope of mankind. All the needles point heavenward, making it a symbol of man's thoughts turning toward heaven.



He again reached into his bag and pulled out a brilliant **STAR**. Teach the Children that the star was the heavenly sign of promises long ago. God promised a Savior for the world, and the star was the sign of fulfillment of that promise.



He then reached into the bag and pulled out a **CANDLE**. Teach the Children that the candle symbol-



izes that Christ is the light of the world, and when we see this great light we are reminded of He who displaces the darkness.



Once again he reached into his bag and then removed a **WREATH** and placed it on the tree. Teach the Children that the wreath symbolizes the eternal nature of love.

Real love never ceases. Love is one continuous round of affection.

He then pulled out from his bag an ornament of **HIMSELF**. Teach the Children that Santa Claus symbolizes the generosity and good will we feel during the month of December.



pulled out from ornament of Teach the Children that the generosity



He reached in again and pulled out a **HOLLY LEAF**. Teach the Children the holly plant represents immortality. It represents the crown of thorns worn by our Savior. The red holly berries represent blood shed by Him.

Next he pulled out a **GIFT** from the bag and said, "Teach the Children that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift. Teach the Children that the



wise men bowed before the holy babe and presented Him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

We should give gifts in the same spirit as the wise men."

Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a **CANDY CANE** and hung it on the tree. Teach the Children that the candy cane represents the shepherd's crook. The crook on the shepherd's staff helps bring back strayed sheep from the flock. The candy cane is the symbol that we are our brother's keeper.



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The meaning of Christmas

He reached in again and pulled out an ANGEL.

Teach the Children that it was the angels that heralded in the glorious news of the Savior's birth. The angels sang 'Glory to God in the highest, on earth, peace and good will.'

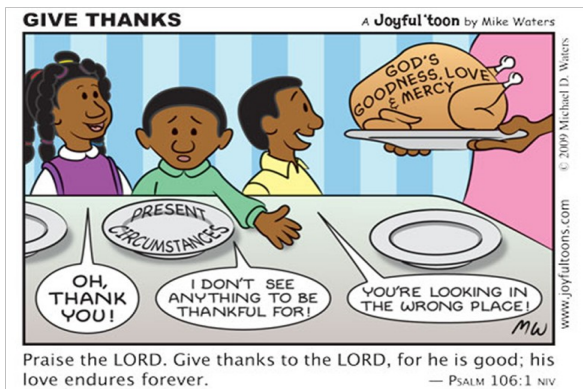
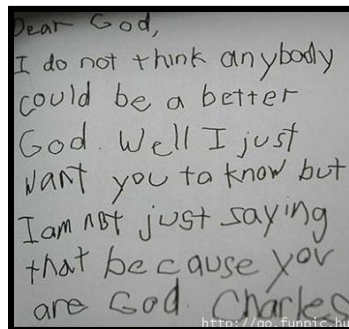


Suddenly I heard a soft twinkling sound, and from his bag he pulled out a BELL. Teach the Children that as the lost sheep are found by the sound of a bell, it should bring people to the fold. The bell symbolizes guidance and return.

Santa looked at the tree and was pleased. He looked back at me and I saw the twinkle was back in his eyes. He said, "Remember, teach the Children the true meaning of Christmas,



and not to put me in the center, for I am but a humble servant of the One who is, and I bow down and worship Him, our Lord, our God."



My idea of Christmas, whether old-fashioned or modern, is very simple: loving others. Come to think of it, why do we have to wait for Christmas to do that?"
~ Bob Hope, American film actor and comedian.

What Jesus did on Christmas

In the epistle to the Philippians we read: "For the divine nature was His from the first" – Christ was always God- "Yet he did not think to snatch at equality with God." Who snatched at equality with God? Satan did. And Adam did when Satan told him he would be like God. But He who is God by nature did not snatch at equality with God, but "made himself nothing." Nothing. The old translation was "He emptied himself." In theology this is called kenosis. God emptied himself; he made himself a nothing, 'assuming the nature of a slave' – not merely of a servant. The Greek word is "doulos". The word doulos is used about forty-seven times by our Lord in the New Testament. A slave does hard work; a slave does dirty work. Assuming the nature of a slave, "bearing human likeness, revealed in human shape, he humbled himself and in obedience accepted even death – death on the cross." So he emptied himself. This verse is Christmas, "He emptied himself."





A WEDDING IS A DAY.... A MARRIAGE IS A LIFETIME

Great Gifts

With all the materialistic pressures involved in Christmas today, we can easily think of it as a period of hectic preparation, a day of celebration and a brief aftermath. We can forget that it is more than a feast, it a season. And like all seasons, its essence is a cycle of preparation, achievement and then the incorporation of what has been achieved into the larger season of which it is a part, the season of our life .

Excerpt from essay Preparing for Birth-John Main



The great gifts of this season – or any season – can't be put under the tree; you can't wear them or eat them or drive them or play with them. We spend so much time on the lesser gifts – toys, sweaters, jewelry, the mint, anise and dill of Christmas – and so little on the **great** gifts – understanding, grace, peace and forgiveness. It's no wonder that the holiday leaves us empty, because when it's over, the only reminders we have are the dirty dishes and the January bills.

The great gifts are like the one gift – the gift that began it all back there, in Bethlehem of Judea. You can't buy them, and they're not on anybody's shopping list. They come as He came – quietly, freely, unexpectedly – and if you're not careful, you'll miss them entirely.

IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONS



Traditions are activities that families, communities or countries do together on a regular basis. These things can be patterns of behavior, enjoyable activities or eating a particular meal. They can be repeated daily, weekly, monthly or once a year. As members of a ministry promoting family life, we focus on the importance of family traditions.

As families become more and more disconnected due to hectic schedules, there seems to be less time to enjoy the simple traditions that were once a vital part of everyday family life. Simple rituals such as taking a weekend family outing, playing games or even family dinners are becoming a distant memory. For many, the holidays have shifted from meaningful time spent together to trying to balance the stresses of work, seasonal decorating, gift buying and active kids on school break.

Family traditions do not have to be complex, time-consuming, or even expensive in order to have great impact. Nor do we have to wait for a holiday to kick start one. Whether it's a family reunion once a year, or movie night once a week, establishing routine customs is a great way to bond with the family.

If an existing tradition starts to lose its appeal, then create a new one! Getting the entire family excited and involved in identifying a new activity is an important way to establish a tradition with meaning. Once these activities are chosen, then work on building them into a ritual. Traditions have to start somewhere!

Children love and thrive on traditions because they cultivate a sense of belonging and security. Making traditions a priority in family life is important as well as fun. By doing so, children not only learn to appreciate and look forward to the time they spend with family members, but they will also develop a full understanding of the meaning behind the word "Family."

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This is the message of Christmas: We are never alone."

~ Taylor Caldwell (1900-1985),



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Cont'd Importance of Tradition

Family traditions are important because::

Family traditions create good feelings and special moments to remember. They are fun things to do. Enjoying this time together as a family will create positive emotions in each member. These are the memories that will last a lifetime.

Family traditions give every member of the family a stronger sense of belonging. Being a part of a family is more than living in the same home or having the same last name. It is about relationships and family bonds. Since family traditions are something you do together, they strengthen the bonds you have between each other creating a stronger sense of belonging to the family.

Family traditions help parents impart the family's values, identity and security to their children and community. Developing the ability to love all happens naturally when you spend quality time together – like during a traditional family activity. You find more opportunities to talk about serious issues and keep the conversations light when you observe a family traditions. This is a powerful tool to use against negative peer pressure, drug use influences, etc.



It comes every year and will go on forever. And along with Christmas belong the keepsakes and the customs. Those humble, everyday things a mother clings to, and ponders, like Mary in the secret spaces of her heart."

~ Marjorie Holmes, American writer.

Our EE community sent us some of the family traditions they remembered. Here are a few of them:

Traditions cont'd



My father worked as a Station Master in the Trinidad Government Railway. On Christmas Day there would be one train in the morning and another in the evening. For the greater part of the day, we had Daddy all to ourselves after he cleared the morning train, and before he left for work for the evening train. He used to play with us and with the toys we got from 'Santa Claus'. That was fun.

Pam Garcia

My uncle reared pigs. Every Christmas my grandfather would get one, and as a family we would all help to prepare garlic pork. Nothing was wasted, my mother would prepare the best pudding and souse. Today I prepare the garlic pork with help from my daughters and my granddaughters.

Barbara Salazar

I remember carolers dressed in red capes, with lit candles going from house to house and singing all the Christmas carols (no parang soca at that time), and wishing the household a Happy and Holy Christmas. Sometimes the leader of the group passed a collection bag in which my parents would put money. The collection we were told were for buying toys for poor children.

Ray Garcia



My aunts and my mother would get together at one sister's home every year to prepare pastelles. Now, my sisters, wife and mother get together to make dozens of pastelles.

Anthony Mitchell

My mother would bake bread on Christmas Eve, our job was to see who could cut and eat the ends the fastest.

Angela Mitchell



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ENGAGED ENCOUNTER HIGHLIGHTS 2012

As a community the EE ministry was able over the last year to make some strides towards enhancing the outreach and appeal of our ministry.

In keeping with the ever evolving situations in our society, we were able from September of this year to begin new presentations at our weekend. These rewriting of talks called for great effort from the presenting couples, but they worked tirelessly, to ensure that our weekend participants received their best efforts. While staying true to our ministry, these new sharings take into account the changing realities of modern society; the increased use of technology and its effects on relationships, the furthering of materialism in daily lives, secularism, different personality types etc. However, we have continued to focus on sacramental marriage, intimacy, communication, value systems as we always have. We have also incorporated the use of multimedia and more interactive presentations, being aware that persons learn and absorb via various means.

We started and continued to use our website to impart information about the weekend and the dates of upcoming weekends; it also allows couples to register electronically. We will continue to improve and expand our website.

October was a landmark month for us and we celebrated our 30th anniversary in Trinidad and Tobago, convening a special weekend over October 5-7th, where there were seminars/workshops on "Utilizing our marriage to promote Catholic Culture and Identity:", "Enhancing Communication as a couple," and a Family afternoon which allowed for games and interactions among participants. Our EE family from Dominica, Grenada, Barbados and the USA joined us for the entire weekend. At the closing Mass, scrolls with Papal blessing were handed out to founders of the EE ministry in Trinidad and Tobago and those who had been sharing on weekends for over

20 years. We published a magazine in commemoration of the event.

Our traditions of community Lenten retreat, mid year weekend relaxation outing, Christmas "lunch and lime" continued unabated. We have now expanded to two locations for our weekends; our traditional Emmaus Centre in Torricella, Arima and the Regional Seminary at Mt. St. Benedict in St. Augustine. We have much to be thankful for, and in 2013, we are looking forward to recruiting young couples for the various aspects of the ministry. May the Lord grant us His favour and send many workers into His vineyard!



It is the personal thoughtfulness, the warm human awareness, the reaching out of the self to one's fellow man that makes giving worthy of the Christmas spirit."

