Dear Parents, Carers and Friends of Mt Maria College Petrie

Christmas

I’d like to begin with a quotation from an unlikely source:  
*Maybe Christmas, the Grinch thought, doesn’t come from a store.*  (Dr. Seuss)

And yes, it’s true, it doesn’t. But in this day and age, it’s so easy to understand why so many people do think this. We as Catholics usually recognize it as a time of thanks and appreciation – the thankfulness to our Lord that He would give the world His only son so that one day, after His son’s death, we would be able to share eternal life.

So continuing with this train of thought, may I put forth the adage: “Time is money.” And this is also true. But let’s turn it on its head. People seem to be so obsessed with buying their loved ones expensive presents, it’s as if the more expensive the present, the greater the depth of the love. But if time is indeed money, and money is that most coveted thing, would it not be better to give our loved ones the gift of time – that one thing that is, metaphorically, one of our most valued things? Time to be with them, time to listen to them, to love them – unconditionally – to just be with them?

I hope all of you have a joyous and loving Christmas, and get to spend as much time as possible with your family and loved ones.

Merry Christmas!

Quotation of the Week

*I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all year.*  (Charles Dickens)

St Maximilian Kolbe, pray for us.
St Marcellin Champagnat, pray for us.
Mary Our Good Mother, pray for us.
And let us remember to always pray for one another.

God bless, have a great Christmas break and thank you for all your support over the year.

Markus Ebeling
Acting Principal
As the year draws to a close let us reflect on the Season of Advent.

Advent

Advent is the season of new beginnings. A new liturgical year begins on the First Sunday of Advent and it beckons to us images of transformation and hope. It is the season of the impossible becoming possible. It is the season of longing and light. Week by week, candles are lit on the Advent wreath signifying our longing for the light of Christ, as the time of his birth draws near. Yet Advent heralds more than Christ’s birth. It paves our way toward celebrating Christ as God-with-us, God in human flesh. This is a profound mystery at the heart of our faith, and it is the cause of our joy at Christmas. There are a number of traditions associated with the Church’s celebration of Advent. Let us explore some of the traditions of the season.

Antiphons

Among the many wonderful traditions connected with Advent is that of the O Antiphons. They are called O Antiphons because each of the petitions begins with ‘O’ as a cry of longing for salvation. This ancient tradition began as early as the seventh century. In many monasteries and parishes the O Antiphons are still sung each night during the seven nights before Christmas and are always proclaimed as the Gospel acclamation on each of those days. The verses of the O Antiphons were put together to make the famous hymn O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. Until the twentieth century, they were always sung in Latin.

Advent Wreath

The custom of lighting a wreath of candles originates in the ancient Northern European custom of having a fire wheel at the winter solstice in December. The fire wheel was lit to celebrate the gradual return of the sun after the shortest, darkest days of winter. Christians adapted this symbol to celebrate the coming of Christ, the light, who transforms the darkest depths of our world.

Many people celebrate Advent by lighting the candles of an Advent wreath each day, accompanied by a prayer. One candle for Week 1, two candles for Week 2, and so on. The wreath comprises three purple candles and one rose-coloured, for the joyful Third Week of Advent. They are set in a circle of evergreen leaves, symbolising God’s endless life and love. A fifth candle, a white ‘Christ’ candle, may be placed in the centre to be lit at Christmas. The gradual lighting of the candles represents the increasing light of Christ as his coming draws near.

Jesse Tree

The Jesse Tree custom is a pictorial celebration of the Jewish history and ancestry of Jesus. Picture-symbols are hung upon a tree, each representing a fragment of the story of the Jewish people leading up to Jesus who is, for Christians, the fulfilment of the prophesies contained in the Hebrew Scriptures. Each person represented by the symbols has, in some way, helped prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah.

The carrying out of this tradition involves obtaining a tree branch or small evergreen tree on which to hang the symbols, and perhaps a brief passage of Scripture related to the person depicted. The symbols may be hung on the tree throughout the season of Advent. Those represented on the tree include Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Rachel, Joseph (coat of many colours), Judah, Ruth, David, Solomon, Joseph (husband of Mary), the Blessed Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ her Son.

Advent Calendar

Another way to mark the days of Advent is to use an Advent calendar. These calendars usually have a door or window to open each day to reveal an image or a prayer. The days of Advent vary each year, so store-bought Advent calendars usually have 24 doors, one for each day in December leading up to Christmas. If you are making your own calendar it may link with the symbols from the Jesse Tree or the prayers for lighting the Advent Wreath. The O Antiphons can also be included in the week leading up to Christmas.

May peace, hope and love be this Season’s gift to you.

Wishing everyone a wonderful Christmas and the very best for 2014.

Janelle Doohan
APRE/Acting Deputy Principal
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