

DECEMBER
2015



Seeds of Hospitality

Newsletter of the Institute of Hospitality
West European Province of Saint John of God ■ No. 72

Dear Hospitallers,

Christmas is often associated with waiting that is why we light the Advent Candles. What are we waiting for this Christmas? Are you longing for anything? What are you expecting to receive? Are you looking forward to something special this Christmas? In Luke's gospel we read: *"There was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon and this man was righteous and pious and waiting for Israel's comfort; and the Holy Spirit was upon him"*

Simeon was told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he seen the Messiah, Jesus. *He told Mary and Joseph when they went to the Temple some weeks after Jesus' birth that the Child Jesus was destined for the rise and fall of many in Israel and as a sign of contradiction so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. He also told Mary that her own soul would be pierced by a sword.* We also read in Luke's Gospel about the Prophetess Anna who spent many years praying and fasting in the temple waiting for Jesus the Messiah. When she seen the child Jesus in the Temple she *"praised God and spoke of him to all those who were awaiting the redemption of Israel"*

In the commercial world we have been hearing and seeing signs of Christmas from around Halloween time. It seems to begin earlier each year. We know that the commercial world is waiting for money! What are we waiting for? What is our focus? Is it on the gift giving and receiving or is it on how I can cook a better dinner this year or a

nicer tree and decorations in the house? It is about all that but primarily Christmas is all about us waiting and preparing to welcome the Child Jesus into our lives. When we truly welcome someone into our lives then our lives will change and that is the challenge of Hospitality. How do we welcome people into our lives and how do we let our lives be changed?

The Child Jesus is challenging us to open our hearts totally to all the people who come to our family and to our Services and to all the people who work with us. This might not be what we see on the Christmas Cards we write and receive but it is the true message of Christmas. Do we welcome everyone in the way we think we would welcome the Child Jesus? John of God's life was a constant welcoming of the Child Jesus. He didn't discriminate or wonder would he/she be too much trouble, John because of his life of hospitality was always positive; he welcomed everyone as if they were the Christ Child. John like Christ was totally selfless; his focus was always on the "other" This is a tremendous challenge to all of us who follow John of God. What have we waited for this Christmas? How are we welcoming the Stranger? I hope we are worth waiting for to the people in our lives as we await the arrival of the Child Jesus!

Happy Christmas to you all!

Gregory



Christmas can Still arrive When You Least Expect..

An elderly lady named Mary Jordan who was struggling with her first Christmas alone. Her husband had died just a few months prior through a slow developing cancer.

Now, several days before Christmas, she was almost snowed in by a brutal weather system. She felt terribly alone - so much so she decided she was not going to decorate for Christmas.

Late that afternoon the doorbell rang, and there was a delivery boy with a box. He said, "Mrs. Jordan?" She nodded. He said, "Would you sign here?" She invited him to step inside and closed the door to get away from the cold. She signed the paper and said, "What's in the box?" The young man laughed and opened up the flap, and inside was a little puppy, a golden Labrador Retriever. The delivery boy picked up the squirming pup and explained, "This is for you, Mrs. Jordan. He's six weeks old, completely housebroken." The young puppy began to wiggle in happiness at being released from captivity.

"Who sent this?" Mrs. Jordan asked. The young man set the animal down and handed her an envelope and said, "It's all explained here in this envelope, Ma'am. The dog was bought last July while its mother was still pregnant. It was meant to be a Christmas gift to you." The young man then handed her a book, *How to Care for Your Labrador*

Retriever.

In desperation she again asked, "Who sent me this puppy?"

As the young man turned to leave, he said, "Your husband, Mrs. Jordan. Happy Christmas."

She opened up the letter from her husband. He had written it three weeks before he died and left it with the kennel owners to be delivered with the puppy as his last Christmas gift to her. The letter was full of love and encouragement and admonishments to be strong. He vowed that he was waiting for the day when she would join him. He had sent her this young animal to keep her company until then. She wiped away the tears, put the letter down, and then remembering the puppy at her feet, she picked up that golden furry ball and held it to her neck. Then she looked out the window at the lights that outlined the neighbor's house, and she heard from the radio in the kitchen the strains of "*Joy to the World, the Lord has Come.*" Suddenly Mary felt the most amazing sensation of peace washing over her. Her heart felt a joy and a wonder greater than the grief and loneliness.

"Little man," she said to the dog, "It's just you and me. But you know what? There's a box down in the back room I'll bet you'd like. It's got a little Christmas tree in it and some decorations and some lights that are going to impress you. And there's a manger scene down there. Let's go get it." God has a way of sending a signal of light to remind us life is stronger than death. Light is more powerful than darkness. Good will overcome evil!





A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Dickens' Christmas Revival

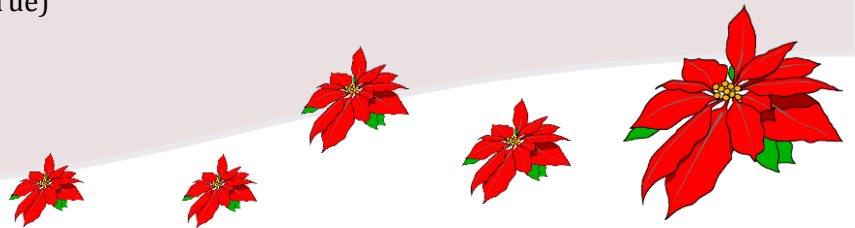


Two hundred years ago, in the early 19th Century, as astonishing as it may seem, Christmas in Great Britain had become almost extinct. The Times newspaper did not mention Christmas once between 1790 and 1835. Not once! However, Charles Dickens was instrumental in reviving Christmas during the Victorian era. He wrote his book 'A Christmas Carol' in 1843 for several reasons. Unemployment and famine was widespread. About 1 in 10 people were as poor as you can possibly imagine, or worse than we can probably imagine. Dickens wanted to challenge the Government and the wealthy to act with generosity and with compassion and so his character Ebenezer Scrooge brings that challenge into focus. Nowadays, not many people want to be like Scrooge at the start of the book. I guess we all hope we can become more like the joyful, genial, generous Scrooge from the last scenes of the book or film. Dickens' book helped to revive Christmas traditions of generosity within Great Britain and the rest of the world.

The "Christmas Carol" is as necessary in today's world as it was in Victorian times. Dickens brought spirituality back to Christmas through his depiction of the values of generosity, compassion and hospitality.

- **January** 27-28 (Wed-Thu)
- **February** 15-16 (Mon-Tue)
- **March** 14-15 (Mon-Tue)
- **April** 4 -5 (Mon-Tue)
- **May** 16-17 (Mon-Tue)
- **June** 13-14 (Mon-Tue)
- **July** 11 - 12 (Mon-Tue)
- **August 31-September 1** (Wed-Thu)
- **October** 26-27 (Wed-Thu)
- **November** 14 -15 (Mon-Tue)
- **December** 5-6 (Mon-Tue)

Dates for Foundation Programmes 2016



We would like people to be more involved with our Newsletter "Seeds of Hospitality". If anyone has any comments, stories, articles or verses that they would like us to include in the Newsletter please let us know through Wheran's email address: Wheran.Kee@sjog.ie



(From back row left) Bro. Kilian, Wheran Kee. Carla Mills, Pearl Langan, Daniel McTiernan, Eleanor O'Reilly, Olivia Gordon, Tara O'Reilly, Aideen Keaney, Bro. Gregory, Elizabeth Lawlor, (from front row left) Maeve Dunn, Colin Gallagher, Joan O'Donnell, Scott Hill