

A Secular Christmas?

Our household never misses a parade. Living with four children a few short blocks off Santa Fe means that no matter how inclement the weather is, during a parade our family can be found sitting on the curb watching strange vehicles creep past while people throw candy at us. Last weekend, we made our pilgrimage to Santa Fe for the annual event that I call the Christmas parade, although it is officially “The Parade of Lights.”

I’d be willing to bet that at some point, “The Parade of Lights” was officially called “The Christmas Parade,” but for some reason, the event was renamed. What used to be “Christmas break” at school is now “Winter break.” These sorts of name changes that seem to exorcise the Spirit of Jesus from Christmas get under my skin. But this year, I am trying to adopt a new perspective. Instead of lamenting the secularization of Christmas, we can embrace the fact that Christmas is celebrated in every corner of the world. Is there any other holiday that is so widely known and celebrated around the world?

Beyond the mere fact that Santa Claus and his elves are busy throughout the season of Advent preparing America for the message of Christmas, the economic blessings of Christmas are huge. Retail businesses count on “holiday shopping” to balance their books, and these businesses provide honorable employment for many people who otherwise might not have jobs. Families that struggle to find time to be together, somehow find time at Christmas. In this light, the secularization of Christmas has done our society a fair bit of good.

Accordingly, the Christmas season is simply more evidence that God is always working to form the world into his image. We may live in a 24/7 society, but there is still one day a year that is kept by common consent as a day of rest. We may live in an age where the goals of commerce appear to hold the upper hand over compassion, but God uses commerce to provide work for the least employable members of our society. Seen

this way, my urge to lament the secularization of Christmas might better be described as a failure to appreciate the true impact of Christmas.

The changed perspective that I am cultivating has been inspired by Michael Ramsey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury. Ramsey served the Church of England during a time in when people were leaving the church in droves; however, Ramsey noted that at the same time many Christian values—the equality of all races and concern for the poor—were making unprecedented gains in society. So, while many Church leaders were certain that the world was overtaking Christianity, Ramsey saw certain aspects of Christianity overtaking the world. Even so, he recognized that the Church missed a lot of opportunities. Near the end of his book *Sacred and Secular*, Ramsey poses the following question: “Suppose that we Christians were more truly fulfilling our difficult mission toward secular society, what might a good, decent secularist or humanist begin to say about us?”

Ramsey answers his own question, saying Christians ought to endorse the good they see in secular things, revealing to the world that Christians are deeply positive and indeed optimistic people. Christians, Ramsey argues, should be marked by three characteristics: (1) “a deep reverence for persons as destined for eternity with God,” (2) peacefulness, “a kind of heavenly serenity which is able to draw the sting of suffering,” and (3) “the humility of a man or woman who has known authentically the presence of God.”

These characteristics—reverence for human life, deep serenity, and humility before God—are at the heart of Christmas. The Incarnation demonstrates more fully than any other act in history the values which Ramsey identifies as the essence of authentic Christian engagement with the world. So, perhaps this Advent we can enjoy the schmaltzy versions of “Silent Night” that play over the store loudspeakers, knowing that God is still at work in the world.

-Benjamin



*A Delightful
Assortment of
Characters at the
Halloween Potluck*

Bishop Michael
Milliken Ordained
Katie Hargis and
Matthew Kemp to
the Diaconate on the
Feast of All Saints



**The Favre Clan
celebrated the Baptism
of London Higgins on
All Saints' Sunday**



Notes for December

Carols in the Cathedral: Christmas Potluck & Sing-along

- Wednesday, December 17, 5:30 PM
- Bring a Christmas dish from around the world to share
- Carols begin at 6:15 PM
- Ham provided



Christmas For Kids

A Christmas tree with names and wishes of children from St. Francis Community Services is in the parish hall. Please take this wonderful opportunity to be a Christmas Angel for a child in need.

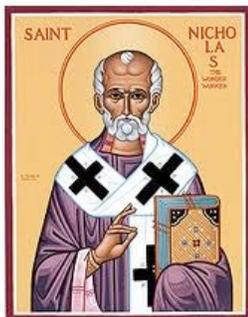
Contact John Ryberg for more information.
(785) 825 -9222

More Accolades from the Steven Spooner Concert:

Coleen Jewell, USD #305 Music Teacher: I need to quit playing; I need to practice more.

Don Hough, Hough Piano and Organ Company: The artist did incredible things with the piano. He interjected his personality into the music. It was a memorable evening.

David Nichols, Cathedral Member: It would be difficult to pare my comments down to only two sentences. It was inspiring, enjoyable and impressive, Steven is a master of his art form and he has a personality to match. His music was satisfying but left me with a longing for more.



Who is St. Nicholas?

St. Nicholas was bishop of Myra (in modern day Turkey) in the fourth century. He was tortured and imprisoned under the Emperor Diocletian, but survived the Roman Empire's the persecution of Christians. He later attended the Council of Nicaea in 325 (which first crafted the Nicene Creed), and according to some accounts struck a priest for denying that Jesus was divine. He died around 342, and has come to be regarded as the patron saint of children, sailors, pawnbrokers, Russia, Greece, and Sicily. Here at Christ Cathedral you can see a window dedicated to Nicholas in St. Michael's Chapel.

Nicholas is best known for his generosity, especially through a the story in which he anonymously dropped money into the stockings of a man who was too poor to pay dowries for his three daughters to be married. Based on stories like this, it became a practice in some European countries (e.g. Germany and the Netherlands) to give gifts to children on his feast day, December 6. Eventually St. Nicholas (or in Dutch, "Sinter Klaas") became the basis for the modern figure Santa Claus.



Stewardship Update:

	Actual	Budget
Pledge Income thru November 23th Year-to-Date	\$147,074	\$162,900
Plate Income thru November 23th Year-to-Date	\$17,384	\$22,917

Income is ~\$21,000 behind budget YTD.

The work of Christ at our Cathedral needs your financial support!

Acoustic Eidolon

With Thomas Loeffke, Harpist

Tuesday • December 9th • 7:00 p.m.

Christ Cathedral
138 S. 8th, Salina

Free Admission

This performance is presented as part of an artist residency through
the Arts Infusion Program of Salina Arts and Humanities



For information call: 785.309.5770 or email sahc@salina.org

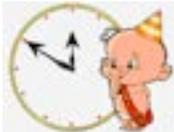
For needed accommodations, please call Kathy Burlew at 309-5770 between the hours of 8 a.m.-Noon and 1-5 p.m.
Every effort will be made to accommodate known disabilities.

For material or speech access, please call at least 5 working days prior to the events.



Salina Arts & Humanities, a department of the City of Salina, has served a unique role in arts advocacy and support since 1966. The Smoky Hill River Festival, Horizons Grants Program, Smoky Hill Museum, Arts Infusion Program in schools, Community Art & Design, Cultural Connections, and Art a la Carte concert series are among the programs of Salina Arts & Humanities, located at 211 W. Iron Avenue in Salina.

December - 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 10 AM - Mass	1	2 6 PM EfM	3 5 PM - Mass 5:45 Supper 6:15 Christian Ed 7:15 Choir	4	5	6 5 PM
7 10 AM - Mass	8	9 6 PM EfM	10 5 PM - Mass 5:45 Supper 6:15 Christian Ed 7:15 Choir	11 9 AM Stewardship Meeting	12	13 5 PM - Mass
14 10 AM - Mass 4 PM Evensong	15 6:30 PM Vestry Meeting	16 6 PM EfM	17 5 PM - Mass 5:30 Potluck and Carols 7:15 Choir	18	19	20 5 PM - Mass
21 10 AM Mass	22	23 6 PM EfM	24 5 PM - Family Mass 10:30 Traditional Christmas Eve Mass	25  10 AM Christmas Day Mass	26	27 5 PM - Mass
28 10 AM - Mass	29	30 6 PM EfM	31 5 PM - Mass 	1 	2	3 5 PM - Mass

Vestry Highlights

Plate and pledge incomes are behind for this point in the year. Several areas are over budget including: diocesan assessment because our receipts are up; supplies because of the extra expense for altar flowers; utilities because of the cold weather; and accounting due to the use of an outside auditor. The Spooner concert was a success even though we did not show a profit. It was recommended that we continue to sponsor piano concerts. A stewardship letter along with a pledge card will be going out soon. Fr. Benjamin asked the Vestry to be leaders for the Read the Bible in a Year program.

Concerns about the Feed the Hungry program and Coffee Hour were discussed. A building use policy for the Feed the Hungry program will be drawn up along with some general building use guidelines.

These are some highlights from the November Vestry Meeting. If you would like a copy of the complete Vestry minutes, please contact the Cathedral office. *Linda Favre, Vestry Clerk*