

THE CALVARY EXAMINER

CHRISTMAS EDITION 2007

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 12

**Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is
Christ the Lord. ~ Luke 2:11**



Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.
~ Philippians 2: 5-11

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Calvary Baptist Church

Kings Highway – Wisner Road Warwick, NY 10990
Mailing Address: 5 Wisner Road
<http://www.cbcwarwick.com>

Craig Adams, Pastor

Church: 986-2137

Home: 986-4560

Eric Dammann, Associate Pastor

Home: 651-5480

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!!!!

ANNOUNCEMENT:

THE DEACONS ARE COLLECTING A GIFT FOR THE PASTORS AND DIRECTOR OF WOMEN'S MINISTRY. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE PLEASE GET IT TO THEM BY THE CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE.

TREASURING GOD IN OUR TRADITIONS

In Noël Piper's Treasuring God in our Traditions we are asked to ponder our traditions and why we do them every year. From birthday breakfasts to graveside remembrances, we are invited to worship the Treasure from Heaven -- Jesus Christ.

In order to learn that Christ is indeed our Treasure we must practice remembering him as such. In Deuteronomy it states "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts." (Deut. 6:4-6) Does this come naturally or do we have to learn them? The Holy Spirit does give this desire. We must put it into practice. One of the ways we can do this is by our traditions. We learn by repetition. In the Old Testament, God invented tradition by instructing his people to perform ceremonies and engage in celebrations yearly. The most notable of these is Passover. God wants people to reenact the meal and share the story.

In the book, a distinction is made between the "everyday" and "especially" traditions. We need the "everyday" traditions or habits to form a foundation, but we also need "especially" traditions to cause us to remember. I thought the book was going to be about Christmas traditions. There is a chapter devoted to it, but it is not the main focus of Noël Piper's meditations. The "everyday" traditions were her main focus. If we are to treasure God we have to make it regular and deliberate. We need to do things consistently to show our children or the people in our circles that God is not to be taken for granted. The everyday traditions that Piper talks about are prayer and reading the Word of God. Her solution for passing down these traditions in your family is by holding family devotions. We need to plan the "everyday" so that the "especially" can be put in the proper context.



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There is a lot more in her book that is worthwhile. You can read the entire book online for free at [http://www.desiringgod.org/Store/Books/ByTopic/104/377 Treasuring God in Our Traditions/](http://www.desiringgod.org/Store/Books/ByTopic/104/377_Treasuring_God_in_Our_Traditions/)

OUR TRADITIONS

On Christmas day, before we do anything else as a family, we read the Christmas story from Luke 2: 1 - 20 and pray and thank God for sending Jesus. It just helps set the tone for the rest of the day and the giving and receiving of gifts. It takes the focus off of the presents and reminds us of the greatest gift.

~ Craig Adams

In the Rosario home, we have two traditions that focus on Christ during the holiday season. The first is to set up our Nativity sets. We have one for the children and one that goes on the mantel. We tell the story of Christ's birth as we set up both sets. The kids play with their set throughout the season setting it up again and again telling the story of our Saviors birth. The second tradition is to make a special coffee cake or bread with candles to blow out. Before we open presents under the tree, we come together in the morning for breakfast and focus on the "real" meaning of Christmas by lighting the advent wreath, singing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus, and listening to my Grandfather read the account of the birth. He went home to be with the Lord this summer, but we made sure to have his reading recorded, so the tradition can be carried on for years to come with our own children.

~ Jennifer Rosario

Katherine and I began decorating gingerbread houses with the family. We have the gingerbread house unadorned, and everyone can create their own special decorations and eat candy, too. Katherine and I light a candle and say a prayer for all the people around the world. Then we go to bed!

~ Tracy Brown



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VIGILIA DI NATALE...LA CASA SICILIANA ... LA FESTA DI NATALE...LA DOLCE VITA

Translation: Christmas Eve... The Italian Home... The Italian Feasts... ...The Sweet Life

By ~ Karen Giammarino

It began with going to the fresh fish market to find the perfect fish for the courses we would hope to enjoy. It was a festive endeavor. We would have to arrive early; otherwise there wouldn't be anything left! In later years, we put our order in, but this was 1960.

If it were summer, the fish would be outside under the umbrellas in bins, but this was December the 24th. I was dressed in my snowsuit, complete with hat, gloves and scarves...and yes, there was more than one. My mother put the first one on my head over my hat, and the other on my neck, before she wrapped it around my face. God forbid I should get sick. I was mortified, but if this was the only way I could go out, then, I was obedient, and this was the only way I could go out. I had visions of anything sugar dancing in my head, but it would have to wait. For now, we were on a mission.

The air was cold, but it felt good, what little of it I could feel. The snow crackled underneath my huge boots, and people were smiling and exchanging hellos. They would say things like "*Caio, Buona Natale,*" and "*Salute a tutti la sua famiglia!*" Of course, there was Hey, "Merry Christmas, and say hello to the family for me!"... and that, I understood. We headed to 18th avenue in Bensonhurst, Brookyn, to the only fish store I knew existed at the time. He got the fish each morning from the Fulton Fish Market, right off the boats. It appeared as though it was just caught, and surprised to find itself in a showcase...eyes opened wide...I Yi Yi...

You knew what you wanted before you went, and you went with a list. How we could possibly forget the tree things we needed, I do not know, but there was something about reading them from a list. I guess that if other people saw you were reading from a list, they would imagine that you had about 15 important things on it. It was a "Brooklyn" thing, and you wanted people to think you were going to be busy cooking for everyone you knew, and their children. The more people you cooked for, the more clout you had. If Mrs. Manachochi got there before you, there would be no shrimp!!! It didn't matter...we couldn't afford shrimp. So, we bought everything we could afford, which was usually flounder fillet, clams, and mussels. My father loved lobster, though, so if it were possible, he would make a way to get a few. Oh, and of course, there was calamari. We were just going to purchase our share, though, and we were each given a responsibility for what we would bring. That was tradition. Also, you could be sure there was no meat on Christmas Eve...at least, not before midnight.

The shop's floor was covered with sawdust and the aromas permeated the air. I used to wonder how the men's wives could stand all of that fish smell on their husband's hands.

Schifo,(Yucko) I thought. Still, there was something about how they could wield a knife through any fish and clean it in about five seconds. I marveled...but not for long...I had other things on my mind, like the candy store that was just across the street from the three room flat where we lived. I could buy my little jelly rolls for a penny, and I had a few of those.

We went home with our little treasures from the ocean and I had visions of how each one would be prepared. They were breaded and fried...what else. This wasn't Alfredo's, and there was no time for rollatini. The women of the house began the frying process at about 7:30 in the evening, and we would get to taste something by 8:00 or so...not that we weren't eating everything else we could find, and we could find a lot. Eating late is typical in La Casa Italiana, which tradition is based on the siestas taken in Italia. You took a nap in the afternoon, and then went back to work. You came home late, and ate a late dinner. This was the way it was, and although things changed



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for many families, they didn't change on Christmas Eve. The stove was an array of different pans for different fish, and it was the center of attention. You couldn't leave anything unattended for a second, or it would end up in l'immondizia. (The garbage)

This particular dinner had a lot to do with distinguishing between the textures of the fresh fish, more than doing it up gourmet. It had to be prepared as simply as possible, or no one ate. The Calamari couldn't be too chewy, and the flounder had to be at once soft and crunchy because of the breading. The baked clams oreganata, though slightly chewy, had my favorite bread crumb topping, and Nana would chop the clams a little. You got twice as much that way if you used both shells. She liked that. The tastes aren't overpowering or extreme either, except if someone happened to bring the sardines, anchovies, and smelts. I yi yi, I would think! How and WHY would they want to eat those things, when we had all of this other good stuff! If that wasn't bad enough, my uncle would sometimes bring the lumache, which means snails. He would dump them out of a paper bag, and I would watch them inch their way around Nanny's table, until she brought them to an untimely death.

I watched a lot of things come to life on that table, and I killed a few too, like the crabs that used to chase me around the kitchen when they dumped them out of the bushel...very funny. Those, I loved to eat, and still do to this day. Poetic, I think. Ahhh, and there was always a pasta, which was like some kind of miracle for me, because I was a very finicky eater back then. How things change. I did love the stuffed artichokes and antipasti, though, which included my favorite green cracked olives with celery. If Nana had the time, she would make me a little pizza Siciliana, which was a nice thick doughy pizza with fresh tomato sauce and some cheese. How I miss her. I was her girl.

Even though the family came from Sicily, where you turn into a troll if you break tradition, our Italian American dinner was really all about the sharing. We didn't adhere to the tradition of having to serve the "seven fishes" either, which many other families did, or they would suffer the wrath of those that wouldn't do it if you paid them...a lot. Look out for flying shoes. (That's another story) We probably had more than seven fishes, now that I think about it.

We were three in our household, but when we ate at Nana's, we could easily be twenty three. Your family always grew at Christmas. After we would eat dinner, there would always be strufoli, which are little dough balls covered in honey and confetti, Panatone, which is bread baked with fruit, and my Nonna Grande's lemon cookies. Nana taught me how to make those. We would have marzipan and biscotti al anise, which are those long cookies infused with the extract. I would turn mine into Biscotti al Cioccolato if I could find the chocolate, and then I would dip them into my café latte...heavy on the latte because I was just a kid. I was at the "Kids" table, after all, so we got away with a little sneak of this and that, here and there. Still, we were allowed to taste, in small quantities, the things that the adults would enjoy. Afterward, we would sneak into Nana's spare room; find the "Special Box," put on her clothes, hats, and jewelry, and play dress up. Things would culminate in a fashion show of sorts, and we would parade around for our aunts and uncles, looking pretty ridiculous, but feeling like a million bucks. We felt blessed, and we were. Some of our family members would go to church at Midnight, and after midnight, the meat fast would be broken, and the sausage would be roasted. Nana made the best crusty Italian bread I have ever eaten, and I've eaten a lot. Speaking of eating, we didn't stop...till sometime in January. I wonder why I didn't get thin until I was 13!

We had aunts, uncles, cousins...first and second...all in one place. We lived in the same neighborhood, and we liked it. We walked to each other's homes, and we didn't come announced. Time wasn't arranged, there were surprises. At Christmas time, our front door could find any one of our family members or a friend, looking for a cup of coffee and a hug. They "Knocked with Their Feet," which means they would come with all sorts of goodies and their arms would be too full to knock with their hands. Your door was graced with a special mark on

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the bottom, which, by the standard of those days, was a good thing. If you were at the table, then they joined you. If you were going somewhere, then you weren't going anywhere. You made your apologies to the waiting family, and they understood, because you never sent anyone away, or else. Sempre Famiglia. (Always Family) There were parties and feasts that lasted throughout the month of December, and well into January too. It was a time for loving like no other time of the year. Every day was Christmas. We were close.

Time moved on as it does so well, and many loved ones have gone to be with the Lord. "Little Italy," has gotten littler over the years, and things are forever changed. I have my memories. Since those days, God has given us new life, and has blessed it abundantly. He has answered countless prayers, and many dreams have come true by His Grace.

Through my daughter's eyes, I see the importance of tradition once again. If there is something I don't do that she remembers me doing, she lets me know about it, and I do it, or else. My mother waits for me to make my Nonna Grande's lemon cookies each year with the anticipation of a child. I love them too. Joey is just happy to have family around, and he eats EVERYTHING I make, and loves it too, or else. He recognizes the importance of enjoying family while they're here. That's key, for no one is guaranteed tomorrow. Nana is forever close, and I can hear her singing to me whenever I think of her. I'm getting old, so I know how she felt when her hands used to hurt from rolling out the dough. Still, at the end of the day, she made time to cradle my head in her lap and run her fingers through my hair. She called me "Karenela." I was her Morning Prayer, and the light of her heart. My mother rubs my back when she sees that "Look" in my eyes. I'm blessed that she is with me. I'm blessed for La Famiglia. Christmas Eve is no longer about the food we eat, but about serving our Church Family in the capacities God has graced us with. I'm blessed that we are all saved, and that's a big deal for this Italian American family from Brooklyn... Questa una prima regalo ~ That's the best gift....Amen.

And...PS

I'm the only mother I know who would put two hats on her young daughter, and made her wear a scarf around her neck as well...or else.



Con Molto Amore e` Un Abbraccio Forte Forte

Karenela

A HEALTHIER CHRISTMAS RECIPE

Spinach and Pear Salad with Gorgonzola

From Kyra Joy's Kitchen

Baby Spinach Leaves or a Spring Mix

Chopped Pears (I use green pears)

Gorgonzola Cheese Crumbles

Rinse enough spinach according how many you are serving. Chop up two to four pears. (I put a whole pear in if I'm just making one portion for lunch.) Top with a handful of Gorgonzola Cheese.

Recommended Dressings are Honey Mustard or a homemade Cranberry Balsamic Vinaigrette.



The Calvary Examiner could not be published without the support of those who write articles and summit stories. I recognize it is not your traditional church newsletter. I would like to personally thank everyone who has done so in 2007, and look forward to a great coming year.

Love in Christ,

Kyra Joy Hamling

