



THE INQUISITOR

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Hamlet Night By: Henry Knight

On the Wednesday following Thanksgiving break this year all the seniors met in the gym at 5:30 for the Seton tradition, "Hamlet Night". Hamlet Night is mandatory for seniors and is counted as a test grade for the English 12 dual enrollment class. All the seniors' families were invited, and many of them showed up to watch the students participate in acting out a scene from Hamlet which they had memorized. Hamlet Night is judged and graded by several Seton faculty, and the participating students

get an opportunity to vote for their favorite scenes. The event lasts for several hours and is broken up by a 10-minute intermission which includes snacks and drinks. Hamlet Night was a great success this year, as everyone seemed to enjoy the event and have a good time, even though it is graded. It is no wonder that this is a Seton tradition, because Hamlet night is one of the few things that sets apart senior year from any other.



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How Many Presents Should You Buy Someone?

By: Matthew Baldwin

Giving your family and friends presents for Christmas has always been a popular tradition still carried on by numerous people today. But how many presents should you give somebody for Christmas? Many people have certain guidelines they follow when buying presents. A popular one is that every person should receive three gifts like the baby Jesus received from the Wisemen at His birth. Another popular habit is to use the Four Presents Rule, which is to give someone something they want, something they need, something to wear, and something to read. I believe that all these personal guidelines make logical sense, but I have a different method for the number of gifts someone should receive. As a small child, Christmas Day was always one of the holidays I looked forward to the most. I think little children are the ones who really look forward to receiving gifts, so they should receive more as a result. Compared to adults, little kids

tend to want gifts that are cheaper and more inexpensive, making it easier to buy for them within a budget. As a person grows older, though, I think the number of presents should start to decrease to somewhere between one to two gifts per person. When someone grows older, they will naturally start moving away from the Christmas toys to more expensive items, like electronics or clothing. Those items can be very pricey, and when a person starts asking for those kinds of presents, the number of gifts to give them should also decrease. That age group of people tends to know how expensive those items are and should understand if they receive fewer presents. Whatever you receive for Christmas, however, shouldn't take away from the celebration of Christ's birth on Christmas Day. May we all remember the great and most important gift of Himself given to us on that day.



Immaculate Conception

By: Shannon O'Malley

December 8th is an important day in the liturgical year, where we as Catholics celebrate our Blessed Mother being conceived without original sin. Our Blessed Mother was given the gift of freedom from original sin at the moment of conception in the womb of her mother, St. Anne.

We celebrate Mary's birthday on September 8th, nine months after December 8th, the Feast of her Immaculate Conception. In *Ineffabilis Deus*, Pope Pius IX wrote:

"We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful."

In 1767-1768, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo painted a captivating depiction of our Blessed Mother, conceived without original sin. His painting is of the Baroque style, which originated in the 17th century in Italy. His image of the Immaculate Conception contains many symbolic elements throughout the painting. The white dove hovering over Mary's head symbolizes the Holy Spirit. He also includes a collection of stars surrounding her head as well as a crescent moon, both of which come from the passage, Revelations 12:1, "A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head." Representing our Blessed Mother's purity and regality, Tiepolo painted lilies and roses scattered throughout.

It is important for Catholics to honor Mary as our Mother and Queen on the feast of her Immaculate Conception and go to Mass to celebrate this special holy day of obligation.



Happy Holiday Home Recipes By: Josiah Albin

Cookies are pretty much the best part of Christmas, right? Whether you're making them for a party, for Santa, or just for a cozy night by the fireplace, there's always a reason to whip up a batch of cookies during the holidays.

Christmas butter cookies are delicious, versatile, and make the perfect foundation for frosting art. The ingredients are as follows: 1 cup unsalted butter at room temperature, ½ cup of granulated sugar, 1 large egg, 1 TB vanilla extract, 3 cups all-purpose flour, ½ tsp baking powder, and ½ tsp. kosher salt.

Step 1: Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, with a mixer at low speed, beat butter and sugar until blended. Increase speed to high, beat until light and creamy. At low speed, beat in egg and vanilla. Beat in flour, baking powder, and salt just until blended.

Step 2: Divide dough into 4 equal pieces. Wrap each piece with plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm enough to roll, about 1 hour.

Step 3: On a lightly floured surface, with a floured rolling pin, roll 1 piece of dough 1/8 inch thick. With floured 2- to 3-inch assorted cookie cutters, cut dough into as many cookies as possible, wrap and refrigerate trimmings. Place cookies, 1 inch apart, on a large ungreased cookie sheet, sprinkle cookies with colored sugar now if you like, or frost with Ornamental Frosting after baking.

Step 4: Bake cookies for 10 to 12 minutes, until lightly browned. Transfer cookies to a wire rack to cool. If you like, brush colored sugar remaining on cookie sheets onto a piece of waxed paper to use again. Repeat with remaining dough and trimmings.

Step 5: When cookies are cool, prepare Ornamental Frosting if you like, use to decorate cookies as desired. Sprinkle colored sugars as desired on frosting before it dries. Allow frosting to dry completely, about 1 hour. Store cookies in tightly covered containers for up to 2 weeks.



Peppermint Meringues are another crowd pleaser. These are easy, tasty confections made from egg whites, sugar, and peppermint extract. Crisp on the outside with a slight chew on the inside, they make a delicious gluten-free dessert to add to your holiday table or sweet homemade food gift idea. They are light, airy swirls of sugar that pair perfectly with a mug of hot chocolate or your morning cup of coffee. Plus, they're easy to make with one simple trick: paint vertical stripes of red food coloring inside a pastry bag before spooning in the meringue. As you pipe out each candy, it will have minty red stripes! The ingredients are as follows: 4 large egg whites, ½ cup granulated sugar, ¼ tsp cream of tartar, and ¼ tsp peppermint extract.

Step 1: Heat oven to 200°F. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.

Step 2: In a large metal or glass bowl, whisk together egg whites, sugar and cream of tartar. Set bowl over (but not in) saucepan of simmering water and cook, whisking constantly, until sugar has dissolved, and whites are very warm to the touch, 3 to 4 minutes.

Step 3: Remove from heat and, using an electric mixer, beat on low speed, gradually increasing speed to high, until glossy soft peaks form, about 5 minutes. Beat in peppermint extract

Step 4: Fit pastry bag with 1/2-inch round pastry tip. Using a paintbrush, paint vertical stripes of food coloring inside the pastry bag. Spoon egg white mixture into bag and pipe 1-inch circles onto prepared baking sheets.

Step 5: Bake meringues until just set on outside, 60 to 75 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

Let the frosting and the sprinkles fly as you celebrate with family and friends!



Crafty Christmas Traditions By: Titus Stanton

Throughout history, no other holiday has been more distinguished and celebrated than Christmas. Across the world, billions of people come together to honor and proclaim the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through this holiday that a variety of Christmas traditions have been generated across multiple cultures. This article will explore some of these creative Christmas traditions from across the world and at our own Seton School.

With numerous traditions coming from various countries, Europe is proficient when it comes to ways of celebrating Christmas. One of the most popular traditions in Europe is decorating fir trees. While America adorns evergreen trees with sparkling lights, Scandinavia and other parts of Northern Europe cover their fir trees with wax candles. While this tradition is popular in Northern Europe, it is in Central Europe, specifically Alsace, Germany, where the first public Christmas tree was displayed in 1576. Another international Christmas celebration finds its roots in Colombia. This gathering, named Noche de las Velitas, occurs on December 7th and celebrates the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and the birth of Christ. Thousands of Colombians decorate their homes and streets in millions of white and red colored velas, candles, and decorated paper bags. In the city square, they launch fireworks and play music all through the night. This festive tradition has also been integrated into America, with the Farolito Walk in Sante Fe, New Mexico. While most of these traditions occur in distant cultures and countries, one of the most famous and influential traditions is celebrated just across the border. In Canada, the French speaking families living in Quebec practice a Christmas Eve tradition named Réveillon. In this custom, families attend the midnight Christmas Eve Mass

and go home to celebrate Christmas with an early morning dinner celebration. The meal includes minced pie, mashed potatoes, stuffing, and a variety of Canadian delicacies.

Even though many of these traditions are from distant and foreign cultures, here at Seton, many of our teachers have their own traditions and ways of celebrating Christmas. When asked about her Christmas traditions, Mrs. Pogue explained how she and her family arrange a Fontanini Bible village at Sacred Heart Church for the entire congregation. She said that it takes two days to set the village up and how she loves creating it with her family. Another creative tradition prepared by our astounding teachers is from Mr. Terreri. He told The Inquisitor that one of his family's traditions is opening one present every day from Christmas to the Epiphany. He said it takes away the "present glut" feeling that you might have when you open all the presents on Christmas. Mrs. K. has continued her parents' tradition with her own children and buys them a new ornament every year that typically marks a milestone in their life that year. "My children leave home as adults with a lifetime of ornaments celebrating First Holy Communions, learning to ride a 2-wheeler, getting their braces off, graduating high school or college, and getting married. Every Christmas they get to take them out and relive the fun memories of that year as they decorate their family tree."

Throughout the world, billions of people gather to celebrate Christmas in their own unique way. It's important that you make your Christmas special with your own distinct traditions. By doing this, you will make your Christmas truly magical.

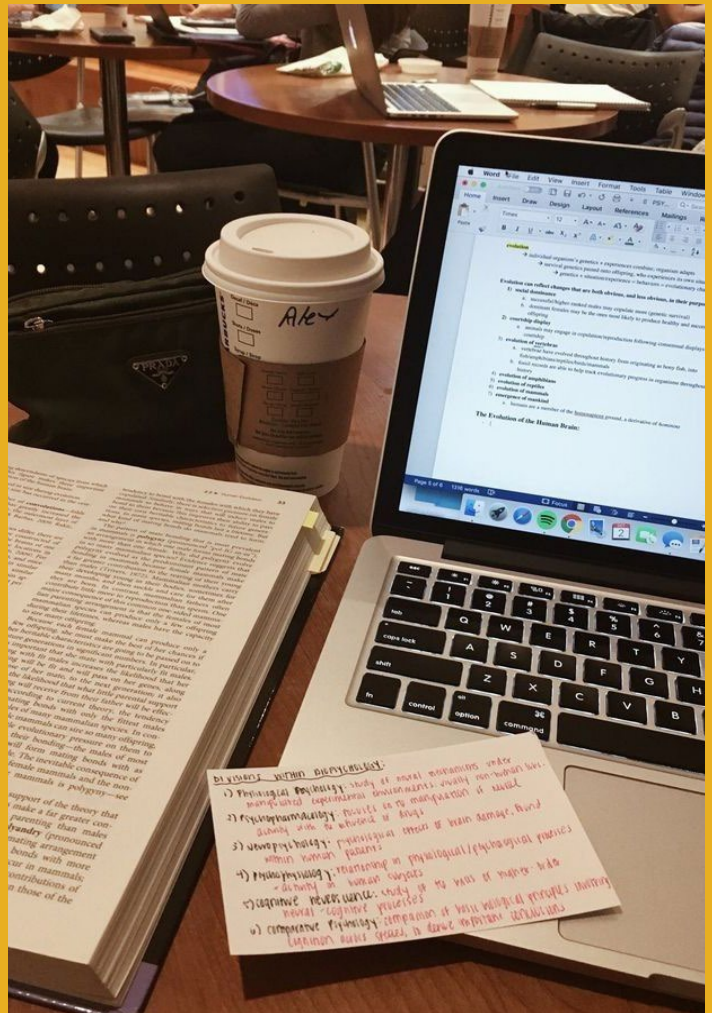


Study Smarter, Not Harder

By: Anneliese Orr

Seton School is known for its challenging curriculum. It is very important for students to know how to productively study. This might be hard for students today because of all the distractions in their lives, so the first step is simple but effective: turn off all distractions. Distractions can come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, but more than likely the number one distraction is your phone. To prevent spending too much time on it, you should go to your phone's settings and set a time limit, or just turn off the phone all together. It is also important to map out your own studying schedule, including breaks. This helps channel your focus because you give yourself a specific task to finish before a certain time and helps you keep track of the breaks you give yourself. The comforts of our beds and couches are hard to deny and are favorite places to do homework, but creating a good environment is a key factor in studying. Finding a quiet place and a table to work on is the ideal study environment. Without the coziness of your bed or couch, you are more likely to focus and less likely to doze off. So, the next time you think of chilling on the couch with your study guides you should instead sit down at a table. One of the hardest things for students is retaining information. Many students read over the material and hope to memorize it like that. While that method can work, it is a less effective way to study. It is recommended to rewrite your study guides by hand. While this method can be laborious, it proves very effective, as the student retains more information by actively thinking of the material while copying it. For

visual learners, little doodles about the material can be very helpful. Every student has his/her own way of studying which works for them. If you are still working out what works best for you, the above methods are ones which have been recommended by professionals and straight A students. Study smarter, not harder!



All These Feasts: The Christmas Octave By: Emma Fox

Each year Christmas comes and goes for the world outside of the Catholic Faith. Artificial decorations, music, and “happy holidays” prevail until December 25th, then the world forgets about Christmas and moves on. As Catholics and Christians, we are blessed to have eight days from Christmas to New Years to continue celebrate. Let us look at December 26 through January 1.

Day 1, December 25: Merry Christmas!

Day 2, December 26: Saint Stephen

It is the day after Christmas and everyone is full of tasty food, surrounded by cheer and presents, and it is actually another feast to celebrate and remember.

St. Stephen was the first martyr after Christ's death. As it is written in the Acts of the Apostles, Stephen, a young deacon, was stoned to death for his Faith. Around the world countries had unusual ways to remember him.

In Ireland, there was the stoning of the wren.

“The story goes [back] during Penal Times, there was once a plot against local soldiers in an Irish village. They were surrounded and were about to be ambushed when a group of wrens pecked on their drums and awakened the soldiers. The plot failed and the wren became known as ‘The Devil’s bird.’

“On St. Stephens Day (December 26) in Ireland, a procession takes place where a pole with a holly bush is carried from house to house and families dress up in old clothes and with blackened faces. In olden times, an actual wren would be killed and placed on top of the pole.

“This custom has, to a large degree, disappeared, but the tradition of visiting from house to house on St. Stephen’s Day has survived and is very much part of Christmas.”

St. Stephen’s Day song:

The Wren, the Wren
 The King of the Birds
 On Stephen’s Day
 He was caught in the furze.
 Up with the kettle
 And down with the pan
 Give us your answer
 And let us be gone.

(St. Stephen’s Day: Irish tradition of ‘hunting the wren’ (irishcentral.com)).

Another fun tradition comes in the form of food. Since St. Stephen is the patron of horses, for reasons unknown, the Slavic countries bake podkovy, which means horseshoes, on December 26th. These baked sweet breads are a wonderful way to celebrate.

St. Stephen’s Horns

INGREDIENTS

- 1 package active dry, or cake, yeast
- 1/2 cup lukewarm milk
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- grated rind of 1 lemon
- 1 cup sweet butter
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 5 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- poppy seed, nuts, or cheese
- cream

DETAILS

Yield: 4 dozen

Prep Time: 2 hours

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Dissolve yeast in lukewarm milk.
- 2) In a separate bowl, beat eggs until light and fluffy. Add sour cream, yeast-milk mixture, lemon juice, rind.
- 3) Cut butter and shortening into dry ingredients; add to egg mixture. Mix well. Chill for 1 hour.
- 4) Roll out dough 1/4 inch thick. Cut into rectangles. Sprinkle rectangles with poppy seeds, nuts, or cheese. Close. Shape into horns. Brush with cream.
- 5) Bake on greased baking sheets 12-15 minutes at 375°.

Recipe Source: Catholic Cookbook, The by William I. Kaufman, The Citadel Press, New York, 1965



Day 3, December 27: Saint John the Evangelist

St. John is known as the beloved apostle of Christ. A fisherman like many of the apostles, he grew close to Christ. After the Resurrection, he wrote both his gospel and the book of Revelation before he died in Ephesus. St. John is one of the few apostles who did not die a martyr's death.

He is the patron saint against burns; against epilepsy; against foot problems; against hailstorms; against poisoning; burn victims; arms manufacturers; art dealers; authors; basket makers; bookbinders; booksellers; publishers; butchers; candle makers; composers; editors; engravers; friendships; glaziers; government officials; harvests; lithographers; notaries; painters; papermakers; printers; saddle makers; scholars; sculptors; stationers; tanners; theologians; typesetters; vintners; and writers. Remember to pray to him, his intercessions are very powerful.

Day 4, December 28: The Holy Innocents

What a beautiful and sad feast this is. Only 3 days after Christmas, the Catholic Church gave us the remembrance of the little ones who died as Herod cruelly sought out the Christ Child. These Holy Innocents are patrons of students. Pray to them as you prepare for tests and other big assignments.

"The precious death of any martyr deserves high praise because of his heroic confession; the death of these children is precious in the sight of God because of the beatitude they gained so quickly. For already at the beginning of their lives they pass on. The end of the present life is for them the beginning of glory. These then, whom Herod's cruelty tore as sucklings from their mothers' bosom, are justly hailed as "infant martyr flowers"; they were the Church's first blossoms, matured by the frost of persecution during the cold winter of unbelief." —St. Augustine

Holy Innocents by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

Sleep, little Baby, sleep;
The holy Angels love thee,
And guard thy bed, and keep
A blessed watch above thee.
No spirit can come near
Nor evil beast to harm thee:
Sleep, Sweet, devoid of fear
Where nothing need alarm thee.
The Love which doth not sleep,
The eternal Arms surround thee:
The Shepherd of the sheep
In perfect love hath found thee.
Sleep through the holy night,
Christ-kept from snare and sorrow,
Until thou wake to light
And love and warmth to-morrow.

Day 5, December 29: Saint Thomas Becket

"Remember the sufferings of Christ, the storms that were weathered...the crown that came from those sufferings which gave new radiance to the faith... All saints give testimony to the truth that without real effort, no one ever wins the crown." - St. Thomas Becket

St. Thomas, born an English man under King Henry II is commemorated on this day. He was martyred for his Faith on December 29, 1170. Today is an optional memorial yet making an effort to go to Mass and pray to him is always a wonderful way to gain a friend in Heaven. St. Thomas is the patron saint of play actors so all those participating in the musical should turn to him often as an intercessor.

Day 6, December 30: The Holy Family

What a wonderful feast! Without the Holy Family Christmas would not be in existence and there would be no Easter in a few months. Thanks be to God for the Blessed Mother, Saint Joseph, and the Christ Child. Today is a wonderful day to spend extra time at home or out and about with your families. Make it a goal to bring more love and harmony within your family over Christmas break and carry it with you for the rest of the year.

Although Sacred Scripture only briefly writes about the Holy Family, read the nativity passages again. They all speak of the quietness and love of the Holy Family. Saint Joseph is the silent, faithful protector. Our Blessed Mother is the calming, trusting mother. The Baby Jesus is the savior of the family and the reason they and we are all here.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, pray for us!

Day 7, December 31: Pope Saint Sylvester I

Along with St. Sylvester, Saints Fr. John Francis Regis and Catherine Labouré are celebrated today.

Many legends surround St. Sylvester, but we know he is one of the earlier popes, entering into his pontificate in 314 A.D. According to legend Pope Sylvester was the one who both cured and baptized Emperor Constantine. He also was said to have defeated a dragon.

For a time, St. Sylvester's feast day was a holy day of obligation. With this in mind, try to make at least a stop in a Catholic Church today, even if you cannot make it to Mass.

Each year in Brazil, since 1925, on December 31st the Saint Sylvester Road Race takes place and is dedicated to St. Sylvester. In 1993, the Little St. Sylvester race was held for the children (Saint Sylvester Road Race - Wikipedia).

Day 8, January 1: Mary, Mother of God

Today is the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God and is a holy day of obligation. This is the feast of Mary's greatest title: Mother of God. Honor her today with gifts of love and sacrifice for she is our mother too.

"Mary, the all-holy ever-virgin Mother of God, is the masterwork of the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the fullness of time. For the first time in the plan of salvation and because his Spirit had prepared her, the Father found the dwelling place where his Son and his Spirit could dwell among men. In this sense the Church's Tradition has often read the most beautiful texts on wisdom in relation to Mary. Mary is acclaimed and represented in the liturgy as the 'Seat of Wisdom.'" — Catechism of the Catholic Church 721

All above articles' material unless otherwise noted comes from Catholic Culture's website.

