

# ***Acquiring The Spirit “Of Christmas”***

A Publication of St. Seraphim's Outreach Ministries of High Point, North Carolina

**Christmas 2004 – Edition**

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St. Seraphim's Ministries is an Outreach Ministry of St. Seraphim of Sarov Eastern Orthodox Christian Church. Our Diocese affiliation is: The Orthodox Catholic Church of North and South America, under the omiphorion of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Roman of Akron, Ohio. St. Seraphim of Sarov Eastern Orthodox Church was founded December 6, 1992. Parish Priest and Pastor: The Right Reverend Father Michael D. Jordan. Church and Food Pantry location: 303 Eastchester Drive, High Point, North Carolina. (At the corner of Eastchester and Johnson Streets in High Point, NC) Our mailing address: Post Office Box 77342, Greensboro, NC 27417-7342. Church telephone number is: (336) 869-8607. Email: [rrfmdj@hotmail.com](mailto:rrfmdj@hotmail.com). Web Address: [www.st-seraphim.com](http://www.st-seraphim.com).

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## **Happy Holidays From Our Family to Yours!**

Dear Members and Friends of St. Seraphim's,

Thank you for taking the time to read **Acquiring the Spirit “Of Christmas”**, a gift from your friends at St. Seraphim of Sarov Eastern Orthodox Christian Church. In this day an age, the Christmas Holidays have become more of source of stress than a blessing for many people. All too often we have forgotten the real reason for the season. From Thanksgiving on we rush, rush, rush, and when the holiday does arrive we're all too tired and grumpy to experience the true joy of the season. In this newsletter you will find several writings and meditations provided by our parish Priest and Pastor the Rt. Rev. Father Michael D. Jordan. It's our hope that reflecting on these thoughts will help sweep away the stress and help to bring home the true meaning of the season, the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope you enjoy this Christmas issue.

Thank you,  
*Nicholas*

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### **News & Announcements Schedule of Services for Christmas at St. Seraphim's**

**December 6<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM** - Vespers and Healing Service for the Feast of St. Nicholas.

This date also marks the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our church and Father Michael's

ordination to the Priesthood.

**December 24<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 PM** - Midnight Divine Liturgy, The Nativity of Christ.

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### **Disability Outreach to Hold First Meeting**

In our last issue we announced that St. Seraphim's will be launching a new ministry for people with disabilities in partnership with Kapabilities, a 501(c)3 Non Profit Organization in the Eden area. “Kapabilities ® of High Point” will have its first organizational meeting on Saturday October 30 at 2:00 PM at Bell House in Greensboro. Refreshments will be served and a December party will be discussed. An effort to collect toiletry articles for people with disabilities will be started as well. We invite all interested persons to attend and become involved.

**For more information email:**  
[rrfmdj@hotmail.com](mailto:rrfmdj@hotmail.com) or contact the Church at 336-869-8607.

### **St. Seraphim's Remembers Sub Deacon Longinios**

St. Seraphim's recently held a memorial service for Sub Deacon Longinios. Sub-Deacon Longinios fell asleep in the Lord on Thursday, August 29, 2002 at the age of 69. He was born October 16, 1932 in High Point, North Carolina. He was a retired school teacher and principal with the Rockbridge County, Virginia School System. He was a

librarian with High Point University. He was a U. S. Army veteran, having served during the Korean War. He was a member and Sub-Deacon of St. Seraphim of Sarov Eastern Orthodox Christian Church.

Sub-Deacon Longinios served St. Seraphim's Church faithfully for eight years as a loyal member, Church Reader, then as a Sub-Deacon. So strong was the faith of this servant of God, that he often served in the Altar even in his last days when pain and weakness from his cancer was almost unbearable!

He was a beloved father and grandfather who touched many people and friends with his stories and love for history. He was preceded in death by one daughter and survived by four daughters and several grandchildren.

St. Seraphim's continues to preserve and cherish the memory of this dedicated servant of God who continues to be missed.



Father Michael

## A Series of Thoughts on Christmas

By: The Right Reverend Father Michael D. Jordan

A Christian author once overheard this conversation between two women in a charity shop: "My husband likes those Nativity cards, but I prefer something more "Christmassy!" If "Christ" is taken out of Christmas, there's nothing left to celebrate!

What have we been taught about the true meaning of Christmas? Could we be sending the wrong message to our children about Christmas? As the conversation between the two women in the charity shop clearly indicates, many people do not understand the true meaning of Christmas! What

could be more "Christmassy" than the Nativity of Christ? What could be less in keeping with the teachings of Christ than the "give me more and more" attitude that many of our children are taught to have during Christmas?

Selfishness makes Christmas a burden, but love makes it a delight! The meaning of Christmas is "love", pure and simple! Unconditional love motivated God the Father to give His Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ to us as our Savior. Jesus Christ did not come into this world to receive, but to give! Indeed, Christ gave His all for us. He gave up His Heavenly Home to be born as a helpless infant. He, Whose Throne of Glory in Heaven cannot be described, gave it up, living in poverty without a roof over His head. He gave of Himself in healing infirmities. He shared His infinite knowledge in His Holy Teachings. He then gave His life on the Cross for our salvation.

Jesus Christ was not born into this world to give us material and perishable gifts. His gifts are love, forgiveness, and salvation. While those gifts were extremely costly to Him, we can give love and forgiveness free of charge because of the high price He paid for our salvation.

Here's a suggestion for a Family Christmas Tradition that will teach your children the real meaning of Christmas:

Pick a person or family that needs assistance in some way – it could be a grandparent, relative or friend in a nursing home. It could be someone in the hospital or a person that lives alone and is isolated during the Christmas holiday. Have your children make a card or handcraft of some type for them, and visit this person with your children during the Christmas season. Let your children know that your family will be sharing love with this person and that this type of love is the real meaning of Christmas. Your children will learn that giving does not need to be materialistic in order to express true Christ like love. I think you will be surprised at just how much love your children will put into this effort.

A man once told what happened to him one Christmas Eve when he was a boy, after the Christmas story had been read. After he and his brothers and sisters had opened all their presents, his father asked for quiet, and said, "Of all the presents you received tonight, I want you to decide which one you like the very best, and set it in front of you." When this was done, the father continued, "Now I want each of you to think of someone you

know who is less fortunate than you, and who is not getting presents as you are. Tomorrow we will have the fun of delivering to this person the presents you have chosen as the very best." This man said he could never forget this experience. It taught him what Christmas was all about – when God gave to mankind the very best He had.

We, too, can offer gifts to the Lord according to the Scriptures: "And the King shall answer and say to them, verily I say to you, inasmuch as you have done these things for the least of these My brethren, you have done them for Me." (Matthew 25:40) When we give from a pure loving heart, we are giving to the Lord!

As E. B. White once said, "To perceive Christmas through its wrapping becomes more difficult every year!" Let us all peel away the wrapping on Christmas this year to reveal the beautiful Godly Gift of Love that Christmas truly is!

God proved His love for us on Christmas. He proved that He does not wish to punish us for our sins, but desires with all His heart to forgive and receive us as the father of the Prodigal Son in the Scriptures. Most people have an ingrained tendency to suspect that God is hostile toward them. Jesus completely erased this suspicion through His Birth, life, death and Resurrection. "For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." (John 3:17)

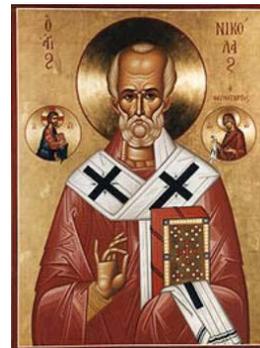
I have enjoyed sharing with you many examples of unique and personal gifts from loving people that symbolize the type of giving that embodies the true Christmas spirit. None of these gifts were material gifts because material things perish. The gifts that remain into eternity are those gifts that are rooted in pure, unconditional love and Christian charity.

The greatest of all gifts by far is the reason for Christmas. God becomes one of us in Christ. He becomes our Brother sharing our sorrows, our weaknesses, our temptations, our suffering, and our death. Jesus comes to stand beside us as Emmanuel (God with us). How near, how approachable, how inescapable, every day, everywhere with ordinary people. You've received a Christmas gift that can never be surpassed, it is ever renewing, ever present, and will always remain new and perfect throughout eternity.

**Christ is Born – Glorify Him!**

**I wish you all a Merry Christmas – one filled with the gift that will never perish, and the love that lasts into eternity.**

If you would like to read Father Michael's complete series of Christmas thoughts please visit our website at [www.st-seraphim.com](http://www.st-seraphim.com)



## FEATURED SAINT: THE REAL SAINT NICHOLAS

St. Nicholas was an Archbishop of Myra in Lycia in the fourth century, and yes, he did deliver gifts in the night as I will explain later. St. Nicholas was extremely generous, especially to needy children.

The reason Jesus and Mary are depicted on the Icon is to teach the people about how he was reinstated as Bishop after he was temporarily deposed after striking a Bishop named Arius at the first Ecumenical Council. Arius was trying to introduce a heresy to the teachings of the Church which denied the Divinity of Jesus Christ. St. Nicholas who strongly supported the Divinity of Jesus Christ was provoked to anger by Arius' false claims. The Council disapproved of St. Nicholas' actions and expelled him from his station as Bishop. That evening several of the members of the Council had this vision: They saw Jesus Christ handing St. Nicholas a Gospel Book, and the Virgin Mary placing an Omophore on him. They reinstated St. Nicholas as Bishop immediately the very next day. The heretic Arius was expelled from the Council and the Divinity of Jesus Christ was affirmed.

St. Nicholas started out as a monk at the Monastery of New Zion which was founded by his uncle.

St. Nicholas originally wanted to live a life of solitude devoted exclusively to Jesus Christ. This is most likely where the seclusion at the North Pole came from in the modern "Santa Claus". Jesus Christ appeared to St. Nicholas in a vision and told him that he must work among the people instead of secluding himself if he wanted to receive a crown in Heaven. St. Nicholas obeyed Jesus Christ and went out into the world to work as a Priest, and eventually as a Bishop.

The legend of "Santa Claus" delivering gifts to children at night who were sound asleep comes from the real St. Nicholas' method of doing good deeds as Christ tells us in secret. There was a very poor gentleman in the town that St. Nicholas lived in that had daughters. This family was so poor and deeply in debt that the father decided to sell his three daughters into prostitution. St. Nicholas was so deeply hurt by this man's decision he immediately began to think of ways he could help him without him ever knowing about it. St. Nicholas wanted his assistance to be totally anonymous as Jesus Christ taught, so he decided to wait until evening when everyone was asleep, and then he would quickly walk by the home of this family and toss a bag of gold through an open window.

After the first sack of gold, the man decided to give his daughter to marriage and used the gold as a dowry. St. Nicholas after learning of this started preparing another sack of gold, and delivered it in the same manner to the family. The father then was able to give his second daughter in marriage and provide a dowry for her as well. The third time that St. Nicholas delivered a bag of gold to the home; the father heard the clink of the gold and ran after St. Nicholas, when he caught up with him he fell at his feet and thanked him for saving his daughters from the evils of prostitution.

St. Nicholas was always remembered as a humble, meek and forgiving man. His clothing was simple, he only ate one meal per day, and to orphans he was a father and provider. He often wept for the people he loved and cared for. Truly St. Nicholas was a loving and caring servant of God. I've always been distressed that someone that lived the principles that Jesus Christ taught would be made into such a materialistic being.

It's okay for children to have the experience of "Santa Claus"; however, when they're old enough, they should be taught about the real St. Nicholas and how he loved to give anonymously to the poor and needy. We need to teach our children the

value of giving instead of expecting more and more. By allowing our children to grow up materialistic instead of philanthropic, we're not really teaching them the true meaning of Christmas!

St. Nicholas knew the true meaning of Christmas - He gave generously to others of himself, expecting nothing in return! He lived the message that the birth of Christ offered us: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward mankind!" May Jesus Christ touch your hearts in a special way this Christmas. May His Holy Birth remind you of the precious gift God gave us - His Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

If you would like to read the complete article on the life of St. Nicholas, please visit our website at [www.st-seraphim.com](http://www.st-seraphim.com)



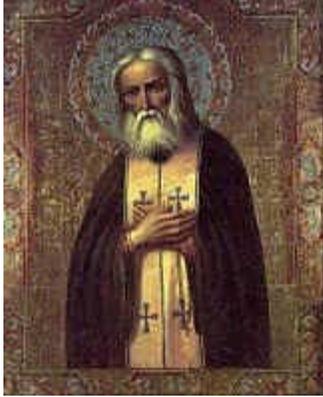
## A Time to Laugh

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining the commandment to "honor thy Father and thy Mother," she asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?"

Without missing a beat one little boy (the oldest of a family) answered, "Thou shall not kill."

My son (almost 4) was showing me picture he drew. Lately he likes to draw what he calls "maps": pictures with roads, rivers, etc, on them. On this particular one there were some orange lines and he said: "There are pipes that are carrying regular water." Then he pointed to some blue lines and said: "These pipes are carrying Holy Water. They go to Church."

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## PLEASE, COME WORSHIP WITH US!

"Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. In this fast paced world of pagers, email, and cell phones, few can find the spiritual rest and peace of mind that they so desperately need. Unfortunately, even some churches are filled with politics and power struggles, as if we don't get enough of that at work! "Be still and know that I am God". Psalm 46 Our spirit needs to be rested and recharged so we will be better able to cope with the day-to-day struggles of life.

In this world of turmoil we are all looking for a peaceful place to escape, if only for a short while. Finding a peaceful spiritual home these days can sometimes be a daunting task. St. Seraphim of Sarov Eastern Orthodox Christian Church is a rare haven of spirituality, peace and prayer. "My Kingdom is not of this world". John 18:36. Christ's Holy Church is an earthly glimpse of His Heavenly Kingdom that is not of this world. Orthodox Christianity offers an "other worldly" appeal for those who want to rest and renew their spirit. If you are looking for a church home free from the politics of this world, St. Seraphim's is certainly the right place for you.

St. Seraphim's is a small but growing church that has been in the Triad area for 11 years. We are a member of the Orthodox Catholic Church of North and South America, an independent, self-governing Diocese based in Ohio. Our primary worship service is the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom which we celebrate every Sunday morning at 11:00 AM. All of our worship services are done in English. We are located on the corner of Eastchester and Johnson Streets in High Point.

### DIRECTIONS TO OUR CHURCH:

We are located in High Point, North Carolina on the corner of Eastchester and Johnson Streets. We are in the Fellowship Building of the St. Christopher's Episcopal Church. Our physical address is: 303 Eastchester Drive - High Point, North Carolina 27262 - The Church phone number is: (336) 869-8607. Divine Liturgy every Sunday morning at 11:00 AM in English.

*Visit us on the web at:*

**[www.st-seraphim.com](http://www.st-seraphim.com)**



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Glorify Him!*