

# THE CRESCENT TOWER

## *"Ut Vitam Habeant Abundantius"*

**IT'S CHRISTMAS TIME AT ST. JOHN'S PREP!**

**by The Crescent Tower Staff**

Welcome to the Christmas edition of The Crescent Tower! Christmas is one of the most joyful celebrations of the year, bringing family and loved ones together to indulge in the spirit of rejoicing, giving, and creating precious memories. At St. John's Prep, students, teachers, and members of the administration come together to celebrate this special time of the year. Our hallways are adorned with decorations, our doors are embellished by Christmas wreaths, our chapel has the beautiful manger, and every morning we enter into a beautiful Christmas forest scene with twinkling lights and snowflakes. If you listen carefully, you can even hear people humming, or singing a Christmas carol. The spirit of Christmas is in the air and it evokes a sense of wonder and excitement for all!

Merry reading to all!

**SNOW MUCH JOY!**

**by Anastasia Flouras, '27**

As December arrives, the question on everyone's mind is, "Will it snow this Christmas?" There's a certain magic in waking up to a winter wonderland on Christmas morning, with snow-covered grounds and rooftops in the morning sun. For many, the possibility of snow brings back cherished memories from their childhood, the excitement of a potential



snow day, the joy of making snow angels and snowmen, and the thrill of sledding down hills create a sense of nostalgia that warms the heart like a cup of hot chocolate.

As the snowflakes dance outside, families gather around the fireplace, share stories and laughter, and drink the essential cup of hot cocoa that brings warmth to the chilly days. It's a time when simple pleasures take hold: the warmth of a blanket, the shining of holiday lights, and the joy of being surrounded by loved ones.

These traditions passed down from generation to generation link us to the past and remind us of the magic of this holiday season. While snowfall remains uncertain, the spirit of Christmas is undoubtedly present. Whether the world outside is covered in snow or not, the warmth of festivities and the joy of



creating memories with family and friends make this holiday season truly special. So, as we wait for the answer to the age-old question, let us embrace the magic that the holiday season brings – with or without snow.

### **THE SEASON OF GIVING: SJP'S FOOD DRIVE**

**by Pamela Anagnostos, '26**

This Christmas season, St. John's Preparatory School did an outstanding job of spreading the Christmas spirit through our annual food drive. The school's commitment to encouraging kindness and empathy has been evident as families, faculty members, and students joined forces to make a significant difference during this joyous time of year. On November 29, 2023, donation boxes were distributed, and each homeroom was told how they could help. The drive officially began in November 30 as students brought in non-perishable food items. Homerooms were encouraged to decorate their boxes with festive wrapping paper. Ultimately, the food

drive was a wonderful representation of what can happen when a school comes together to give back to the less fortunate and positively impact the community! We're so grateful for our generous school community!

### **REMAIN MINDFUL OF THE MARKET!**

**by Theo Darringer, '25**

With Christmas being right around the corner, you're probably searching for gifts for your family and friends. It's hard not to resist the convenience of a few clicks for your Christmas purchases, but take some time to think before clicking that tempting button; ask yourself, "Is this the best retail experience available to me?" As an economics enthusiast, the best advice I can give you is to do the traditional walk through the city to find the best deals.

Celebrating Christmas with your loved ones shouldn't mean breaking your bank! Consider entering some of the beautifully decorated stores throughout Manhattan to find some incredible bargains that have rolled around this

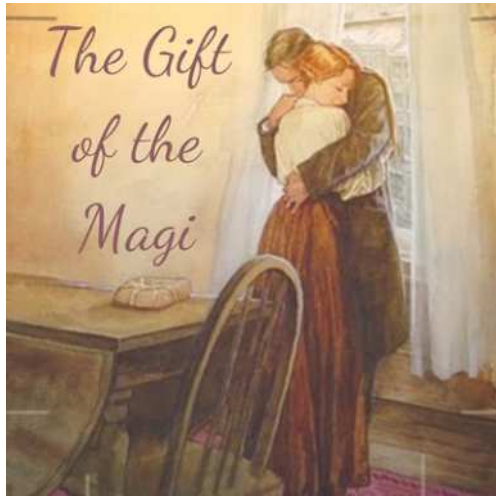
Christmas season. Despite being surrounded by so many enticing deals, remember to be savvy and focused – think before you buy. By creating a game plan and narrowing down what you really need, you increase your efficiency, minimize your spending, and find what you're looking for. Remember to shop local and support small businesses. Aside from offering your support, you might encounter stellar deals that large-scale department stores simply cannot beat. Finally, be realistic and resist the urge to overspend.

Remember, gift giving is a great way to show your love for others, but it isn't all there is to Christmas. Rather than letting gifts take center stage of your celebration, focus on your time with loved ones above all else. Merry Christmas everyone!

### **WELCOME BACK TO THE BOOK CORNER!**

**by Valeria Vislocky, '26**

The Christmas season is a time of joy, compassion, and celebration. However, it can also be a time of stress when it comes to shopping for loved ones. Trying to find meaningful gifts for so many people all at one time isn't always an easy task – and it definitely isn't an easy one for Jim and Della Dillingham Young, the two main characters in "The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry. This young married couple struggles to find each other a perfect Christmas gift with the little money they have. Feeling pressured to get the other a present of great value, Jim and Della both sell their most



prized possessions to gather enough money for Christmas gifts.

Excitedly awaiting to show each other the wonderful presents they bought, Jim and Della are both caught off guard when gifting each other the items. The couple quickly comes to realize that they never needed fancy presents to represent their love. All they ever really needed was each other.

So as you cozy up by the fireplace this time of year, pick up “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry. It’s the perfect short story to remind us all that the true gift of the season may not come from a designer brand, but rather the people who surround us in our everyday lives.

**CELEBRATING OUR BLESSED MOTHER**  
by Valeria Vislocky, '26

Although December is most commonly associated with Christmas itself, it is also important to acknowledge our Blessed Mother this season. Starting with December 8th, we celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. On this day, we acknowledge the Virgin Mary being conceived without Original Sin, making her the perfect Mother of God’s

only Son. Being a Holy Day of Obligation in the Catholic Church, let us take this day to truly reflect on the significance of Mary’s existence.

Furthermore, on December 12th, we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. When our Blessed Mother appeared to Juan Diego in Mexico City in 1531, she asked him to construct a shrine on Tepeyac Hill. However, the local bishop of the town was skeptical of Diego’s claims of seeing Our Lady. On December 12, 1531, Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to Juan once more and directed him to pick roses in an area that should have been barren in the winter time. Juan Diego took the roses under his cloak and came forth to the bishop. As the roses spilled out from his coat in front of the bishop, a picture of the Blessed Mother had taken shape on his coat as well. The bishop was astounded by the miracle, and immediately ordered for her shrine to be built, as Mary had originally requested.

Whether we know her as the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Guadalupe, or simply Jesus’ Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary plays a vital role in our Church history and continues to be recognized throughout this time of year.

**THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTMAS**

by Ariana Yopez, '26

We must not forget the meaning, purpose, and beginning of the Catholic Christmas.

Christmas is the second season of the church calendar and thus the second most joyful to Catholics. As many already know, it begins on December 25 and ends with the Baptism of Jesus,



no later than January 13. Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, the Savior and Redeemer. During this season, we welcome Christ into our world and our hearts, and reflect on the gift of salvation that is born with Him. Though red and white are the traditional symbols of Christmas, the church signifies the season with white and gold. The traditional Christmas tree and Nativity scene are also common in the church and Christian homes. It is also traditional to exchange Christmas gifts with family and friends as a way of honoring God the Father’s gift of His only Son to the world. Having received the gift of Christ, we naturally want to pass it on to our loved ones, however, gifts are not the focal point of Christmas. Let us remember to give thanks for Jesus, and the gift of salvation through His birth, death, and resurrection. Have a blessed Christmas!

**NEW YEAR, NEW RESOLUTIONS**

by Rihanna Bonilla, '26

The holiday season comes only once a year, and brings with it many lovely memories to

cherish for a lifetime. Our tremendous anticipation for a new year can begin as early as the day after Christmas. While we all want to immediately start jotting down our new year's resolutions for 2024 (and figure out ways to actually stick with them), perhaps we should take a minute to reflect on our surroundings. This is what some of SJP's students did, describing their new year's resolutions – not only for themselves, but for the world. Let's take a look at what some of our students told The Crescent Tower!

We begin with the perspectives of our student body's veterans, the senior class of 2024. As our seniors enter their final year at SJP, they recognize the power of synergy and the influence it can have on a global scale, regardless of what circumstances we face. Ioanna Todaro wishes for people around the world to be granted the ability, "to learn, to see, and to appreciate more good than bad. We've forgotten that joy can be found anywhere and everywhere. [It is important to] remember that we really are all in this together." Indeed, it is possible to see this upcoming year as a chance to realize that, despite difficulties, our world has much to see and offer. This is what Bryan Quintero also conveyed to us, as his resolution is, "for people to grow more patient and not be so hasty. [By] taking a step back, [this] helps avoid conflict and lets you appreciate the beauty and happiness in life."



Meanwhile, Anna Iorfida would like for the world to accept diversity, and to become, "a place where your gender, race, age, or income does not cause people to negatively view or treat you." Adel Nasrallah would also like the world to do away with all types of prejudices as his, "resolution for the world is to foster welcoming communities, embrace diversity, and ensure that everyone feels valued by their community."

Our junior class' resolutions were definitely not far off from those of their seniors, expressing both a sense of hope and aspiration for a more insightful future for ourselves and generations to come. This is exactly what Kareena Ramlakhan states in her resolution, stating that she hopes for the world to, "love and respect each other, no matter who or what they look like; [that] all interactions [may] be filled with peace, love and happiness." Meanwhile, Kenton Newton took a stand for environmental awareness, stating that, by 2024, more efforts should be made to, "clear out water pollution in

the ocean." Both Arshiya Zakir and Danielle Knox have expressed their desire for the world to bring an end to ongoing conflicts and to settle in stability; Arshiya is a firm believer in, "end[ing] ... war itself" in the world, and Danielle hopes that everyone may, "strive to obtain everlasting peace [by] mutual understanding of one another, respect, consideration, [and] aspiration to learn from our counterparts, as well as [for people to be] able to take accountability for [their] potential faults."

2023 was a year with plenty of ups and downs, and the sophomore class at SJP took note of that when delivering their responses. They have emphasized that the world has its flaws and measures should be taken to ensure a safer living situation for those less fortunate. Athena Koinakis states that she wishes for the world to follow up on scientific advances by working towards a, "cure for [all] mental illnesses." Eric Alvarez expressed the importance of financial management and its global benefits; he told us that if there

was a, “dedicated effort to cut unnecessary expenses, create a budget, and set aside a portion of income for savings,” we could help to build a more sustainable global economy. Shane Chee stated that he wishes the world would contribute, “more protection ... to stop ... violence”, emphasizing the overall undertaking that comes with striving towards world peace. Muskaan Begum wrote that her resolution for the world would be political stability, detailing in her response that, “the world would [be much safer] if there was less corruption in our global politics.”

As for our newest members of the student body, our freshmen, they resonated with the appreciation of the beauty in the world, and how to turn our society into a healthier place. Caitlyn Bonilla-Chan wanted to see, “the world [become] a better place by helping people” to demonstrate that, once again, nobody is truly alone, and that the fear of asking for help is irrational as everyone is deserving of help. For Margot Bertoia, a strong mental capacity is something we should strive for as, “our society is constantly [undergoing] changes that people aren't used to or ready for, which can cause problems in different ways that can have a huge impact.” Perhaps what the world needs is a break and some time to reflect on what really matters. Valentina Valencia believes the world needs, “to spread kindness and compassion ... with respect and empathy, and to work together to create a better world.” At the same time, Keyan Ramlakhan reflects on



more serious issues, such as extreme hunger and poverty, as he wishes to, “see an end to this harsh reality”. He advocates, “to see people be able to [receive] their meals – and not starve, not knowing when they will get their next plate of food.” Through spreading love, banding together, and staying inspired, we can mold these dreams into a reality!

What are your resolutions for this new year?

### **CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES IN NYC**

**by Sebastian Cruz, '26**

With so many things to do this Christmas season, you might not know what to do first – so, we've narrowed down a few great options for everyone!

- Visit the Rockefeller Tree
- Pass by the Fifth Avenue light show presented by Saks
- Check out the Ice Cream Market
- Drop by the Bryant Park flea market and ice skating rink
- Skate around the ice rink at Central Park
- Explore the Lightscape at Brooklyn Botanical Garden
- Do some shopping at the

Columbia Circle Holiday Market

- Enjoy a warm meal at Tavern On The Green, Balthazar Restaurant, or Papillon Bistro

### **MEMORIES OF CHRISTMAS PAST**

**by Kenneth Paul Padilla II, '27**

During the Christmas season, merry memories inundate my mind and are shared with my family. When I was about seven years old, my family introduced an exceptional and notable tradition that has been carried over for many years. The grand spectacle of New York City, the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree, met my eyes and filled my soul with the spirit of the holiday season. As a seven year old in second grade, this Christmas tree dominated my view and left me speaking words of admiration and astonishment.

The throng of people from different cultures and ethnicities wore the visage of happiness and created love with one another. The bright lights of the Christmas tree shone on our faces, a memory that remains in my consciousness. It was at this

moment where my mother and father would grab my hand to stand as a family in front of the Christmas tree. To conclude the night, we would take the train to 42nd Street in hopes of finding a restaurant that had seating availability. After waiting for an hour or more, we would share a great dinner. We would talk about our hopes, goals, and aspirations for the future which is a beautiful part of the holiday season.

At the time, I would share hopes of materialism and irrelevant aspirations, but as I look back to these moments of tender innocence, I realize that these precious family memories are more valuable than materialistic things. The internal beauty and external aesthetic of this moment made me realize the true meaning of the holiday season. The harmony of family and the innocence of youth highlight the beauty of Christmas. Christmas is celebrated only once a year. This is a rare opportunity where we are able to look back to our past and appreciate the tender memories we have made as family. As we grow older, our relationships strengthen. As human beings in God's presence, we should always show appreciation for the small moments in life.

Sometimes, life challenges us with arduous and strenuous moments that naturally cause us to stress and worry. The Christmas season reminds us of the importance of valuing the simple moments we experience in life. It is a time for us to appreciate others for who they are, and appreciate

the gift of life. Take time this Christmas season to be present to yourself and your loved ones. Have a merry Christmas!

**ICONIC CHRISTMAS DISPLAYS ARRIVE AGAIN, BRIGHTER THAN EVER BEFORE**

by **Angelika Peppia, '27**  
With the holiday season arriving, the city of New York has begun preparing for the vibrant celebration of Christmas. Various stores and restaurants have already put up their decorations and there are many locations along sidewalks with fresh trees ready to be taken home. Although New York City is a famous destination for Christmas time, Manhattan, in particular, decks out for the holiday season. Department stores such as Saks Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman, Bloomingdales, and many more have unveiled their famous window displays and decorations.

Saks Fifth Avenue – essentially a New York City landmark –

unveiled its holiday window displays and annual light show on November 20th. All displays and decorations are a collaboration by Christian Dior, a well-known French designer brand, and Saks. This collaboration was due in part to the 70th Anniversary between the two iconic brands. To say that the displays drew a large attraction would be an understatement, as a multitude of people crowded the streets of Fifth Avenue, who were standing in the bitter cold attempting to capture photos and videos of the light show. The show was described as "magical" as people in the crowds were in awe of the intricate and whimsical light show. This was the first time Saks had introduced a display such as this year's intricately decorated colossal clock, intertwined with various flowers and butterflies. Instead of containing any kind of numerals, the clock substituted numbers with sculptures of all twelve zodiac



signs. This dream-like display was titled the "Carousel Of Dreams," as its light show provided viewers with an electric sensation, as if they were truly trapped in a dream. The intricate light show consists of nearly 300,000 LED lights, which helped radiate the magic of the "Carousel Of Dreams," along with a medley of classic Christmas songs. An interview from Andrew Winton, who is the SVP of Creative at Saks, called the displays and light show the, "most ambitious holiday windows and light show in Saks Fifth Avenue history" – a rather true statement from Winton, as the entire display truly brought out festivity and joy from New York, which was a necessity at this time of year.

The Bloomingdale's "Bloomies Holiday Windows" were unveiled on November 16th. All window displays from department stores such as these typically receive inspiration from some kind of source. This year, Bloomingdale's window displays were all inspired from the upcoming "Wonka" movie. All displays contained some sort of aspect taken from the movie, whether they were mannequins portraying the famous Willy Wonka, or their flamboyant style of colors and props. It provided a contrast to the Saks Fifth Avenue holiday window display, as Bloomingdales has created a more vibrant and wonderfully child-like sequence, compared to Saks' darker and more serious display.



Bergdorf Goodman's holiday displays were also unveiled on November 16th. This year's theme being, "Isn't It Brilliant?" featured vintage signs, traffic lights, and various kinds of television sets. Neon colors and signs were a central part of the window displays, as they brought out the eccentric and chaotic feeling of New York itself.

Just like other department stores, Macy's unveiled its holiday window display on November 16th. This year's theme was "Give Love" which showcased their favorite reindeer, "Tiptoe," alongside her friends, traveling around while spreading Christmas cheer and magic. Each window represented a world of its own, each one unique in its own way. Fifth Avenue is considered to be the heart of luxury stores and boutiques in Manhattan, as this avenue contains the most anticipated Christmas display unveiling each year. News sites await for the unveiling to report on the theme chosen for the year, and the type of designs

created for their magnificent window displays.

In addition to the unveilings of the department store displays, the annual Rockefeller Tree Lighting was unveiled on November 30th, where pop legend, Cher, arrived as a special guest and performed "DJ Play A Christmas Song." She delivered a stunning performance and ended the tree lighting event with her duet performance of "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)" alongside Darlene Love. Manhattan delivered a jaw-dropping Christmas entrance, which will continue to be talked about in years to come and will be remembered as one of Manhattan's greatest Christmas displays yet.

## **HOLIDAY RECIPES TO CHILL FOR**

**by Vivian King, '26**

Everyone loves dessert, but holiday desserts feel extra special! Every year, we all look forward to enjoying some sweet treats with our families on the holidays, no matter



what holiday we celebrate. Whether you're spending Christmas alone this year, baking with friends, or just need some inspiration, make sure to try these recipes and let us know how they turned out!

### **Mexican Hot Chocolate (The New York Times):**

- 4 cups whole milk
- 2 (4-inch) cinnamon sticks (preferably ceylon)
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 8 ounces dark chocolate (preferably 70%)

**Step 1:** In a medium saucepan, combine milk, cinnamon, sugar, and vanilla. Heat over medium until the mixture begins to steam, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes.

**Step 2:** While the mixture heats, cut or break up the chocolate into small pieces so it melts evenly. Once the milk is steaming, add the chocolate and whisk until it's melted and incorporated.

**Step 3:** Turn off the heat and discard cinnamon sticks.

- Whisk the chocolate vigorously until it's frothy, 3-4 minutes, or blend in a blender for about 2 minutes. Serve hot.

### **Old-Fashioned Sugar Cookies (A Family Recipe):**

- 4 cups sifted all purpose flour (16oz)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 cup soft butter or margarine
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup dairy sour cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

**Step 1:** Sift flour with baking powder, soda, salt, and nutmeg; set aside.

**Step 2:** In a large bowl or electric mixer, at medium speed, beat butter, sugar, and egg until light and fluffy.

**Step 3:** At low speed, beat in sour cream and vanilla until smooth.

**Step 4:** Gradually add flour mixture, beating until well combined.

**Step 5:** With a rubber spatula, form dough into a ball. Wrap dough in foil; refrigerate several hours or overnight.

**Step 6:** Divide dough into 4 parts. Refrigerate until ready to roll out.

**Step 7:** Meanwhile preheat the oven to 375 F. Lightly grease cookie sheets.

**Step 8:** On a well floured surface, roll dough, one part at a time, 1/4 inch thick.

**Step 9:** With floured cookie cutters, cut out the cookies. Using a spatula place about 2 inches apart on the cookie sheet. (Cover them in cinnamon sugar before baking if you want!)

**Step 10:** Bake for 10-12 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove and put out to cool.

### **Kourabiedes (Food Network):**

- 3/4 cup walnuts
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted

- butter, softened
- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon brandy
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 to 2 tablespoons orange flower water
- 3/4 cup powdered sugar

**Step 1:** Preheat the oven to 350 F.

**Step 2:** Toast the walnuts until golden brown and fragrant, about 6 minutes. Let cool, then chop about half of the nuts (you should have about 1/2 cup chopped). Pulse the remaining nuts in the food processor until finely ground (about 1/4 cup ground).

**Step 3:** Stir flour, baking powder, salt, and nuts together in a medium bowl. Set aside.

**Step 4:** In another medium bowl, beat the butter, sugar, egg yolk, brandy, and vanilla extract together with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until the mixture gets light and fluffy, about 10 minutes.

**Step 5:** At low speed, stir in the nut mixture to make a crumbly dough. Cover the bowl and set dough aside at room temperature for 1 hour.

**Step 6:** Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line two baking sheets with parchment or coat with nonstick spray.

**Step 7:** With a tablespoon, scoop out 1-inch pieces of dough and roll into balls between the palms of your hands. Pinch the ends of the balls to make a football shape. Place the cookies on the prepared baking sheets. Bake until the cookies set and start to brown, about 18 minutes.

**Step 8:** Remove cookies from the oven and immediately

sprinkle them lightly with the orange water. If you don't have a brush, simply dip your fingers into the water and flick it over the cookies a few times. Make sure not to douse them, just enough for them to carry the scent of flowers.

**Step 9:** Put the confectioners' sugar in a bag, and add 5 to 6 of the warm cookies to it. Very gently toss the cookies to coat with sugar. Remove them from the bag and cool cookies on a rack. Repeat with remaining cookies. Serve.

## HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES

by George Baltzis, '26

The spirit of Christmas has swept St. John's Prep by storm, sparking various school activities and performances that continue to bring our community closer than ever. From the embracing of old traditions to the introduction of new celebrations, here's how St. John's Prep has been staying busy this Christmas season!

In the month of December, the St. John's Prep Student Council has introduced the new hallway decorating contest. The competition, which differs from last year's homeroom decorating contest, encourages students to work together according to a chosen theme. Our Student Council also sponsored the

annual Christmas Tree Lighting on Wednesday, December 6. The event took place in our library and featured a special visit from Mr. and Mrs. Claus, some musical shows by our Glee Club, and a number from our Dance Team, achieving a large turnout and leaving students compelled. On the same day, the Student Council held a Christmas-themed dress down to raise funds for our annual Christmas food drive, conducted by our Campus Life group. Simultaneously, our Book Club hosted readings of "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. On December 18, our Jazz-Rock collective performed during periods 4, 5, and 6, striking every chord, hitting every note, and engaging with our audience to deliver a great show! In preparation for the Christmas break, a touching mass was held in our auditorium on Tuesday, December 19, evoking solace and strength in our students as they await the day of Jesus Christ's birth.

On behalf of The Crescent Tower Staff, I hope everyone's Christmas is filled with joy, comfort, health, and hope! Merry Christmas!





## **A CHRISTMAS RE-CAROL**

**by The Crescent Tower Staff**

This year's Christmas production, under the artistic direction of Ms. Rodano, was "A Christmas Re-Carol," reimagined from Dickens' classic story by our alumna Mia Lopez of the class of 2023. The didactic production communicates the heart of Dickens' classic ghost story with excellent script work, allowing students from the Visual and Performing Arts program an excellent opportunity to present their talents and delve into the ageless themes and messages of Charles Dickens' timeless tale. In the classic, Marley appears to Ebenezer in chains and tries to help him understand the true meaning of life. Marley wants Ebenezer to foster a metamorphosis of his spirit so he can avoid the same end result – an eternity with chains. The set design transported the audience into Victorian England, creating a visually captivating backdrop for the story's unfolding. From the skilled direction of our alumni, Mia Lopez of the class of 2023 and John Schwab of the class of 2019, to our wonderful casting, the play captivated audiences while also fostering a deep appreciation for literature and creative arts. Through this transformative experience, students reflected on the importance of empathy, redemption, and kindness – all of which are lasting life lessons that extend far beyond their high school years.

Congratulations to our alumni Mia Lopez and John Schwab!



## CHRISTMAS TRIVIA

### from The Crescent Tower Staff

Test your basic knowledge of Christmas movies, songs, and folklore to see how much you know about the most magical time of the year. You can find all the answers at the bottom of this page!

1. How many ghosts show up in A Christmas Carol?
2. Where was baby Jesus born?
3. In Home Alone, where are the McCallisters going on vacation when they leave Kevin behind?
4. In the classic Christmas movie, How The Grinch Stole Christmas, the Grinch was described with three words. What are they?
5. What words follow "Silent Night" in the song?
6. In Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, what was the first name of Scrooge?
7. Which Christmas song contains the lyric "Everyone dancing merrily in the new old-fashioned way?"
8. What are the names of Santa's reindeers?
9. What are the names of the Wise men?
10. Which one of Santa's reindeer has the same name as another holiday mascot?



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## ANSWERS

1. Four
2. Bethlehem
3. Paris
4. Stink, Stank, Stunk
5. Holy night
6. Ebenezer
7. "Rocking Around The Christmas Tree"
8. Rudolph, Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen.
9. Balthasar, Melchior, and Caspar
10. Cupid

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## **COOKIES FOR SANTA... AND THE REINDEER, TOO!**

**by Carlos Escobar, '27**

It was the one thing I looked forward to on December 24th. I would quietly prance across the living room the night of Christmas Eve, making sure not to disturb my old golden retriever, Betty.

Once I made it into the kitchen, I would stand on the stepping stool and open the plate cabinet above the sink, grabbing the one to fit four chocolate chip cookies! I would always make sure there were enough for Santa and the reindeer to enjoy. And of course, I couldn't forget the milk. I would pour out a glass of milk for Santa to stay awake during his travels.

I would then leave it on the coffee table, close enough to the middle so that Betty wouldn't steal anything that didn't belong to her.

Satisfied, I would run up the stairs and tuck myself into bed, prepared for what wonders Santa would leave under our glamorous Christmas tree at sunrise.

Those Christmas Eve nights, I would dream about Santa leaving my presents under the tree, leaving no crumbs on the plate that I prepared for him. I would always rise in the morning to an abundance of presents in the living room, as well as a clean plate sitting on the coffee table where I left it the night before.

This would be my tradition, up until I entered middle school. Middle school was a tough period for me, being with new classmates and trying to fit in as one of them.

The last day before Christmas break, I told my friends about how much I was anticipating my Christmas tradition. I still remember the look on their faces when they told me how childish I was being.

"You still believe in Santa?" one of them snickered. The others only laughed. "Leaving cookies for Santa? All you're doing is wasting perfectly good milk and cookies," went another.

I didn't know what to say. I felt confused.

The first few days of Christmas break flew by, and every day I lost more and more enthusiasm to continue my tradition. The night before Christmas, I asked my mother if Santa was real. She was taken aback by that question. She knew how serious I was about Santa!

"Of course he is!" She told me with uncertainty in her voice. "He's as real as you make him out to be."

"What did she mean by that?" I thought to myself. "As real as I make it out to be?" My mind was spinning with so many conflicting thoughts. My mother kissed me on the forehead and turned off the lights, leaving me alone with my racing mind.

That night, I did not prepare my meal for Santa and the reindeer in secrecy. I tossed and turned until I finally closed my eyes to sleep.

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Santa Claus and his reindeer landed on my rooftop. He grabbed onto his buckle as he stepped out of his wine-tint sleigh carrying his massive bag of presents. He leapt into the chimney,

landing flawlessly on the firewood.

As per usual, he continued his routine of swiftly putting the presents under the Christmas tree, and he headed to the coffee table to claim his...

"Oh?" he said, retracting his plump hand. "No cookies from the Jones family?" He pitifully acknowledged. His stomach growled.

He returned to the rooftop with his stomach empty, and no cookies for the reindeer. The reindeer were astonished.

At once, Prancer spoke. "Santa! Where are the cookies we share?" He asked. Dasher and Blitzen spoke amongst themselves, theorizing what could've happened.

Santa set his bag of presents onto the sleigh and sighed in disappointment and hunger. "It seems as if the boy has stopped believing." In unison, the reindeer yelled.

"That's impossible! He's always remembered to feed us! How could he stop believing?!" Comet yelled.

Donner cried out loud. "Oh, Santa! I don't think I'll be able to continue flying after this! I'm starving!" He said, rubbing his hoof on his empty stomach. The other reindeer agreed. Santa was displeased greatly.

"I too, am hungry," he said. "I'm afraid we'll have to return to the North Pole, all because of the child who stopped believing."

The reindeer continued crying as Santa boarded the sleigh, his stomach aching from its emptiness. They flew at once, headed straight for the North Pole. Christmas was canceled.

That morning, millions of children woke up to a horrifying sight; a vacancy beneath their beautifully adorned Christmas trees.

\*\*\*

I woke up in a cold sweat. I ruined Christmas. It was all my fault! A wave of regret rushed over me, but that's when I turned to the window and saw that it was still dark outside!

I checked my clock, the time reading ten past twelve in the morning. I exhaled a sigh of relief as I realized that it was just a bad dream. But I did not go back to sleep. Instead, I swiftly ran downstairs, prancing carefully in the living room to not stir up Betty, and I grabbed the cookies from the cabinet, this time without a stepping stool.

And thirty years later, I would do the same with children of my own. Every Christmas Eve, I would tell the tale of how my disbelief caused Christmas to be canceled. I would finish the story with the lesson: Always prepare and leave cookies for Santa.

...And the reindeer too!



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## A VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS

by Clement Clarke Moore

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;  
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,  
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;  
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,  
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;  
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,  
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,  
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.  
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow  
Gave the luster of mid-day to objects below,  
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,  
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,  
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,  
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.  
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,  
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;  
"Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now, Prancer and Vixen!  
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!  
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!  
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"  
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,  
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;  
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,  
With the sleigh full of Toys, and St. Nicholas too.  
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof  
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.  
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,  
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.  
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,  
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;  
A bundle of Toys he had flung on his back,





And he looked like a pedler just opening his pack.  
His eyes—how they twinkled! His dimples how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!  
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow  
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;  
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,  
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;  
He had a broad face and a little round belly,  
That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.  
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,  
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;  
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,  
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;  
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,  
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,  
And laying his finger aside of his nose,  
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;  
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,  
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle,  
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,  
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night."





## MERRY CHRISTMAS! from The Crescent Tower Staff



As we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and take time off with family and friends, it is important that we reflect on the blessings in our lives and our intentions going forward in 2024. We must appreciate the people in our lives who stand by our side, encourage us to do great things, and advise us when we are in need of guidance.

As a school, St. John's Prep is committed to maintaining a sense of togetherness and fostering an environment that nurtures lifelong friendships – and we are incredibly thankful for the administrators, faculty, teachers, and staff who contribute to this thriving community. We would like to also thank some of Santa's helpers from the Parent Guild, namely Mrs. Baltzis, Mrs. Montalvo, Mrs. Quirindongo, and Mr. & Mrs. Tankleff, who helped spread cheer throughout St. John's Prep through their positivity, festive ornaments, and glimmering lights! We greatly appreciate their commitment to decorating our entrance, chapel, and library. Last, but definitely not least, we would like to thank the students who play such a valuable role in our school community. If it were not for your kindness, immense support for your peers, and creative minds, St. John's Prep would look incredibly different; the vibrant environment which we are so well known for would not exist.

This Christmas, we pray for the St. John's Prep family's happiness, safety, health, and success, as well as a prosperous and enriching new year. Below, you will find two inspiring excerpts from the Bible and a story titled "A Woman Wrapped In Silence." Merry Christmas St. John's Prep!

### Story Excerpt

"A Woman Wrapped In Silence"  
by John Lynch

"Wrapped him up in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.

Her first gift then to Him, and His first witness  
To the ways of earth, the first of tribute,  
And the gesture that began the long  
Fulfillment was a simple care she brought  
To Him, not as a creature comes to stoop,  
But as a mother bends to love. We know  
No more than this, and what exchange beyond  
Lies gathered to the spaces of her heart  
To turn forever there, inviolate."

### Bible Verse

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)



## ***THE CRESCENT TOWER STAFF***

The Crescent Tower is always looking for students who want to work on our newspaper. Our newspaper is designed not only to deliver news but to help students develop skills in writing, reporting, photography, design, and multimedia. In addition, The Crescent Tower will teach students valuable lessons in organization, leadership, and collaboration. The Crescent Tower Staff is always open to new ideas and recruits. If you are interested in working with The Crescent Tower, please visit Mrs. Adrahtas in room 203S.

**Moderator**  
Kathy Adrahtas

**Chief Editor**  
George Baltzis, '26

**Book Review & Director of Resources**  
Valeria Vislocky, '26

### **Journalists**

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Pamela Anagnostos, '26	Vivian King, '26
Theo Darringer, '25	George Baltzis, '26
Valeria Vislocky, '26	Carlos Escobar, '27
Ariana Yepez, '26	
Rihanna Bonilla, '26	<b><u>Photographers</u></b>
Sebastian Cruz, '26	Vivian King, '26
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Our sincere appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Bethge for his help in editing our newspaper and Mr. Edwards for his stunning photography.

**We couldn't have done this without the SJP community!**

A special "Thank you" to Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Martinez, Mrs. Flood, and Mrs. Agrios for their support.



**PLEASE FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM: @THECRESCENTTOWER!**