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Welcome to St. Francis Xavier School's newsletter published by the High School Mass Communication Class. The newsletter will be published several times a year with our purpose to inform you concerning personnel, students, and events at St. Francis Xavier School.

This is a Christmas Edition—each student in the class wrote of a favorite memory. Hope you enjoy! Merry Christmas!!

The Coldest Place on Earth

Every Christmas, I go to South Dakota with my family to visit my grandparents. The 6-hour long drive is absolutely torturous, as we have barely any room--thanks to our suitcases. However, the snow in South Dakota comes in a great abundance.

Typically, when we visit, we stay for around three days—or one full weekend. I see all of my uncles and aunts, bringing along cousins I don't really talk to. If I had to choose one thing I enjoyed the most about visiting my grandparents, it would definitely be all the snow. I can recall multiple times where a blizzard—one that shatters Kansas' record for snow, went through South Dakota. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to enjoy myself in South Dakota, as for some reason we didn't go last year. I am planning on creating a new favorite Christmas memory though, although not in South Dakota. I have a friend flying in from Florida, and I plan on

meeting him December 20th. It's a shame we have to write this article now (December 1st), as I'm sure I'll have many stories to tell after the break.

South Dakota is one of the coldest places I've ever been to, and I doubt I'll be going anywhere colder in the foreseeable future. This tradition will likely persist throughout the rest of my life, as most of my cousins are living in South Dakota as well. However, nothing beats the amount of snow in South Dakota, as it always feels like playing in a cloud. –Scott W.

A Latvian Christmas

With my mother having come from Latvia, and serving as the main director for Christmas in the Curit family, I have enjoyed and experienced the many things that a Latvian Christmas has to offer. Though not too different from the way Christmas is celebrated around the world, there are some noteworthy things that I believe enhance it for the better.

Out of anything Latvia has to offer though, first and foremost, is the Christmas tree itself. Although contested by Germany, Estonia, and other places, what comes from Latvia is the best, so this is the definite birthplace of the Christmas tree. It is documented that in 1510, a guild by the name of the Brotherhood of the Blackheads decorated a fir tree with roses in a marketplace and set it on fire. Since then, of course, this tradition has lasted throughout the world, without the burning for the most part other than Latvia.

In my household Christmas traditions, during our Christmas Eve dinner, there must be at least nine different dishes. Traditionally these would be grey peas, sauerkraut, bacon rolls, pies, and gingerbread, among many other things. Interestingly in relation to the church, in the town where my mother grew up in which was Barkava, Latvia, the church which is Catholic would give out communion for people to take home and eat with their families on Christmas Eve. This is something that my family continues today, as our relatives ship it from Barkava to right here in Junction City, Kansas.

There are many other traditions like this among other holidays for Latvians as well, all of which make me proud to be a Latvian American. –Janis C.

A Frozen Christmas

My favorite Christmas memory is Christmas of 2014. Frozen had come out the year before in November, and I was obsessed with Frozen. We had a movie day on the last day of school before Christmas break. The boys got to pick a movie and then the girls. The boys picked Cars 2 and the girls picked Frozen. I was really excited because I hadn't ever actually seen the movie; I just saw all the Frozen toys and other items and thought they were cool.

After watching the movie in school, I was even more obsessed. I asked Santa to get me Elsa toys that Christmas, but I didn't think I would get them. I woke up really early that year to get everyone awake, so we could open presents. I got a lot of gifts that year, but the two that I liked the most were both Frozen items. The first one was a little travel art case that had Elsa's face on it. The next one was a set of an Elsa and Anna doll. I also got a Frozen coloring book too, but I don't remember it that much, so I don't think I really cared for it. One of the dolls sang, but I can't remember which one or maybe it was both. –Taylor S.

A Hamster Christmas

Christmas is a beautiful time of year, filled with song and cheer, advent candles, caroling, and Hallmark movies. These traditions make Christmas time so special to us. I myself have many memories and traditions that are very dear to me.

One of my family's traditions is our sibling exchange. Since I have such a large family, with 8 kids, it is hard for every sibling to get all the others a present. So, my mom came up with the sibling exchange! All the kids' names (except the baby) are put into a bowl. Then we draw names and buy/make a present for the name we draw! It is a lot of fun.

One of my favorite Christmas memories is when we got our first hamster, Zeus. It was Christmas morning, and we went downstairs excitedly. My sister Scarlett was looking around, then she asked, "Where's my present?" One of the parents pointed to a little cage on the table. She went over and looked and asked "What is it?" My dad told her to look inside. Scarlet looked in and said, "It's a hamster!" Then she said very excitedly, "IT'S A HAMSTER!" She was jumping up

and down yelling, “It’s a hamster, Santa brought me a hamster!”, over and over again. Then she reached inside, and it bit her. –Madison D.

What Does Christmas Mean to You?

To me, Christmas means a community where my friends and family can spend time together giving gifts, sharing experiences, and making memories.

Christmas is also so important to me because it’s the day we as Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our savior.

The songs our church sings leading up to Christmas, “The First Noel,” “Do You Hear What I Hear,” “Silent Night,” and “Little Drummer Boy,” are probably my favorite part because of the sense of warmth and happiness they bring.

Merry Christmas to All! –Dana D.

The Family Christmas Party

My favorite Christmas tradition is the family Christmas party. This is my favorite Christmas tradition because I like games, food, gifts, and bonding time with my family. I have a big family and a lot of cousins which makes it very exciting.

The games we play are really entertaining especially because my family is very competitive, which makes it interesting sometimes. The best game to play is Uno because they get mad and start arguing about the rules, which I think is very funny to watch.

By saying they are competitive, we have a food competition every year. I think you can imagine how that goes. One year, we played a game with money and were blind folded and had to pick it up sparsely and put it into a bowl.

Though the games are very fun, I think the best part is spending time with my cousins because we are all around the same age and have the same humor, so it's very fun to hang out with them. It's like having a group of best friends, plus our parents know each other, so we can always have sleep overs.

As you can see, I have a very chaotic family, but I love them and would not trade them for the world. I have made so many memories at these Christmas parties good and bad and can't wait to make many more. –Kennedi H.

Christmas a Day Early

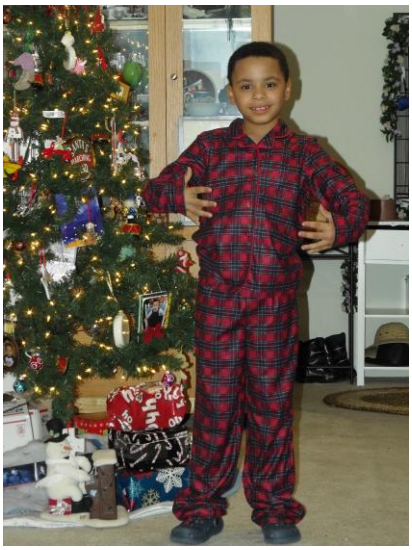
My family's Christmas tradition is opening presents a night early on Christmas Eve, but we would only open presents from other family members on Christmas Eve. Then, on Christmas Day, my older brother, my cousin, and I, would open presents from Santa. Trust me, I'd rather spend my evening opening presents than having to wait until Christmas Day. After opening presents, the whole family would open their stockings. Later into Christmas Day, we would have our Christmas dinner. Christmas dinner would be normal, consisting of a gorgeous, succulent, honey ham.

For multiple years, this was a tradition on my mother's side of the family. I loved doing this every year because, as a kid, it felt like I would get more presents than usual. Also, it would be easier to sleep on Christmas night. Since I had already opened some presents, it lowered my anticipation for the next day.

I never understood why my family did this. I've asked my mom and my grandma, and they never gave me an answer. Also, we hadn't always been doing this. One year it just happened, and we've been doing it ever since. Regardless, I enjoy doing it every year. –Nick F.

Christmas in the Centennial State

My favorite memories of Christmas were probably from when I lived in Colorado. During wintertime in the Mile High State, it's always snowing, which turned "Colorful Colorado" into a blank slate. However, it always felt like Christmastime was really there.



One thing I especially remember was travelling. Every other year, my mom and I would travel to my grandma's house here in Junction City to celebrate Christmas. In the years we didn't go, we celebrated a very relaxed Christmas at home.

In the years that I went to my grandma's, my mom and I would leave around 6 or 7 days before Christmas actually came to help with setting up and preparations for the holidays. On the day we left for our 8-hour trip, we would wake up around 7am and be out of the house around

8am to 9am that same morning. The road trips were long, but eventually getting to Junction City was worth it. If my mom and I were travelling for Christmas, that meant that most of my other family were too. This would lead to a packed house for the holidays, and I loved it as a kid. I got to see all my favorite aunts, uncles, and cousins and spend a good amount of time with them.

On Christmas Day, almost every single one of my family members was in the kitchen making all sorts of different foods as I sat aside and watched (as I still didn't really know my left from my right and couldn't be trusted in a kitchen). When everything was ready, we would all gather in the big dining room and have dinner and dessert, which featured many stories and laughs. After everyone had eaten, gifts would be passed around by a designated Santa, and we would keep talking and enjoying each other until we were worn out.

When we stayed home for the holidays, Christmas Day would be much more peaceful. My mom and I would enjoy a quiet breakfast before opening our presents, then we would relax during the day before our dinner that evening. I loved being around my family, even during the chaos of Christmas Day, but I would have to say that I enjoyed the holidays that I spent in Colorado a little bit more because of how simple they were. Overall, I'd say that Christmas is a huge staple in my family, as it's one of the only times that most of my family was able to all come together and enjoy each other's presence. –Charles Q.

Enjoying Christmas with Art

I think my favorite Christmas memory would have to be when I got a cool art set. A couple of years ago, I started getting interested in drawing cool designs, and it always stood out to me how there would be times when I would look up a drawing online and be surprised at how people were able to draw them. I also became interested in painting last year because I wanted to add some color to my drawings so that they would look brighter.

So, when Christmas came around, I was very surprised to see that I actually received a fun art set, which had a lot of stuff inside of it. The art set included a bunch of different brushes, some canvases, and different colors to paint with. There was also a sketch book so that I could draw anything I wanted. And after a few days, I ended up using a blank canvas to draw a mountain with some trees in the background.

At first, I wasn't sure how it would look since it had been a while since the last time I painted something, but it actually ended up looking pretty good. I even hung it up on my wall. It's safe to say that I did a good job with the painting. I think

that the art set was the best present I ever received because it was something I really wanted for the past couple of years, but I never got around to asking for it until last year. –Lathan N.

Hypothermia and "GRIIIIIIIIIIINCH"

It could have been the freezing cold or the fact my hand was entirely red. Maybe it was because of laughing until it hurt that made me remember it.

Nine-year-old me and my cousin, who's three months younger than me, decided to have a competition. "It's not cold at all! I could lie in the snow longer than you." "NO! I could lie in the snow with a t-shirt on forever!" Little me had no idea hypothermia could develop in just 30 minutes. We ran inside and put on t-shirts and shorts and ran back out and flopped into the snow. We talked and giggled about random things. However, I refused to give up. Our parents looked outside and laughed. Eventually we saw how red our hands were, and my cousin ran inside. I followed her.

My family and our eight cousins, grandparents, aunt and uncle always spend Christmas together. On Christmas Eve, we get into our grandpa's old van, hit our heads on the roof when he goes over any bumps, and go through the Aisle of Lights, a big holiday Christmas light display. –Lillian C.

Salina Diocese Motto for this School Year:
"Together Let us be Disciples of Jesus on Mission."

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