

The Christ House Newsletter

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For Friends and Family

Winter 2007

Christmas Greetings

I am confident that readers of this column will agree that commercialism is spoiling the Christmas holiday, - more importantly, the holy day - like mold on a fruit cake. We get carols starting on Halloween! However, the day still is important, and we are rewarded when we dig down and remind ourselves of the real meaning of this celebration of Incarnation.

When the early Christians began to celebrate the life of Christ, they had no idea of the exact day of His birth. They chose the 25th of December because it was already a pagan feast day built upon the winter solstice - the beginning of the lengthening of the light which would eventually produce crops.

Christ is our light and our new life. We would do well to remember that, unlike the sun's light which every day peaks and then leaves, Christ is with us always.

When we celebrate Incarnation at Christmas we might also remember that God has always had a presence in creation. God is both transcendent and immanent, above, beyond creation and still part of it, because nothing can exist apart from God

So in spite of all the commercialism and some maudlin sentimentality, Christmas can remind us of God's presence in the world, and particularly of God's presence in our humanity. It should remind us of God's love for us. "He so loved the world that He gave us His only son."

May God bless all of you, and all of yours. **Bro. Tom**

Our Thanksgiving Meal

The day was quiet except for a few phone calls from ex-residents. One of these was from a Rwandan now living in Atlanta and he had mostly bad news: He had been a minister in Rwanda and got a job helping out in a new church in Atlanta. It seems this church might have to close for lack of members.

"I was sent down here to open this church and minister to the French speaking community, getting them involved with the church, which I did; but once I finished the job, headquarters decided to appoint another man as pastor. He had little talent and failed us in a big way, so now we have very few parishioners."

I asked him how he celebrated thanksgiving, and he said: "The kids had the day off from school, so we just had a nice meal together. When it comes to thanking God, let me tell you, Mr. David, I have a lot to be thankful for. Just imagine, I escaped the genocide in Rwanda, I was able to come to the US and have a home here in Christ House, and finally move my whole family here to join me." It was so good to see that he had a perspective on his life that allowed him to balance the good and the bad.

One of our visitors was a twenty-three year old from Ethiopia who lived with us a couple of years ago. He is now working full-time and attending La Guardia Community College. Guta is thankful for God being there for him these past few years.

Motumbo from Congo was one of the residents at our Thanksgiving table. He finds it very hard to understand the nature of the holiday, for such a day does not exist in his culture in Africa. But Africans do understand that they have things to be thankful for. When asked what he was thankful for, he said, "Mostly many thanks to God for Christ House." Despite a lot of programs on the Discovery Channel, our African residents say the only big holidays for them were Christmas and their independence day.



Why are Boris and Sam so happy? They are getting their email from the computer keep ing connected to home.

Our new arrival is a young man from Chechnya. Boris was recently granted asylum and released from the INS detention center in buffalo NY, where he had spent one hundred days. He left his native country about two years ago, and had a very challenging journey through East and Central Europe, Greece, and

finally Mexico. This involved walking, swimming, hopping freight cars, and hitch hiking- all fraught with danger.

He was thankful to have survived all that and to be out of detention, free to get on with his life.

Vincent, another former resident from Africa whom we mentioned in past letters, also stopped by recently. He is doing well, working as a home attendant and going to school, trying to push himself up the professional ladder towards a nursing certificate. *We are always so thankful and pleased to hear that the men are doing well.*

"Attention Everybody! You Have Three Days To Move Out."

That was the word around here a few days ago. The fire department was cracking the whip, going after illegal single-room occupancies. They are dangerous because of the hazard of fires from heaters and hot plates, with one small kitchen for three to four rooms. There are unsanitary conditions too, because a whole family can be crammed into one tiny room. It is understandable that the fire department had to crack down.

What is incomprehensible is the way they conducted their operation. They barged into the houses like terrorists with sledge hammer in hand. Once inside they pounded on the doors a couple of times, and if no one answered, they knocked the door down. This brought back unhappy memories for some here.

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Imagine the impact of this on our residents. They thought that it only happened in their countries.

Merry Christmas Feliz Navidad