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The National Herald

And All Our Greek American Friends

Merry Christmas

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Merry Christmas
Let’s not forget spiritual
is the birth of Christ
the Son of God.
Peace on Earth to all

The BEHRAKIS Family
Christmas! What does it mean? It means that the One of the Trinity out of exorbitant love, extreme if you wish, remained what He was, God, and became what He wasn’t, human. Christmas! The incarnate presence of God among us. It is a great and inconceivable mystery. It is difficult for our limited mind to go through the vastness of the fact that “the newborn is God.” The approach to this mystery can only be achieved through the power and the dynamics of faith. Faith not as a theoretical religious ideology, but faith as the establishment of a relationship with God. Faith as the total trust to Him. Beyond that there is nothing else. We remain ecstatic in front of the magnitude of loving emptiness of God, through which He dared everything, a freely loving. A Great love. A perfect love. A total love. A love without terms and without boundaries. An endless love. A crucified love. A salvific love. A total love. A love without terms and without boundaries. An endless love. In this way we understand that “God is life.” We don’t say that God has love, but He is love. The angels cried out “peace on earth” and filled the heavens that mysterious night that God assumed a human body and entered in history dividing it into two, but I am not sure the Earth heard the angels’ voices. Their voice wasn’t strong enough to bring the will of God to us. What a pity! That is why today we kill each other. Two thousand years, God’s will for “peace on earth” remains an unfulfilled desire. Senseless wars continue on the face of the earth. Blood continues to flow every day. Why do we kill each other? Our churches have emptied, Christ is gone. Many professionals of His Church of various ranks preach love but they hate each other. Hypocrisy is beyond any measurement. Our table might be full of food, but our hunger continues. It is a different kind of hunger and thirst. It is the endless inclination of the soul that wants to depart from the earthly attachment and to be liberated from any and all necessities. The heating system is operating to its fullest capacity, but the cold continues to freeze our body, probably because our soul refuses to warm up. Despite all these obstacles, “today Christ is born, let us clarify Him.” That means God on earth. He persists to assume a body like ours because God continues to love us as we are. That is why we continue to exist.
Wishing you a
Merry Christmas
AND A JOYOUS AND PROSPEROUS
New Year
Dr. Sotirios J. Vahaviolos
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The Christmas season is a time that should be filled with hope and joy for the birth of Jesus. However, most people’s obsession with getting the perfect gift can get in the way of the true meaning of the season. If keeping “Christ” in Christmas, as the bumper stickers say, seems more difficult than ever, it is only because we make it so. Keeping up with the latest trends and gadgets, being the first to own the newest, most expensive, or sought-after items is only marginally related to the birth of Christ.

So the Three Wise Men brought the baby Jesus gifts, and we imitate them by giving each other gifts. Gold would certainly go over well for most of the family and friends on our gift-giving lists, but frankincense and myrrh might be a hard sell. We should always remember, we have a choice. We don’t need extravagant gifts to show how much a person means to us. Sometimes just being there and being present in the moment is more meaningful than any gift. Putting the phone or tablet down and having a real conversation or a real experience can lead to something more valuable than any material things we remember. There is a sanctity in the present day for multitasking, but at what cost? It might seem more efficient to do several things at once and do it well and to finish what we started.

It might also be worthwhile to think about those less fortunate during the Christmas season. As many people in need, it seems especially offensive to buy ostentatious gifts, to be consumed by materialism, and to spend more time in the community. and helping the less fortunate can put things into perspective.

Great work is being done by organizations including the Afya Foundation, a nonprofit that collects and delivers critically needed surplus medical supplies, hospital equipment, and humanitarian provisions for acute and ongoing health crises worldwide. They recently raised funds through a benefit hosted by the Livanos family to support efforts in Lesbos dealing with the refugee crisis. More information is available on the Afya Foundation website, afyafoundation.org.

The New York Cares Coat Drive runs through December 31 with several locations where coats can be dropped off that will go to those in need. People or organizations can sign up as a coat collection by registering online. More information is available online at newyorkcares.org.

Making the effort to give back this Christmas honors the spirit of love and hope that is at the heart of the holiday season. Spending time with our loved ones, creating cherished memories, and giving thanks for all the blessings we have received this year will make the holidays even more special and more meaningful. Making the world a better place is the best gift of all. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Wishing you and yours
a Merry Christmas
and a Happy
and Healthy
New Year

Maria Allwin
Season Greetings
from
ALEX and FAYE SPANOS
and Family

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30TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

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- Patriarch Bartholomew

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.
Let us continue to pray for Orthodox Christian Unity in the United States.

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Best wishes to the entire Greek American Community for a Merry Christmas and a Happy, healthy and prosperous New Year

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and
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Hospital for Special Surgery
Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine
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WISH A HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON
&
A JOYOUS AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO
THE NATIONAL HERALD AND ALL OF OUR
GREEK AMERICAN FRIENDS

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To the Greek-American community
May the true meaning of the holiday season fill your hearts and home with many blessings

We wish you
a Happy Holiday Season!
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wishes everyone
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Make it Christmas, Not Stressmas

By Constantinos E. Scaros

In recent years, the Albert Einstein quote “Imagination is as important as knowledge in dealing with things symbolic” has become an influential idea. And yet, it is appropos to one to keep in mind when it comes to Christmas – or other holiday rituals.

The celebration of Christmas in the United States is replete with a daunting task list, the most prevalent of chores included below:

1. Buy a tree
2. Decorate the tree
3. Buy gifts
4. Wrap the gifts
5. Place the gifts under the tree
6. Decorate the rest of the house – even though those to whom you didn’t send a Christmas card, even though they sent you one – that arrived the day after Christmas and are just a sample. Yet, there is a reason we do so unapologetically. In fact, the Christmas tree is a living thing, and decorating it is the housing ritual nearing a fin to take us to work, or if rush hour entails – because otherwise we won’t have a task list, the most prevalent of chores over and over again and expecting different results” has become an overused quote “insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results” has become an overused quote. By Constantinos E. Scaros

In recent years, the Albert Einstein quote “Imagination is as important as knowledge in dealing with things symbolic” has become an influential idea. And yet, it is appropos to one to keep in mind when it comes to Christmas – or other holiday rituals.

By Constantinos E. Scaros

The specific line to which I refer is: “so be good for goodness’ sake” seems anything but appropriate. Similarly, “getting into Heaven” should be icing on the cake – being good, being good for goodness’ sake.” And if the message is the lyrics are self-evident: “He [Santa Claus] sees you when you’re sleeping, he knows when you’re awake, he knows if you’ve been bad or good, so be good for goodness’ sake.” Being “good for goodness’ sake” simply put, means being good for the sake of being good. For me, the essential meaning not only of Christmas, but of Christianity and, most broadly, spirituality can be found in the lyrics of the Christmas Carol “Santa Claus Is Coming to Town,” particularly prevalent among children. The great beauty and potential of Christmas is absolutely nothing that your work was a very enjoyable experience. Back to the context of “Santa Claus is Coming to Town” – the lyrics are self-evident: “He [Santa Claus] sees you when you’re sleeping, he knows when you’re awake, he knows if you’ve been bad or good, so be good for goodness’ sake.” And if the message is the lyrics are self-evident: “He [Santa Claus] sees you when you’re sleeping, he knows when you’re awake, he knows if you’ve been bad or good, so be good for goodness’ sake.” Being “good for goodness’ sake” simply put, means being good for the sake of being good. For me, the essential meaning not only of Christmas, but of Christianity and, most broadly, spirituality can be found in the lyrics of the Christmas Carol “Santa Claus Is Coming to Town,” particularly prevalent among children. The great beauty and potential of Christmas is absolutely nothing that your work was a very enjoyable experience. 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and a Happy and Healthy New Year

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Three Cookie Recipes for the Holiday Season

By Eleon Saakele

While the holiday shopping season may begin earlier and earlier every year, the season for holiday cookies is one we should share with friends and family for as long as we can. Traditional Greek cookie recipes are often handed down from generation to generation and with tricky measurements and unscrupulous directions like “as much flour as it takes” but that shouldn’t deter anyone from trying to bake some of these tasty treats for the holidays. Cookies also make great hostess gifts for all the parties you may be attending this year and into next year. From Thanksgiving through Christmas, New Year’s and Epiphany, there are plenty of holidays to bake up some special treats for your loved ones. For a fun way to share cookies at your parties, try a cookie buffet table. Have family and friends bake a batch of their favorite cookies for your party. Set them out on a table with food safe bags and/or boxes and your guests can choose which cookies to take home with them as a parting gift. Here are three easy to follow cookie recipes.

Sesame Cookies with Jam

INGREDIENTS
• 1 cup unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
• 1/2 cup sugar
• 1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons sesame seeds
• 6 tablespoons jam of your choice

IN THE BOWL OF A STAND MIXER WITH THE PADDLE ATTACHMENT, CREAM THE BUTTER AND SUGAR UNTIL LIGHT AND FLUFFY, BUT NOT IN THE CREAM. WHILE MIXING THE FLOUR AND SALT IN A SEPARATE BOWL AND ADD GRADUALLY TO THE BUTTER MIXTURE. BEAT UNTIL THE DRY INGREDIENTS ARE COMBINED.rolled into one inch balls and roll in sesame seeds. Place two inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Make an indentation in the center of each cookie about 3/8 inch deep and fill with the jam of your choice. Be careful not to overfill. Bake in a preheated 400 degree oven for 10-12 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove to wire racks to cool completely.

Makes about 4 dozen sesame cookies.

Melomakarona/Finikia (Honey Cookies)

INGREDIENTS
• 1 cup farina
• 2 teaspoon baking soda
• 1/2 cup sugar
• 1 cup olive oil
• 1 cup orange juice
• 1/4 cup cognac

IN A LARGE BOWL, WHISK TOGETHER THE FLOUR, BAKING SODA, AND SUGAR. ADD THE OIL AND ORANGE JUICE. WHISK WELL UNTIL THE DRY INGREDIENTS ARE COMBINED. Form the dough into ovals about 2 inches long. If desired, form the cookies into a crescent or half-moon shapes and place on cookie sheet and immediately place them on waxed paper covered with confectioners’ sugar.

Meanwhile, sprinkle a large piece of waxed paper with a generous amount of confectioners’ sugar. When the cookies are done, remove them from the cookie sheet and immediately press them on the waxed paper covered with confectioners’ sugar. If using the ouzo, sprinkle the cookies at this point and then add confectioners’ sugar on top of the ouzo. Over-cook, place the kourambiedes on a sheet of waxed paper and let sit for an antique crinkled. Makes about 50-60 kourambiedes.

Kourambiedes

INGREDIENTS
• 2 cups unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
• 1/2 cup confectioners’ sugar
• 1 cup blanched almonds, chopped, toasted and set aside to cool
• 6-7 cups all-purpose flour
• Ouzo for sprinkling (optional)
• Confectioners’ sugar for coating

IN A LARGE SAUCEPAN, COMBINE THE HONEY, SUGAR, WATER AND CINNAMON. SIMMER THE SYRUP QUICKLY SO THEY DON’T DISSOLVE IN THE SYRUP. COOL THE COOKIES COMPLETELY WITH A SPRINKLE OF WALNUTS AND A DASH OF GROUND CINNAMON. MAKES ABOUT 60- 70 COOKIES.

FOR THE SYRUP:
• 2 cups honey
• 2 cups sugar
• 2 cups water
• 1 cinnamon stick

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INGREDIENTS
• 1 cup farina
• 2 teaspoon baking powder
• 1 teaspoon baking soda
• 1/2 cup sugar
• 1 cup olive oil
• 1 cup orange juice
• 1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest
• 1/4 cup cognac

IN A LARGE BOWL, WHISK TOGETHER THE FLOUR, BAKING SODA, AND SUGAR. ADD THE OIL AND ORANGE JUICE. WHISK WELL UNTIL THE DRY INGREDIENTS ARE COMBINED. Form the dough into ovals about 2 inches long. If desired, form the cookies into a crescent or half-moon shapes and place on cookie sheet and immediately place them on waxed paper covered with confectioners’ sugar.

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Best wishes

for a Joyous Christmas

and a Healthy

and Prosperous New Year!
Metropolitan Museum Hosts Byzantine Pop-Ups

By Eleni Sakellis

NEW YORK – On December 9, the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Medieval Sculpture Hall, Gallery 305, provided a dramatic setting for the first two Byzantine Pop-Ups performed in front of the only full-scale, authorized painting of the Deesis Mosaic from Hagia Sophia.

The performances of hymns and carols of the Byzantine Empire were sung in multiple languages from Greek and Russian to Armenian and Arabic. The festive and holy atmosphere of the Medieval Sculpture Hall is enhanced during December by the beautifully decorated Christmas tree featuring the Neapolitan Baroque Creche. The sound of the talanton signaled the start of the performance. Made for the Byzantine Pop-Ups by the Xenophontos monastery, the talanton, a wooden plank used instead of a bell in monasteries of the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition summons the monks to prayer and meals.

Among the hymns performed was Christ is Born Glorify Him and continued with Christmas chants and carols from the Byzantine Empire. The hall was crowded with museum visitors who were captivated by the powerful voices of the singers. Some of them had come only to see the Christmas tree and were pleasantly surprised by the performance that took place. Many attendees were of Greek descent and recognized the hymns and carols, but all those who paused to listen to the remarkable performances were amazed regardless of their ethnic or religious background. The performance was free with admission to the museum. In addition to the December 9 performances, three more were scheduled for December 16 at 4, 6, and 8 PM. All those with an appreciation of Byzantine music will be impressed by the Byzantine Pop-Ups.

The performers, an international ensemble of singers in the Axion Estin Foundation Chanters, are Eleftherios Eleftheriadis, Christos Chalkias, Rassem El Massih, Spyro Antonopoulos, Georgios Theodoridis, Nektarios Antoniou, Stephen Esper, Constantine Kokenes, Theodore Brakatsoulos, Nicholas Bavros, and Eystratios Gatanas. Eleftheriadis is performing at the museum for the third time in the Byzantine Pop-Ups. He previously appeared as a soloist for the Sacred Music of Byzantium featuring the Byzantine Choir under the direction of the late Lycourgos Angelopoulos, and in 2015 performed in the Grace Studios Region Auditorium for the Looking East from Byzantium concert. Eleftheriadis is a chanter at the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Shrine Church in Flushing, Queens.

Chalkias struck the talanton in the performance and sang. This year marks his second performance in the Byzantine Pop-Ups. Chalkias trained in Byzantine chant with the great theorists and interpreters of the Mount Athos Byzantine tradition on Mount Athos in Greece. He is a volunteer and board member of the Axion Estin Foundation since 2002.

The Byzantine Pop-Ups are made possible by the Axion Estin Foundation (AEF), a non-profit educational organization with a core mission of promoting Byzantine Music and the Arts. AEF seeks to stimulate appreciation and study of this art form through its unique network of academic, music, arts, and liturgical organizations in the United States and internationally. AEF produces programming, events, and publications in a comprehensive effort to broaden understanding and audience for Byzantine Music in the United States and internationally.

We Wish You
a Merry Christmas
and a
Happy and Prosperous
New Year

Peter Mesologites
Leonard Zangas

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AMERICAN Hellenic Educational
Progressive Association
GOLD COAST CHAPTER NO. 456
Manhasset, New York 11030

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MARY MIHALAKOS MARTUSCELLO

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The members of the Gold Coast Chapter #456 wish everyone
a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

We are the largest chapter on Long Island and the 5 Boroughs.
Our meetings are held at the Port Washington Yacht Club, located
at One Yacht Club Dr., Port Washington, NY, first Wednesday of each month, 6:00 pm.

Join us! We are fun!
We have a new Sons of Pericles Chapter.
Contact John G. Levas, president, at Amcorjgl@aol.com
for more information.
Sons are encouraged to join this new chapter.
The Gold Coast Chapter is conducting a membership drive.
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Membership is open to everyone who believes
in the mission of the organization.
A very old custom which remains today practically unchanged is the Greek Christmas carols, which is called kanala in Greek. Children, in groups of two or more, still make the rounds of houses singing carols, usually accompanied by the triangle or guitar, accordion or harmonica.

The children go from house to house, knock on doors and ask: "Shall we sing them?" If the homeowner's answer is yes, the kids sing the Christmas carols for several minutes before finishing up with the wish, "Many happy returns!" Years ago the homeowners offered the children holiday sweets and pastries, but today they usually give them some money.

The carols are sung on the eves of Christmas, New Year and Epiphany, and they are different for each holiday.

**HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS CAROLS IN GREECE**

The word kanala comes from the Latin cantala, which translates as "the beginning of the month." It is believed that the history of caroling goes deep into the past and connects with ancient Greece. The Christmas carols have been sung since the times of Homer. In fact, they have even found carols written in those distant past days which are similar to the ones sung today. In ancient times the word for carols was Eirenesioni, and children of then had an offering of a cake which deprived the arrival of the god Dionysus. Other times they held an olive or laurel branch decorated with red and white threads, on which they would tie the offerings of the homeowners.

The Eirenesioni song from the Homeric period can still be heard today — with small changes in the carols of Thrace: the homeowners.

The children go from house to house, knock on doors and ask: "shall we sing them?" If the homeowner's answer is yes, the kids sing the Christmas carols, usually accompanied by the triangle or guitars, accordions or harmonicas. As they arrive at each house, the children knock on the door and ask, "Shall we sing them?" If the reply is positive, they sing for a few minutes, ending with the wish, "Many years!" The head of the household rewards them with a small amount of money, although in the past they would be offered orange, such as meloncaves or kouzounakides.

Good Friday, Easter, and the first of the month is called kalanda in Greek. Children, in groups of two or more, still make the rounds of houses singing carols on those occasions. Many people should once

and may its clay jugs fill with honey, wine and oil.

And the founding new year with singing songs.

— Following are the Greek carols for each of the three holidays: Christmas Carols, New Year Carols and Epiphany Carols.

**GREEK CHRISTMAS CAROLS**

**Greek New Year Carols**

From the month and first of the year
My tall prosperity.
Let our good year begin.
Church with the holy throne
It is the beginning of the year.
Here, is the earth.
Let work up earth
And show us up.
So beat it on the way
And will not go on us
From Koura.
Yours, a lady, kindly.

**GREEK EPHESYAN CAROLS**

Today is the light and the neighbour
The happiness is big and the sanctification
Between the Jordan River
See our Lady the Blessed Virgin Mary
She carries an organ, a candle she holds
And pleased is St. John.
St. John held and Baptist
Baptises this divine child of mine
And moved to the house.
And we are bid to sing
Good day, good day!
Good day to you master
And the sinews.

**“Shall we sing them?” — Christmas in a Contemporary Greek Village**

Christmas usher in a 12-day period of celebration, the 12 days of Christmas, which end with the feast of Theophany.

On the eve of the feasts that mark the 12 Days of Christmas, Theophany, Christmas, Epiphany, Circumcision of Christ or St. Basil's Day, and Theophany), Christmas ushers in a 12-day period of celebration, the 12 Days of Christmas, which end with the feast of Theophany.

Circumcision of Christ or St. Basil's Day, and Theophany), Christmas ushers in a 12-day period of celebration, the 12 Days of Christmas, which end with the feast of Theophany.

On the eve of the feast of the birth of the Lord, Christmas Eve, children go from house to house singing carols, usually accompanied by the triangle or guitar, accordion or harmonica. In ancient times the word for carols was Eirenesioni, and children of then had an offering of a cake which deprived the arrival of the god Dionysus. Other times they held an olive or laurel branch decorated with red and white threads, on which they would tie the offerings of the homeowners.

The Eirenesioni song from the Homeric period can still be heard today — with small changes in the carols of Thrace:

- In the carols of Thrace, the homeowners.

The children go from house to house, knock on doors and ask: "shall we sing them?" If the homeowner's answer is yes, the kids sing the Christmas carols for several minutes before finishing up with the wish, "Many happy returns!" Years ago the homeowners offered the children holiday sweets and pastries, but today they usually give them some money.

The carols are sung on the eves of Christmas, New Year and Epiphany, and they are different for each holiday.

**GREEK NEW YEAR CAROLS**

*From the month and first of the year*

**My tall prosperity**

*Let our good year begin*

**Church with the holy throne**

*It is the beginning of the year*

**Here, is the earth**

**Let work up earth**

**And show us up**

**So beat it on the way**

**And will not go on us**

**From Koura**

**Yours, a lady, kindly**

**GREEK EPHESYAN CAROLS**

*Today is the light and the neighbour*

**The happiness is big and the sanctification**

**Between the Jordan River**

**See our Lady the Blessed Virgin Mary**

**She carries an organ, a candle she holds**

**And pleased is St. John**

**St. John held and Baptist**

**Baptises this divine child of mine**

**And moved to the house**

**And we are bid to sing**

**Good day, good day!**

**Good day to you master**

**And the sinews**

**A blessed and joyous Christmas**

**and a peaceful, healthy and full of grace and progress**

**New Year to all.**

Peter & Aphrodite Skeadas

**Eυφρόσυνα Χριστούγεννα**

**Ειρηνικός, Υγιές**

και πλήρες χάριτος

και προόδου Νέο Ετός
gia όλους

**Πάτερ και Αφροδίτη**

Σκιαδά
Dr. Ahmed Mohiuddin, MD, FACC

President and CEO, Medical Center of Boston International, Inc.

TO ALL OF OUR GREEK FRIENDS IN AMERICA AND GREECE

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Waltham, MA 02452
Tel.: (781) 894-8858 • Fax: (781) 894-8856
“Have a Holly Jolly Solstice” and Other Politically Correct Holiday Wishes

By Constantine E. Scarras

One of Candidate Trump’s repeated campaign promises was that if elected president, “we’ll bring Christmas back!” I was skeptical then, but the evidence is now more than clear. Trump has clearly brought Christmas back to all Americans, not just one group. Trump has done so by almost every store clerk, food server, and random passerby.

This year, Trump barked on a “thank you” tour to be able to say ‘Merry Christmas’ if elected president, “we’d again.” Sure enough, no sooner speaking in front of a cavalcade of various battleground states, “Wow, there’s still a place in America where it’s ok to say ‘Merry Christmas’ to a stranger,” I thought.

A few years later, I learned that there was more than one type of response from the mom: “Have a Holly Jolly Solstice,” and to the wife: “Happy Hanukah” or “Blessed Ramadan.” It’s like you wishing a non-Greek “Happy Greek Independence Day” on March 25. It’s not the same as Christmas, or any other major religious holiday, no matter how inclusive you try to make it. So, on this 25th of December, don’t worry so much about how you say it, or how it is said to you. Just be grateful for the human interaction. Whether you are the giver or the receiver of a good wish, it is a blessing. Be Happy.

The Board of Directors and the Advisory Committee of the Hellenic Relief Foundation

1. Do you say “Merry Christmas”?
2. When you wish someone “Merry Christmas,” do you say it, or how it is said to you?
3. How important is it to you to hear “Merry Christmas” rather than “Happy Holidays”?
4. Are you offended as a Christian by the well-wisher? Or are you conscious that by saying “Merry Christmas” yourself you might offend a non-Christian recipient, then in various professions (or some variation thereof).

Have a Holly Jolly Solstice and Other Politically Correct Holiday Wishes

Christmas 2016

GREEK ORTHODOX BASKETBALL LEAGUE

State Senator Leonidas and Dr. Donna Raptakis Alexandra and Nicholas wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

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Greek Orthodox Basketball League

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the communities, players, families and the entire G.O.B. Board of Directors

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Peter Kakoyiannis, Partner
Boat vs Tree: A Conflict of Christmas Cultures in Greece

Greeks are increasingly turning to decorating small Christmas boats instead of trees, considered an import from Rome, in the mistaken belief they are reviving an old Greek custom.

“We are slowly abandoning Christmas trees, which are considered a foreign custom, and turning to ships instead,” said Efros Vallianou, a journalist from the western island of Cephalonia. “We are trying to renew the island’s distant color that was lost when all our buildings collapsed in a big earthquake in 1953,” she said.

Cephalonians have even set up a citizen group to promote the boats and its results are already evident. “Every Christmas, more and more boats appear in banks, hotels and shops,” Vallianou said. “Spreading the island’s distant color, as a further argument in favor of the viking. The Christmas boats are made of paper or wood, decorated with small, colorful lamps and a few, simple ornaments. They are usually placed near the outer door or by the fireplace and the bow should always point to the interior of the house. With golden objects or coins placed in it, the ship symbolizes a full load of riches reaching one’s home. And the Christmas boat is making inroads into mainland Greece.

Every December, Greece’s second city, Thessaloniki, erects a huge, illuminated metal structure in the shape of a three-mast ship next to the Christmas tree in its main Aristotelous Square. “The Town Hall introduced the ship in 1999. Thessaloniki is a port city and we thought this would show appreciation for the role the sea played in the city’s economy,” said Thessaloniki Municipal Councilor Vassilis Gakis.

“The ship was the first of its kind in Greece. Many other municipalities are adopting it, but their models are not as big or even exist,” he told AFP.

Even the vast majority of Greeks who continue to stick to the Christmas tree consider it a foreign import. The modern Christmas tree entered Greece in the luggage of the country’s first king, Otto of Bavaria, who ascended to the throne in 1833 but the tree did not become popular before the 1940s.

The ship, by contrast, is viewed as a quintessential Greek symbol. Greeks have been seafarers for thousands of years and the country is today one of the world’s mightiest shipping nations.

But scholars are skeptical about the ship’s Christmas role. “Ships are not Christmas trees,” said Dimitris Loukatos, one of Greece’s most important ethnographers, as early as 1975. “Though it is true that children on the islands sang Christmas carols holding illuminated model boats in their laps,” Loukatos said.

“Boats were seen as something that served as a lantern in the dark or as a box for presents collected in return for singing carols,” he said. “But in other parts of the country, children held other symbolic objects, such as miniature models of the Saint Sophia Church in Constantinople (Istanbul),” said Loukatos.

“Using boats as Christmas ships is a new-fangled development,” Ekaterini Kamilaki, president of the Hellenic Folklore Research Center told AFP.

The Christmas tree, assumed to be foreign, may even have some Greek roots. Use of decorated greenery and branches around New Year is recorded as far back as in Greece antiquity, as it is in other pre-Christian cultures.

“Boats have been considered a Christwood in northern Syria. ‘Using branches and green bushes called “Christwood” always had a place in Christian households during the medieval Byzantine and Ottoman empires. ‘Whether its enemies like it or not, it is certain that the Christmas tree existed in the Byzantine Empire,’ Kamilaki said, citing historical evidence from fifth-century AD northern Syria. ‘We don’t want to ban the Christmas tree. It has roots in mountains and mountains.’ Gakis explained, explaining why the tree and the boat coexist in Thessaloniki’s Aristotelous Square.

This is a partial excerpt from an article http://www.sfakia-crete.com/sfakia-crete/christmas.html

President Panagiotis Psarakis and the National Board of the Pancretan Association of America Cordially Wish a Merry Christmas & a Happy, Prosperous, and Peaceful New Year to All Members, Friends, and their Families

www.pancretan.org
Happy Holidays

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From:

Israel Asher, LLC
Casey Shear

George Kalergios and family

Many thanks to our attorneys for the exceptional results obtained for our company in 2016
Drs Spiro & Amalia Spireas
and
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