

THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

Through the ages, agnostics, atheists and other critics have sought to annul the reality and profundity of the virgin birth. Many of them even reject the existence of a Supreme Being who transcends the boundry of man's finite reasoning. They refuse to bow in humble submission to a God whose ways and thoughts cannot be limited to the logical and rational thinking of man. Consequently, these individuals are ignorantly seeking to discredit the church and its baptized believers in Jesus Christ, who know through personal experience that a Saviour is born. For He is alive in us; constantly producing love, joy, peace and deliverance for the total man.

As we view our world today, we see many who lack the faith which gives this advent season its real and glorious significance - For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. St. John 3:16, 17.

On the night of His birth a member of the angelic host appeared unto shepherds who kept watch over their flock by night and said: "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to ALL people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." St. Luke 2:10, 11, 13, 14.

There are many who are "decking the hall with bows of holly" and singing, "tis the season to be jolly" who don't know what real joy is. For real joy is that inner peace that continuously springs up like a perennial well of water even in the midst of trouble and confusion.

Many will be "dreaming of a white Christmas just like the ones I used to know, where the treetops glisten and children listen to hear sleigh bells in the snow." And personally, I cherish the same dream. But if you really want a white Christmas, say as David said, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalms 51: 7, 10

As we forge ahead with Christ in Christmas, we can assure our critics that the recognition of Christmas is not sinful and paganistic, but the greatest birthday celebration of the year for we are cognizant of the fact that Christmas is more than:

Trees beautifully decorated, colorful lights burning bright, carols harmoniously sung, the exchange of gifts, Santa Claus and his reindeer, commercialization with bumper-to-bumper mall traffic.

This is the season to be jolly, for Christ, the Saviour is born. He is our long awaited deliverance.

"A Visit from the Belsnickel" comes to Old Salem December 14

A Pennsylvania German tradition will visit Old Salem and the MESDA Auditorium on Saturday, December 14 as part of the holiday season events in the historic district. A Visit from the Belsnickel will be available for families at three different times that day. The Belsnickel is described in a 19th century article as "a mischievous hobgoblin [who] makes his presence known to the people once a year by his cunning tricks of fairism.... He carries a great budget on his back, filled with all the dainties common to the season." This rascally, naughty fellow comes to visit with children and judge their behavior during the past year. He is the good friend and patron of all the good children, and will likely have a holiday treat for the children in attendance.

Tim Essig, of the Landis Valley Museum in Lancaster, Pa., has researched the stories, costuming and actions of the traditional Belsnickel. Essig will bring that tradition and fun to Old Salem for three skits during the day on Saturday the 14th.

Spaces during the three visits of the Belsnickel will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Parents and children have several options for attending the program. The visit will be presented at 10 a.m., 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. For those who wish to only attend the visit, the cost will be \$10 for adults and \$8 for children (which includes a visit to the new Toy Museum at Old Salem). There will be 50 spaces available at the morning and late afternoon sessions, and 25 spaces for the 2 p.m. visit.

For a more complete experience, there will also be a lunch-and-visit combination offered to 25 persons total. Lunch will begin at the Salem Tavern Restaurant at 11:45 a.m., followed by a tour of the Toy Museum and the 2 p.m. Visit from the Belsnickel. The cost for this event is \$20 for adults and \$15 for children.

For reservations or information, call (336) 721-7352 weekdays. The MESDA Auditorium and The Toy Museum at Old Salem are both located in the Frank L. Horton Museum Center, 924 South Main Street at the lower end of the Old Salem historic district.



Away In A Manger



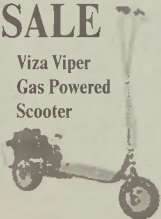
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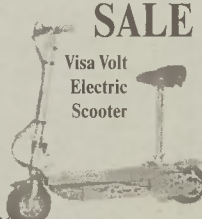
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