

Our Lady of Lebanon Church

(Maronite Catholic Rite)

2216 Eoff Street, Wheeling, WV 26003

Rectory: (304) 233-1688 • Fax: (304) 233-4714

E-Mail: ololwv@Comcast.net • Web Site: www.ololwv.com

Christmas 2009

*Merry Christmas
With Love and Prayers*

from all of us

Pastor: Rev. Bakhos Chidiac

Secretaries: Charlotte Khourey & Thomasina Geimer

Organist: Evelyn Ghaphery

**Choir Members: Rita Strawn, Lou Khourey, Allison Duffy,
Dr. Rob Vawter, Shirley George, George Thomas, Ted Olinski, Earl
Duffy, Jody & Abbie Seabright, Robert Vawter, Tracey Dierkes**

**Parish Council Members: Lou Khourey, Linda Duffy,
Tom George, P.J. Lenz, and Carol Dougherty**

Altar Servers: Sam Elias, Bob Kupchak, Bob Sengewalt & Mike Linton

Altar Boys: Louie Khourey & Dalton Haas

Members of the Women Society & President: Sandra Dusick

Members of the Cedar Club & President: Linda Duffy

Bulletin Coordinator: Julia Tappe

Merry Christmas in Many Languages

Language	How to write it	How to say it
Lebanese		Me-Lad Ma-Jeed
French	Joyeux Noel	Jo-Wa-Yuh Noh-Ehl
German	Frohliche Weihnachten	Fruh-Lee-Kheh Vigh-Nakh-Tin
Spanish	Feliz Navidad	
Italian	Buon Natale	Bwohn na-Ta-Leh
Russian		Zroh Dje-Sht Vohm
Chinese		Goon Hoh Sheng Than
Norwegian	God Jul	God Yool
Portuguese	Felez Natal	Feh-Lees Na-Tahl
Greek		Kah-Lah-Khress Too-Geh-Nah
Hawaiian	Mele Kalikimaka	Meh-Leh Kah-Lee-Kee-Mah-Kah

Gospel Reflection: Christmas 2009

Readings: Heb: 1:1-12 & Lk 2:1-20

“She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” Luke 2:7

Does Luke’s version of Jesus’ birth differ from Matthew’s?

Yes. Our Christmas cards, carols, pageants, and crèche sets tend to interweave Luke and Matthew’s nativities, but each author presents his own distinctive take on Jesus’ birth.

When Jesus is born in Matthew’s Gospel, a star emblazons the sky, signaling dignitaries from exotic lands. These magi” embark on their long journey, taking up to two years to reach Jerusalem. Once there, their arrival wreaks havoc, as not only is King Herod troubled, but all Jerusalem. Plots are hatched. Calculations are made. Deals are struck. The magi continue onward, guided by the star. They find Jesus – at his house – and pay him homage with fantastic gifts. When they evade Herod, Herod launches a desperate assassination attempt. Warned by a dream, the holy family flees under cover of darkness to seek asylum in Egypt.

In Luke, Mary and Joseph are forced to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem for a state census. Lost in a sea of humanity, they are denied even a spare room there. In the back alley of some hostel, Mary gives birth and must lay her child in a paltry feedbox. The entire event goes practically unnoticed, except when a few scruffy shepherds shuffle in from a neighboring field. Eight days later, the holy family returns to Nazareth, stopping briefly to offer their temple sacrifice.

These portrayals of Jesus’ birth differ radically in details, and they even seem contradictory. Matthew’s scene is portentous, dramatic, and politically-charged. Luke’s is humble, pedestrian, and unassuming. Each evangelist uses his story to convey who Jesus is and why he has come. For Matthew, Jesus is the King of the Jews, the long-awaited Messiah, whose dramatic arrival befits his royal status. For Luke, Jesus is the Son of God whose meager circumstances reflect his solidarity with even the most insignificant members of society.

Merry Christmas from the Pastor

Dear Parishioners and Special Friends,

Four days before Christmas in 1991, the Lord had called me to serve his altar and his people. I was forty years old when I was ordained. Now I regret not to be called earlier because serving the Lord is the greatest honor I have ever received. I am so glad to be your servant priest because your bounty and generosity have brought lot of joy to my heart throughout the last eight and half years I have served here in Wheeling.

I am so grateful to all the parishioners and friends who came together on December 20th to prepare and join me for a luncheon on the occasion of my 18th Anniversary to the priesthood. You humbled me a lot, for I don’t deserve all your support and love. I thank each and everyone who prepare food or pastry or supported me with gifts. By doing that, you put me under a huge debt, which I am afraid I will not be able to repay.

Also I am so thankful to all those who supported me this Christmas with gifts of all kinds. I am so lucky to be here among you. You are the best of the best in the world.

My friends, our visitors are amazed at the achievement with no debt and the beauty of our church. You deserve more than that because you are generous and you work hard to achieve your goal. This church is for you and for your children. Your presence at Mass and your generous financial support keep her alive and beautiful. Penny-pinching people have no life and they live in mediocrity and honor their fortune but not God.

Without you, there is no need for the church or for the priest. Throughout history, the church was the birthplace of many saints. From the church they drew their strength and they obtained the blessings from the Mysteries. You and I need this blessing because without God we could not do anything.

May your Christmas be Joyful and the New Year full of good news. Let's keep the good work up!

--Fr. Bakhos

Christmas Reflection: Christmas Invitation

You are cordially invited to

A BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION!!!

Guest of Honor: Jesus Christ

Date: Every day. Traditionally, December 25
but He's always around, so the date is flexible...

Time: Whenever you're ready.

(Please don't be late, though, or you'll miss out on all the fun!)

Place: In your heart.... He'll meet you there.

(You'll hear Him knock.)

Attire: Come as you are... grubbies are okay.

He'll be washing our clothes anyway. He said something about new white robes and crowns for everyone who stays till the last.

Tickets: Admission is free. He's already paid for everyone...

(He says you wouldn't have been able to afford it anyway...
it cost Him everything He had.

But you do need to accept the ticket!!

Refreshments: New wine, bread, and a far-out drink He calls "Living Water,"
followed by a supper that promises to be out of this world!

Gift Suggestions: Your life. He's one of those people who already has everything else.
(He's very generous in return though. Just wait until you see what He has for you!)

Entertainment: Joy, Peace, Truth, Light, Life, Love, Real Happiness,
Communion with God, Forgiveness, Miracles, Healing, Power,
Eternity in Paradise, Contentment, and much more!
(All "G" rated, so bring your family and friends.)

R.S.V.P. Very Important!

He must know ahead so He can
reserve a spot for you at the table.

Also, He's keeping a list of His friends for future reference.

He calls it the "Lamb's Book of Life."

Party being given by His Kids (that's us!!)

Hope to see you there! For those of you whom
I will see at the party, share this with someone today!

Christmas Reflection: "Mary Did You Know"

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?
...Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?
...This child that you've delivered will soon deliver you.
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with His hand?
...Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
...And when you kiss your little baby you've kissed the face of God.
The blind will see. The deaf will hear. The dead will live again.
The lame will leap. The dumb will speak. The praises of The Lamb
Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations?
...Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?
...This sleeping child you're holding is the Great I Am
May the true joy of Christmas be with you throughout the year.

Christmas Reflection: We've Lost Sight of Christmas

During the frenzied pace of the Christmas season, we tend to lose sight of the message and promise that Christmas heralds. So often we're caught up in getting ready for this's and last minute that's. We rush here. We push there, and practically run over people seeking that special gift which we really cannot afford.

Could all this hurrying and scurrying be Satan's vengeance against God, or his revenge against the Incarnation –the birth of the Son of God? Satan blinds us all with the glitter and gloss, sounds of bells tinkling and cash registers jingling. We've lost sight of the meaning of Christmas –the message of peace among all men and women, the promise of joy to everyone of good will.

Christmas' true splendor is found more often in simplicity –simplicity rooted in awareness and listening. For as we listen more to the world around us, we become increasingly aware of the troubles and pain, the anger and strain that men and women suffer. It is the message and promise of Christmas which can bring hope to the little, the lost and the least; to the bruised, the battered and the broken.

One of the greatest gifts we can bring to the world, bring to each man, woman or child we meet this Christmas season, is to "practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty." I'm reminded of the B.C. comic strip from several years ago in which cartoonist Johnny Hart has the character Wiley searching for answers to one of life's great questions. It is a question so simple and yet so timely. In the first panel Wiley asks, "Whatever happened to kindness?" He then proceeds to write the following verse:

*"Why do people go to the trouble to give other people some trouble?
Why do they burst someone's bubble, when they know it comes back to them double?
Why do we go to the effort to hurt someone we actually love?
Why can't we say something sweet 'stead of curt? A push only leads to a shove.
Why can't we treat other folks with respect? With a smile or a kind word or two?
Treat them with honor, the way you'd expect they should act when they're dealing with you.
Why can't we overlook others' mistakes? We've all surely been there before.
Love and forgiveness is all that it takes, to boot Satan's butt out the door."*

This Christmas season, give a gift that will last, a gift that will endure long after you are gone. "Practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty." Go ahead, try it! It will shock you only a bit. I'm sure it will astound others, too, and I am certain it will startle the world around you. Go ahead, practice kindness anyway. The world could use a jolt such as this.

Christmas Prayer

Blessed be the Child, who today delights Bethlehem.

Blessed be the Newborn, who today made humanity young again.

Blessed be the fruit, who bowed Himself down for our hunger.

Blessed be the Gracious One, who suddenly enriched all our poverty and filled our need.

Blessed be He whose mercy inclined Him to heal our sickness.

Blessed is the Shepherd, who became the sheep for our absolution.

Blessed is the Vine shoot that became the cup of our salvation.

Blessed also is the Cluster, the source of the medicine of life.

Blessed also the Ploughman, who Himself became a grain of wheat, that was sown & a sheaf that was reaped...

Sea of glory without needs, receive in Your graciousness a drop of thanksgiving, for by Your gift You have moistened my tongue to praise You.

--Saint Ephrem

Mass Intentions

THIS WEEKEND, December 26-27: St. Steven the first Christian martyr

Saturday, December 26 at 4:00 p.m.:

40-Day Mass of Larry Gibbons by his mother Lucille Gibbons & Family
John F. Kukula by his wife Mary Rose Kukula

Sunday, December 27 at 10:30 a.m.:

Helen Fielding by her husband Don Fielding (FL) & his special intentions
Larry Gibbons by Rosella, Susan & Domenique George

Weekday Masses

Monday, December 28: No Mass. Pastor's Day Off

Tuesday, December 29: No Mass. Pastor's Day Off

Wednesday, December 30: No Mass. Pastor's Day of vacation

Thursday, December 31 at 5:00 p.m.: New Year's Eve Mass: (No Midnight Mass)

Helen Fielding by her husband Don Fielding (FL) & his special intentions
Mike & Sadie Thomas and Deceased Relatives (MN) by Ervin & Rosemary Splatt (WI)

Friday, January 1, 2010 at 10:30 a.m.: New Year's Day Mass: (Day of Obligation)

Helen Fielding by her husband Don Fielding (FL) & his special intentions
Larry Gibbons by Bob Kupchak & Family

NEXT WEEKEND, January 2-3: Finding of Jesus in the Temple

Saturday, January 2:

At 3:30 p.m.: Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

At 4:00 p.m.: 40-Day Mass for John Saab (of Morgantown) by his Family
The Henning & Bott Families by Don & Roberta Henning

Sunday, January 3 at 10:30 a.m.: Mass will be followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

--Living and Deceased members of the Nicholas & Nimnoon Ghaphery Family & the David Abraham Ghaphery Family by the Ghaphery Family

--Nicholas Abraham Ghaphery Sr. by the Ghaphery Family

Donate to the Church Maintenance Fund

Help with the Endowment Fund to Keep Our Church Open and Active (Total Raised: \$2,260.00)

Please donate toward the Endowment Fund CD account that is meant exclusively for our church maintenance for the years to come. Only the yearly interest will be withdrawn and spent to pay for church utilities and general maintenance. All benefactors will be enrolled in the daily Mass offering. Please put into writing in your will the following wording:

(I, , hereby give, devise and bequeath the sum of \$..... (or specify described real or personal property) to the Church of Our Lady of Lebanon, a non-profit organization located at 2216 Eoff Street, Wheeling, WV 26003, Phone (304) 233-1688. Deposit my donation in the Endowment Fund account designated to maintain and support the church. Also, I wish to be enrolled in the daily Mass intentions as a benefactor.) Many thanks to December donors: Irene & Paul Schuler (\$53), A Friend (\$50), Women Society (\$180 –Dec. gift basket),

Donate to Our Parish Families Assistance Fund

A special account called “**Parish Families Assistance Fund**” had been opened to help exclusively the families of our parish who are in dire need. You can make a donation to the church earmarked toward the “Poor of the Parish” or drop your donation in the Poor Box located at the back of the church. The Poor Box money located at the back of the church will be divided between the poor of our parish and the “Poor of Wheeling” through cooperative effort with the 18th Street Catholic Neighborhood Charity Center. All donations are tax deductible. May God reward those who share their blessings with the brothers and sisters of the Lord.

Many Thanks to December donors: Dennis Albaugh (\$100),

Our Lady of Lebanon Community Calendar

Date	Event
Sunday, December 27	50/50 Monthly Raffle Drawing – following Sunday Mass in the Cedar Hall
Monday, January 11, 2010	Cedar Club Meeting – 7:00 p.m. in the old basement hall
Friday, January 15, 2010	Cedar Club after Holiday Dinner – 6:30 p.m.-??at the Tikki Bar & Restaurant
Sunday, January 24, 2010	Women’s Society Meeting – following Sunday Mass
Sunday, January 31, 2010	50/50 Monthly Raffle Drawing – following Sunday Mass in the Cedar Hall
Thurs., February 11, 2010	Reverse Raffle & Dinner – cocktails & hors d’oeuvres at 6 & Dinner at 7 p.m.



Community Events

Attention Bulletin Subscribers (December 31st, 2009)

The 2010 bulletin will be mailed weekly ONLY to those who renewed their subscriptions by sending \$50 to cover the cost of the stamps, envelopes, printing and related expenses. For those who did not renew their subscription, the last bulletin they receive will be that of the weekend of **December 27, 2009**. Don’t delay. Mail your payment today!

40-Day Mass of John Saab (Saturday, January 2, 2010)

The 40-Day Mass Memorial for John Saab of Morgantown will be celebrated at our church on Saturday, January 2nd, 2010. His family will attend the Mass.

Cedar Club Meeting (Monday, January 11, in old basement hall)

The next Cedar Club meeting is on at 7 p.m. in the old hall. Try to attend. Hostesses will be Alison Duffy & Nini Miller.

Cedar Club “After Holiday Dinner” (Friday, January 15, at Tikki Bar Restaurant)

The Cedar Club “After Holiday Dinner” starts at 6:30 p.m. at the Tikki Bar & Restaurant. Everyone is welcome. Wear your Hawaiian attire and order from the menu – pay as you go. Reservations required; call Nini 304-243-0057 or Allison at 304-242-6853.

Women's Society Meeting (Sunday, January 24th, after Mass)

Plan to join the Women's Society for their next meeting scheduled for Sunday, January 24th, after Mass. We will complete our plans for the upcoming events.

Second Maronite Reverse Raffle Dinner (Thursday, February 11, 2010)

Our 2st Maronite Reverse Raffle and Dinner is scheduled for Thursday, February 11, 2010, at the Wheeling Country Club. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres begin at 6:00 p.m.; a sit-down dinner at 7:00 p.m. (each dinner purchase includes 2 drink coupons). Come and experience the excitement of the night. Everyone who attended last year really enjoyed the event – especially those who always work at our events. They were able to enjoy the event while being waited upon by the courteous, efficient staff at the Wheeling Country Club. Winners need not be present. Plan not to attend.

Deadline to purchase tickets is: Sunday, February 7, 2010. Costs are:

\$ 50.00	1 Raffle Ticket only
\$ 75.00	1 Raffle Ticket & 1 Dinner (with 2 drink coupons)
\$100.00	1 Raffle Ticket & 2 Dinners (with 2 drink coupons for each dinner)

For tickets call Mickey (Joseph) Morgan at 304-277-1642, Lois Rutter at 304-242-3922; Linda Duffy at 304-242-6853 or

- 1) complete the attached order form
- 2) Make your check payable to: **Our Lady of Lebanon Church** with "Memo Line:" **Reverse Raffle**
- 3) Mail both the form and the check to:

**Our Lady of Lebanon Church; "Attention, Reverse Raffle", 2216 Eoff Street
Wheeling, WV 26003**

Women's Society Gift Basket Raffle (next Drawing at our 2010 St. Maron Dinner)

The Women's Society's next Gift Basket Raffle drawing will be held at our 2010 St. Maron Dinner which has yet to be scheduled. The "Wine and Chocolate" Gift Basket will include various wine and chocolates. (NOTE: Ladies, if you have an item to donate, please bring it to Carol as soon as possible so the basket can be displayed as soon as she can assemble it.)

The Gift Basket Raffle proceeds benefit the maintenance of our church through the "Endowment Fund." **Won't you take a chance ... or two ... or eighteen!** Tickets cost \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00 **or 18 ticket stubs (3 sheets of tickets) at one time for only \$10.00.** All Gift Basket and 50/50 Raffle Tickets are now printed on white paper in the bulletins so please check the ticket sheets carefully to be sure you are completing the correct ticket stubs. Tickets are available in our weekly bulletin and at the entrance to the church at that time also.

Buy or sell the tickets, and return the completed stubs as soon as possible in the weekly collection (note Gift Basket Raffle on "Memo" line of your check and front of envelope) or mail to: Our Lady of Lebanon Church, 2216 Eoff Street, Wheeling, WV 26003. Congratulations to December's winner – Peggy Justice.

Women's Society Monthly 50/50 Raffle (Drawn: Sundays, Dec. 27th & Jan. 31)

The Women's Society continues to sponsor the **Monthly 50/50 Raffle**. Tickets cost \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. Proceeds now will benefit the maintenance of our church through the "Endowment Fund."

The drawing from entries received for the **December 50/50 Raffle Tickets**, which can be found at the church entrance, will take place in the Cedar Hall after Mass on **Sunday, December 27.**

The next drawing from entries received for the **January 50/50 Raffle Tickets**, which can be found at the church entrance and in the Weekly Church Bulletins, will take place in the Cedar Hall after Mass on **Sunday, January 31.**

Please check the ticket sheets carefully to be sure you are completing the correct ticket stubs. All raffle tickets are now printed on white paper only. Buy or sell the tickets, and return the completed stubs as soon as possible in the collection or mail to: Our Lady of Lebanon Church, 2216 Eoff Street, Wheeling, WV 26003. Please write as "Memo: 50/50 Raffle."

For more information or additional tickets, contact the church office at (304) 233-1688. May the Blessed Mother reward you manifold and we ask for your continued support. Congratulations to Irene Schuler who won the November prize of \$53 and donated it to the Endowment Fund for the maintenance of our church.

Please Pray for Those on Our Prayer List

Please Remember Those Hospitalized Recently In Your Prayers:

Barb Sobota, Josephine Joseph, Theresa Snedeker,

Also please pray for those who asked us to pray for them:

Charles Gibbons, Mary Custer, Bob Dougherty (brother of Bill), Edith Fahey, Frank Lish, Dolores Oser, Rosella Saseen, Sam Elias, Justin Frenn, Gary West, Louis John, Laura Wellman, Virginia Khourey Bryan (aunt of Lou Khourey in Toledo, OH), Manell Brice (Arlington, VA), Rose Mary Bris-Roybal (Albuquerque, NM), Pat & John Vawter (mother & brother of Dr. Rob Vawter)

Happy Birthday

December 27: Gloria Sterling, Luke Lenz
 December 29: Jeff Bentz, Tom John, Thomas Simon
 January 1: Nancy Joseph
 January 3: Sue Brubach
 January 6: Anna Jalad, Gina Stees
 January 7: Jacob Wilson
 January 8: Paul Schuler
 January 10: Marjorie John, Mary Petros

Your Church Support Last Week

\$ 951	Collection
56	Candles
10	Utilities
25	Christmas Flowers
280	Parking
9	Fundraising
120	Ads
560	Reimbursement
1,120	Donation to church
180	Donation (endowment fund)
100	Donation (Poor Families)
\$3,411	Total. <i>May God reward you many fold</i>

What's New?

Parish Condolences: Joe Gonot

The pastor and the parishioners of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Wheeling, offer their heartfelt sympathy to the **Gonot** family on the loss of their beloved **Joe** who passed away in Heartland, Lansing, Ohio.

Fr. Bakhos celebrated the Funeral Mass at Our Lady of Lebanon Church on Wednesday, December 23rd, at 1:00 p.m. The Women's Society served the Mercy Meal at the Cedar Hall of the church after the interment.

May the Blessed Mother intercede for him and lead him to the light of Christ. May the Almighty God grant repose of the soul to His servant Joe and we extend the parish's condolences to *his* Family in their time of sorrow.

Lower Your Income Tax before the End of the Year

One way to lower your income tax bill for this year is to make charitable contributions, which can be deducted from your income when you itemize deductions on your 2009 Income Tax Return. Gifts made to charities, such as Our Lady of Lebanon Church, are tax deductible. It is important that you keep in mind that in order for you to claim the deduction on your tax return for 2009, **your gift must be received by the church and your check must be dated on or before December 31st, 2009.**

By the end of January 2010, those who made donations of \$250 or more will automatically receive from Our Lady of Lebanon Church a statement acceptable to the IRS stating the donor(s) name and the amount donated –through checks or weekly offering envelopes– from January 1st, 2009, through December 31st, 2009. This statement should be kept with your tax records, in case the IRS audits your return. *Note: The IRS will only accept cancelled checks or church statements as proof of your contributions.*

Poor Box

Please consider sharing your blessings with the brothers and sisters of Christ. Some are in dire need some are not, but God alone knows what's in each one's heart. The Poor Box is located at the rear of the church near the Holy Water Font. Half of the money from that box is deposited in our "Parish Families Assistance Fund" to assist the poor families in our parish; and the other half is given to Catholic Charity on 18th Street, in Wheeling to be used for the poor and homeless. May your good deeds toward the brothers and sisters of Christ shine in the kingdom of God.

Christmas Story: Saint Nicholas

(died in 342 AD)

Better known to children everywhere as Santa Claus, Saint Nicholas is one of the oldest official saints of the Catholic Church. In the early 4th century, Nicholas served as the Bishop of Myra, a Mediterranean city today known as Demre. Saint Nicholas attended the Council of Nicea in 325, which is credited for instituting the Nicene Creed, an early predecessor of the creed currently said at Mass.

Saint Nicholas is believed to have first become associated with Christmas because his feast date, like that of the Immaculate Conception, is close to the beginning of the Season. His link to the tradition of gift giving comes from a popular story. In Myra, there was a family of three daughters who were so poor that between them they did not have enough money for even one dowry, so none of them could marry. The eldest offered to sell herself into slavery to at least earn a dowry for the other two. On hearing of this, Nicholas anonymously sent three gifts of money to the family over three years. It is said that the first time he did so the money was thrown down the chimney, creating the myth of Santa Claus and chimneys.

Following Nicholas' death in 342, he became the subject of popular devotion and many stories spread of his miracles. Today we recognize Saint Nicholas not only as the mythical Santa Claus, but also as the patron saint of children.

Reflections: To Be With Christ

I remembered a village priest in Province who went to the waiting room of the nearby railway junction every night when most people were in bed, because there the lonely gathered, men who had no home, men who could not face home because of what they had done, men who could not speak to any woman but a prostitute, men and women who were failures because of their own fault or someone else's fault or nobody's fault. He knew Christ must be there; and he wished to be where Christ was, to make visible to these people the Christ Whom they could not see, to take their suffering and their sin upon him, as Christ was, to pray for them, as Christ prayed. (J.W. Stevenson)

Christmas Story: The Best Christmas

My husband and I had been happily (most of the time) married for five years but hadn't been blessed with a baby. I decided to do some serious praying and promised God that if He would give us a child, I would be a perfect mother, love it with all my heart and raise it with His Word as my guide. God answered my prayers and blessed us with a son. The next year God blessed us with another son. The following year, He blessed us with yet another son. The year after that we were blessed with a daughter. My husband thought we'd been blessed right into poverty. We now had four children, and the oldest was only four years old. I learned never to ask God for anything unless I meant it. As a priest once told me, "If you pray for rain, make sure you carry an umbrella."

I began reading a few verses of the Bible to the children each day as they lay in their cribs. I was off to a good start. God had entrusted me with four children and I didn't want to disappoint Him. I tried to be patient the day the children smashed two dozen eggs on the kitchen floor searching for baby chicks. I tried to be understanding when they started a hotel for homeless frogs in the spare bedroom, although took me nearly two hours to catch all twenty-three frogs. When my daughter poured ketchup all over herself and rolled up in a blanket to see how it felt to be a hot dog, I tried to see the humor rather than the mess. In spite of changing over twenty-five thousand diapers, never eating a hot meal and never sleeping for more than thirty minutes at a time, I still thank God daily for my children. While I couldn't keep my promise to be a perfect mother—I didn't even come close—I did keep my promise to raise them in the Word of God. I knew I was missing the mark just a little when I told my daughter we were going to church to worship God, and she wanted to bring a bar of soap along to "wash up" Jesus, too. Something was lost in the translation when I explained that God gave us everlasting life, and my son thought it was generous of God to give us His "Last wife." My proudest moment came during the children's Christmas pageant. My daughter was playing Mary, two of my sons were shepherds and my youngest son was a wise man. This was their moment to shine. My five-year-old shepherd had practiced his line, "We found the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." But he was nervous and said, "The baby was wrapped in wrinkled clothes." My four-year-old "Mary" said, "That's not wrinkled clothes, silly. That's dirty, rotten clothes." A wrestling match broke out between Mary and the shepherd and was stopped by an angel, who bent her halo and lost her left wing. I slouched a little lower in my seat when Mary dropped the doll representing baby Jesus, and it bounced down the aisle crying. "Mama-Mama." Mary grabbed the doll, wrapped it back up and held it tightly as the wise men arrived.

My other son stepped forward wearing a bathrobe and a paper crown, knelt at the manger and announced, "We are the Three Wise Men, and we are bringing gifts of gold, common sense, and fur." The congregation dissolved into laughter, and the pageant got a standing ovation. "I've never enjoyed a Christmas program as much this one," the priest laughed, wiping tears from his eyes. "For the rest of my life, I'll never hear the Christmas story without thinking of "gold, common sense, and fur." "My children are my pride and my joy and my greatest blessing," I said as I dug through my purse looking for an aspirin. My wish is that you too will be blessed with gold, common sense, and fur this Christmas season. **HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS!**

Joke (573)

Logic Lapses

Letter from a Dutch mother to her son, Hans:

Dear Son,

I'm writing this letter very slow 'cause I know that you can't read fast. You should also know that we don't live any longer where we used to live. You see, your father read in the paper that most accidents happen within twenty miles of home, so we moved. Our new house has a washing machine. The first day I put four shirts in it for my wash, and then I pulled the handle, and I haven't seen hide nor hair of them since.

It only rained twice this week. The first time it rained for three days, and the second time it rained for four days. You said that you wanted us to send you your coat. Well, when we talked to Aunt Sue about it, she said that it would be too heavy to mail with those big, heavy buttons, so we cut them off and put them in the pockets.

We got a bill from the funeral home today, and it said that if we didn't pay for Grandma's funeral then up she comes.

The other day your Uncle John was at the brewery and fell into the whiskey vat. Some people tried to pull him out, but he fought them off so long that he finally drowned. We had him cremated, and he burned for three days. Three of your friends went off a bridge in their pickup the other day. The driver got out okay, but the two in the back drowned. It seems that they couldn't get the tailgate down. That's all for now. --Love, Mom

P.S. Was going to send some money but already had the letter sealed.

The Bible Says Jump

One of the fathers in our congregation related to me how he and his five-year-old daughter had been jumping together on their backyard trampoline. She was having a great time.

Finally, her father stopped for a rest and quoted a Scripture verse: "You know, the Bible says, 'Be still and know that I am God.'"

His daughter quickly grew tired of her father's inactivity and retorted, "The Bible says, 'Jump, jump, jump!'"

Noah's Business Venture

An industrial executive who knew his Bible agreed to teach a few sessions of Sunday school. He asked the children, "Why was Noah the first businessman?"

There was silence. Nobody knew.

"Well," said the executive, "it's because he floated the first joint stock company and forced all his competitors into involuntary liquidation."

Job Insecurity

Insecurity is finding on your new job that your name is written on the door in chalk-and that there's a wet sponge hanging next to it.

Church Staff Job Descriptions

Pastor: Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. More powerful than a locomotive. Faster than a speeding bullet. Walks on water. Gives counsel to God.

Associate Pastor: Able to leap short buildings in a single bound. As powerful as a switch engine. Just as fast as a speeding bullet. Walks on water when the sea is calm. Talks with God.

Minister of Music: Leaps short buildings with a running start. Almost as powerful as a switch engine. Faster than a speeding BB. Walks on water if he or she knows where the stumps are. Sings to God.

Minister of Youth: Runs around buildings. Powerful enough to chase a locomotive with a handcar. Uses a squirt gun. Spends a lot of time around the water fountain. Mumbles to himself or herself.

Church Secretary: Lifts buildings to walk under them. Catches speeding bullets in her teeth. Freezes water with a single glance. When God speaks, she says, "May I ask who's calling?"

What New Job Lingo Really Means

"Join our fast-paced company": We have no time to train you.

"Casual work atmosphere": We don't pay enough to expect that you'll dress up.

"Must be deadline oriented": You'll be six months behind schedule on your first day.

"Some overtime required": Some time each night and some time each weekend.

"Duties will vary": Anyone in the office can boss you around.

"Must have an eye for detail": We have no quality control.

"Career-minded": Female applicants must be childless (and remain that way).

"No phone calls please": We've filled the job; our call for resumes is just a legal formality.

"Seeking candidates with a wide variety of experience": You'll need it to replace three people who just left.

"Problem-solving skills a must": You're walking into a company in perpetual chaos.

"Requires team leadership skills": You'll have the responsibilities of a manager without the pay or respect.

"Good communication skills": Management communicates, you listen, figure out what they want, and do it.