



December 2001  
No. 2

# SAINT MICHAEL

## *Messenger*

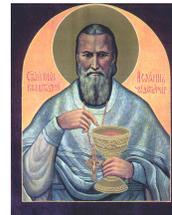
SAINT MICHAEL SCHOOL  
Santa Rosa, California

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*Greetings in Christ to all in this Holy Season,*

In the previous issue of *Saint Michael Messenger*, we mentioned that in our efforts to develop an Orthodox Christian curriculum, we realized such a curriculum had to revolve around the effort to form the *soul* of the child, not just inform the brain. Most of us have a sense of what the phrase “inform the brain” means, but what does “form the soul” mean? How is our soul formed? Did God not make it whole and complete? We know that prayer and good deeds are beneficial for the soul, and that sin is bad for the soul, but our idea of the soul may not go beyond that.

The early Church Fathers had a much clearer concept of the soul, and we can gain much by studying their writings. Fortunately, God has provided us with a few saints of modern times who have immersed themselves in the writings of the early Church and can pass on this knowledge to us. St. Theophan the Recluse, in his book, *The Path to Salvation*, gives us an excellent primer on the soul. St. John of Kronstadt’s *My Life in Christ* echoes the same understanding and insights.



**St. John of  
Kronstadt**



**St. Theophan  
the Recluse**

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The Church teaches that man's soul is trinitarian, in the image of the Divine Trinity Who created it. This trinity is seen in three aspects or capabilities, usually referred to as "*mind, heart and will,*" or "*thinking, feeling, and acting.*" A Christian education must be designed to engage all three capabilities of the soul, not just the thinking or intellectual part. Thus the whole soul—*heart, mind and will*—is given opportunities to come to the knowledge of God.

We would like to share one way we have designed our curriculum to provide activities for the right formation of the *will*. As parents and teachers, we all know that children have a *will*,



and that certain uses of this *will* call for needful disciplinary actions. We also know that the use of this *will* can produce unexpected surprises, such as a "breakfast in bed" for mom on a special occasion, or a clean bedroom one day without even being told.

Children find such satisfaction when they discover they can do something that brings delight and amazement to others. In school, we attempt to capitalize on this natural, positive inclination by providing opportunities to serve others through simple chores and larger service projects. Every morning each child is assigned a cleaning task and within a few minutes the entire school is cleaned, dusted and vacuumed, and the porches and sidewalks are swept. On Friday mornings, after short lessons, time is spent on service projects. Many times it is an outdoor project involving gardening, construction, or property maintenance. Other times it





is assembling St. Innocent Academy's newsletter, *The Eagle*, or making treats for neighbors and friends.

Of course, the jobs are not always easy or even pleasant. This becomes an opportunity for the child to struggle against the laziness of the flesh and to conquer the reluctance to do something that is not "fun."

Sometimes it involves hard physical labor, such as using sledgehammers to break up concrete in the old fishpond. Other activities, such as carefully planting seeds or bulbs, or painting the fence, become lessons in patience and attending to detail. Everyone must learn to work cooperatively, diligently, and cheerfully. We have learned that the best way to accomplish this is to work alongside the children, showing and teaching by word and example.



We adults sometimes think it is faster and easier to just "do it ourselves." Yet when an adult works joyfully with a child, the child learns much more than how to perform a task. The struggles produce many other rewards. He sees that he is needed and loved and gains a respect for physical labor. Just the satisfaction of finally completing a big project puts a glow in each one's heart. Becoming confident in new skills and abilities also contributes to a healthy self-respect that leads to even greater efforts to the glory of God.





## *Student Reports*

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### **Mailing *The Eagle*** *Camden Ramsay*

Each month, St. Innocent's Academy in Kodiak, Alaska sends us their newsletter called *The Eagle*. It is our job to assemble the pages and get it ready for mailing. We set up our desks in a line to make an assembly



line. Each student has a job. There are several different jobs:

1. collating the pages
2. stuffing into an envelope
3. labeling the envelope
4. stamping
5. sealing
6. mailing

Someone reads the newsletter to us as we work. We rotate workers, but the jobs stay in the same order. My favorite job is labeling, because I get to read the five hundred names on the labels.

# *Student Reports*

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## **How to Make a Jigsaw Puzzle**

*Danny Foster*

In our woodworking class, some of us made jigsaw puzzles. This is how we did it. First, we took a piece of paper the size we wanted our puzzle to be. Then we drew, on the piece of paper, a picture of what we wanted our puzzle to look like.

We then cut a 1/4-inch piece of plywood the same size as the paper with the drawing. We took a piece of carbon paper and put it between our drawing and the wood. We then traced along the basic outlines of our drawing so that we had a basic outline of our drawing on the wood. Then we painted the drawing on the wood. We used tubes of watercolor pigments mixed with water.

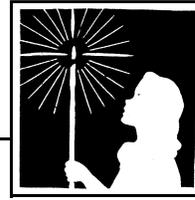


Then we took our paper drawing and experimented by drawing lines with a pencil to figure out how we wanted our puzzle pieces to be shaped. We then used a pencil to draw the shapes of the puzzle pieces on the board. We used a coping saw to cut along the lines we had drawn. After the puzzle was all cut apart, we lightly sanded the edges of all the pieces. After that, we made a frame with a bottom and sides, just big enough for the puzzle to fit inside.

Then we. . . were done!

# *High* LIGHTS

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## The Use of Art in the Curriculum

“There is no impression without expression,” said the British educator, Charlotte Mason. We have found this to be a true and extremely useful axiom. Every lesson taught *to* the children requires some manner of outward expression *by* the children in order that the teaching becomes deeply internalized. We use many methods to accomplish this, but as much as possible, we use art. As mentioned in our last newsletter, observing something in God’s creation, sketching it, naming and recording it in a nature journal, is one way to enable this expression.

We realize that art is an important part of children’s education, providing for the growth of individual creativity and the development of the soul’s power of discernment and sensitivity to true beauty. We have consistently aspired through the years to provide some artistic expression in all the various areas of study. We are careful to provide artwork that not only enhances the understanding and remembrance of the lesson, but also provides delight in learning, and is in itself a work of beauty.

Although we use several different mediums, the favorite activity of all is watercolor painting. We use the best materials we can afford and a wet-on-wet technique, which produces lovely results. It is evident that the children’s desire and appreciation for beauty and color is satisfied in this method of painting. This has proved itself time and again through the years as we have painted with children in homeschooling groups, summer school programs, public and private schools, Sunday schools, and private lessons. Many of the older children have become quite expressive in their work, sometimes surpassing their teacher’s abilities, and creating their own original works of beauty.

# *High* LIGHTS

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As an offering to each of you at this time of our Lord's Nativity, we are printing here some of the children's Christmas artwork from the past ten years. We want to make a special mention that some of these paintings were inspired by Mrs. Debra Dietch, a fellow teacher in the 1980's. We are very grateful to her for sharing with us her exceptional talent.



"St. Lucia of Syracuse"

*Night falls on silent steps,  
Round house and cottage,  
O'er the earth the sun forgot,  
Dark shadows linger,  
Then on a threshold stands,  
White clad in candlelight,  
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia.*



"The First Christmas Tree"

*A story adapted from "Nature  
Myths," by Florence Holbrook.*

# *High* LIGHTS

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“Good King Wenceslaus”

*Good King Wenceslaus went out  
On the Feast of Stephen,  
When the snow lay round about,  
Deep and crisp and even.  
Brightly shone the moon that night,  
Though the frost was cruel,  
When a poor man came in sight  
Gathering winter fuel.*



“Sleigh ride”

# *High* LIGHTS

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*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

*St. Matthew 1:21*



# *High* LIGHTS

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## “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

*O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie,  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by,  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light,  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.*



## “The Magi”

# *High* LIGHTS

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“The Crib of Bo’Bossu”

A legend of the Breton folk, taken from *The Long Christmas*, by Ruth Sawyer.



*We extend our warmest wishes to  
all our families and friends for a  
joyous and blessed Nativity.*



*Thy Nativity, O Christ our God,  
Has shone to the world the light of wisdom;  
For by it those who worshiped the stars,  
Were taught by a star to adore Thee,  
The Sun of Righteousness,  
And to know Thee the Orient from on high.  
O Lord, glory to Thee!*

**ST. MICHAEL SCHOOL** is a ministry of the Holy Dormition Orthodox Church, Santa Rosa, CA, under the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church, and His Very Most Reverend Metropolitan Joseph of the Bulgarian Diocese of U.S.A., Canada, and Australia. Fr. Dcn. James Hughes, Headmaster, Tel. (707) 545-0861, e-mail: [jkhughes@infostations.com](mailto:jkhughes@infostations.com).