MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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“Good evening, my lords; it is in your pleasures, I tell you, the blessing of Christ’s divine birth. Christ is born today in the city of Bethlehem, and the heavens are with him.”

The birth of Christ was first celebrated on December 25 in the year 336. It is known that when Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, became sole emperor after 324, he issued an order by which Christian holidays were given recognition and were adopted by the Church—one might even say that the emperor wanted to protect the Church against the rise of a rival to its position. This order included attestation to the uniqueness of the Christian faith by illustrating how ancient Greek feasts of orgies, drunkenness, and popular festivals of ancient Greek or Roman origin were also celebrated by Christians. The Church, in order to protest the celebration of the birth of the Sun (the Sun of Righteousness, Deut. 8:12), namely Jesus Christ, who was born on December 25, it was introduced by the Romans in various places, such as Broumalia) the celebration of the “invincible sun,” a very popular celebration, particul-

Many Christians who came from the same cultural back-
ground were not excluded and included from the rest of society. They were born to the birth of Christ and were confirmed in the faith. Some great fathers took the initiative to make the change. Among them was Patriarch of Constantinople John Chrysostom, who decreed the celebration of the “invincible sun,” a very popular celebration, partic-

The Church Fathers, did not destroy the cultural heritage in which it was born and developed, as we see from the writings of the Church fathers, the Church includes feasts whose origin were not excluded and included from the rest of society. They were born to the birth of Christ and were confirmed in the faith. Some great fathers took the initiative to make the change. Among them was Patriarch of Constantinople John Chrysostom, who decreed the celebration of the “invincible sun,” a very popular celebration, partic-

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From Ancestral Greek to Christian Holidays

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from The National Herald
Drs. Spiro & Amalia Spireas
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Wish you

a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year
On the First Day of Christmas...Celebrating Hellenic Style

Traditional Customs for the Twelve Days of Christmas in Greece

**Macedonia**

**CHRISTILOG**

In the villages of northern Greece, from Kastoria-Ragoutari to Ioannina, crowds look into the fields during the days preceding the holiday and choose the Christoxylo, or Christ-log, the most beautiful, sturdy and thick log from a pine or olive tree. It will take home with the intent of burning it in the fireplace continuously from Christmas Eve until Epiphany. When the log is burning, the family believes that the Christoxylo brings them the warmth of Bethlehem.

Before the master of the house brings the Christoxylo, the mistress of the household arranges to drink the house and prepare things in an orderly and carefully so that not a flower or leaf from another tree. Even the chimney is cleaned, so the Christoxylo, the evil demons, do no find a place to seep into the house through the chimney.

The night before Christmas, the Christoxylogos (the person who carries the Christoxylo) circles around the hearth, the master of the house will ignite a new fire with the Christoxylo, hoping it will endure all twelve days.

**KASTORIA-RAGOUTARI**

During the heart of winter, on December 6 the people of Ioannina take the Christoxylo from Kastoria-Ragoutari ("masked"), who makes merry and dances, spreading joy and high spirits. All the Christoxylo’s ancestors themselves to a Dionysian revelry, with the accompaniment of folk instruments that play all the traditional melodies of the region. Despite the obstacles encountered in their long journey, the Christoxylo plays its traditional melodies, whose origins are lost in time.

During the season of Christmas, visiting a neighbor for the holy day is called a Kastoria-Ragoutari. From the name, it is evident that in Kastoria-Ragoutari there are many gournochara, (hog-joy).

The gournochara is one of the most significant traditions of Christmas. The people believe that as the dry leaves catch fire and the day was dedicated to the celebration of Christmas. This holiday, which lasts for twelve days, is one of the most significant holidays in the Hellenic tradition. On the 25th of December, the festival of Christmas, the people of Kastoria-Ragoutari go to church. The first thing they do is to greet each other. The next thing they do is to give each other a kiss. Then they go to the church and sing a prayer. After the prayer, they return home and have a meal. The meal consists of a variety of dishes, such as roasted chicken, suckling pig, and lamb. The meal is followed by a game called "fireworks," which is played until the new year. The people of Kastoria-Ragoutari believe that if they play this game, they will have a successful year.

**Christmas Special**

**THE NATIONAL HERALD, DECEMBER 22, 2012**

Happy Holidays from the National Hellenic Society

**Monemvasia in Drama, northeastern Macedonia**

Illustration of Ragoutari in Kastoria

Continued on page 10
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and a joyous and prosperous
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Merry Christmas

To Cyprus,
the Greek and Cypriot American communities
and Hellenes everywhere,
I wish a Merry Christmas
and a Happy and healthy New Year,
which we hope will also bring
positive developments
regarding Cyprus and all Greek issues,
along with peace and progress for all humanity.

Philip Christopher
President
of The International Coordinating Committee “Justice for Cyprus” (PSEKA)
and of the Pancyprian Association
A Very Merry
and a Blessed Christmas

A Happy, Peaceful
and Prosperous New Year

JOHN, MARGO
YANNI CATSIMATIDIS
ANDREA and CHRISTOPHER COX
Best wishes to my relatives, friends and the entire Greek American community

Merry Christmas & a Happy and Prosperous New Year

Dr. John & Helen Collis and Family

“As when God became man in Bethlehem the eternal Word became flesh, so in the Bible, the glory of God veils itself…”

St. John Chrysostom

Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year

Nicholas J. Bouras
25 DeForest Avenue, P.O. BOX 1474, New Jersey

Best wishes to my relatives, friends and the entire Greek American community

Merry Christmas & a Happy and Prosperous New Year
Best wishes
for a Merry Christmas
and
a Healthy & Happy
New Year 2013

Jim and Wanda Pedas
Ted and Lea Pedas
and families
Congressman John Sarbanes and his family extend warm wishes for a joyful holiday season and a happy New Year.
Warmest wishes
to the entire Greek American Community
for
a Merry Christmas
and
a Happy New Year

From a friend
wish all
a Merry Christmas
and
a Joyous New Year

AHI Headquarters
Hellenic House
1220 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036
Tel.: (202) 785-8430 - Fax: (202) 785-5178

Continued from page 10

Stories of the kalikantzaroi have mesmerized the Greek popular imagination for millennia.

CElEBRATING Hellenic Style

The AHI Public Affairs Committee
The AHI Business Network
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The AHI Headquarters

Merry Christmas
Best Wishes
for
A Happy, Healthy
and
Prosperous New Year!
Pete J. & Cathy Pappas

Continued on page 16

...Celebrating Hellenic Style

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and its Affiliates

The AHI Foundation

DECEMBER 22, 2012
THE NATIONAL HERALD, DECEMBER 22, 2012

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Ye Olde Greek Christmas – A Nice Holiday Myth

By Constantine S. Sirigos

(There is a national story about a Christmas song on the 1980s that should remind people of an island at Greece’s Cyclades group, the real oasis of the holiday melodies depicted.)

When I was 13 years old I considered myself a very lucky Greek-American boy. Unlike all my Greek-American friends, I lived summer vacations in Greece, and my boss agreed to pay for half the airfare for the trip. 

That year our family – olive oil immigrants of a lifetime. That year our family – Dimitri, Marina, and Suzie, my friends and cousins and Greek-American boy. Unlike all my friends, I considered myself a very lucky one.

Mom and Dad saved their pennies and were ready to rebuild the ancestral home. We didn’t understand at the time, but the Greek School teacher – Yia Yia’s gout forced her to stay behind in Brooklyn.

There was finally going to be electricity, and a telephone, and electricity, and a telephone, and electricity, and a telephone, and electricity, and a telephone, and electricity, and a telephone.

Our father’s company – olive oil immigrants of a lifetime. That year our family – Dimitri, Marina, and Suzie, my friends and cousins and Greek-American boy. Unlike all my friends, I considered myself a very lucky one.

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There was finally going to be electricity, and a telephone, and electricity, and a telephone, and electricity, and a telephone, and electricity, and a telephone, and electricity, and a telephone.

The family had gradually built up to that triumph in 1979, but one of our highlights was Christmas in Greece. We decided we would have a concert in a balcony that included American Christmas carols, Greek holiday songs, and some popular Greek tunes. Mom and Dad liked the idea of a concert from the start because they could show off their children, and Dad because he could help in growing their public. The family had gradually built up to that triumph in 1979, but one of our highlights was Christmas in Greece. We decided we would have a concert in a balcony that included American Christmas carols, Greek holiday songs, and some popular Greek tunes. Mom and Dad liked the idea of a concert from the start because they could show off their children, and Dad because he could help in growing their public. The family had gradually built up to that triumph in 1979, but one of our highlights was Christmas in Greece. We decided we would have a concert in a balcony that included American Christmas carols, Greek holiday songs, and some popular Greek tunes. Mom and Dad liked the idea of a concert from the start because they could show off their children, and Dad because he could help in growing their public.

This gathering of family and friends can’t wait for their Christmas gifts, called angelokalamas on some islands.

The OCL web site www.ocl.org is keeping you up to date on the work of the Assembly. Get the information. Get involved.

Hellenic American Bankers Association

wishes all
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

www.haba.org

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continued on page 18
The Founders of Faith: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism would like to extend their wishes to our spiritual leader, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, and the entire Hellenic American Community

For peace, joy and happiness this Christmas season and throughout the New Year.

FAITH: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism
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Faith: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism supports the development of innovative educational, cultural, and scholarship programs for young people that promote an understanding of the Orthodox faith, Hellenism, and the relationship of the two to America’s history and multicultural landscape.
I wish all my friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy Prosperous, Blessed New Year with Peace on Earth!

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On the First Day of Christmas... Celebrating Hellenic Style

Continued from page 12

protected the vine and the grape fields from weeds. They also believed that the ash from the fire that the other day had warmed Zeus was blessed and protected them from all evil. The twelve days of the Twelve Days, believing the vineyards were protected from li-karianoi and other goblins or evil. They halted on January 7 after the woods had been blessed and the vineyard had received the sign of holy water.

They believed that it was common practice for each girl to sing carols outside the door. For this reason, long after dark, they would carry their clothes and shoes into the houses. They also avoided unmarked walks in the countryside, and long before dawn returned to their homes.

In the Christmas Eve the children walked around the neighborhood in street clothes and went from neighbor to neighbor singing the Christmas carols. One child had a basket, into which the homemakers placed their treats.

CHRIST’S SILENT WATER/NUITSHELLS FOR THE KALIKANTZAROI (Submitted by Angeliki Toutouni, resident of Pyrgi, Chios) In the village of Pyrgi on Chios, every young single woman keeps the tradition of the silent water. Carrying a pitcher, each girl walked silently from her home to the large church in the village square, sounds of which have in earplugs, a very deep dialect were the same. The girl was carrying a pitcher of water from the well. Then carried it home without talking to anyone she saw along the way. Traditions build that she would marry a man whose name was the same as the name of the first man she saw on her way home. But there were some exceptions along the way. Many young single women have followed this tradition, they try to avoid bathing during Christmas, because they believe that the Ka-likantaroi would be able to wash their clothes and jump inside them, so as to escape the evil that the Bles- sing of the Waters on Theophany. In the capital town of Chora, the churches feel that by washing their clothes and jumping inside them would escape this evil. The locals divided their neighborhood into sections, and sent off a different group of children to each section. Whenever money was collected was donated to charities. By visiting the houses, they also avoided bathing in the outside overnight. For this reason, the Ka-li-kanteroi would be able to wash their clothes and jump inside them, so as to escape the evil.

In the spirit of the season, let us remember that people in Greece are deprived even of their absolute necessities. Our festive table will be much warmer if we can help even one family in Greece to celebrate with St. Barbara, whose feast day is December 4. Traditionally the homeworkers would make melopites, honey cookies consisting of wheat, corn, and beans that were handed out to the neighbors. Usually the child in the family would feed the melopites to the Ka-li-kantaroi, and the melopita, the father of the house would make the sign of the cross on the front door of
The children would announce, “There is a stranger at the door.” As the patriarch of our family and the provider for the household, tradition had it that the first to enter our home was the first to enter and convey the blessings of the New Year. His next shot was to present each person with the traditional New Year’s kiss. As the patriarch of our family, my father would wisely choose to make an already auspicious day even more so by the tossing of a few coins on the floor as he approached the door to greet my father, and his pockets filled with silver dollars. When the fireworks began at midnight, this was to give the good luck of the “Podarico,” or the first step into the New Year. His entrance into our home was to bring good luck through the year. As Christmas Eve approached, children would go to every house in the neighborhood “Toufekia” (shotguns) heralding the birth of Christ. As for a main event, every household usually had a pig that they would slaughter and cook for the entire Christmas feast. Families would gather at one table in the center of the village and eat together.

As Christmas Eve approached, children would play a tradition called “Silent water”. Single young women kept the tradition of the “Silent water”. As the name implies, the children would go door to door asking for entry into the house. Invariable one of the children would announce, “There is a stranger at the door.” The children would carry cardboard boats and decorated with an embroidered “Protochronias” (First of the Year). The children would also carry cardboard boats and decorate them, hoping to have the blessing to the house.

On Christmas, households would prepare pourma, a com- plementary New Year’s pastry, a com- pense. The pourma was usually decorated with an embroidered birth of Christ. As a treat for all of us, every household usually had a pig that they would slaughter and cook for the entire Christmas feast. At midnight, families would gather at one table as the center of the village and eat together. Every Christmas, the Pontian communities in America gather and sing Pontian Kalana in the other Pontian community in the area. In Boston, Mass., where I currently reside and in Kalamata every Christmas, accompanied with a kemenze. In Athens, Greece where my family is from, the Pontian community carries on these traditions, especially with the foods in our household.

Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary in Pyrgi, Chios, where a single young woman kept the traditions of the “Silent Water”.

Also, Pontians would prepare pourma, a corn puff that was usually decorated with an embroidered “Merry Christmas” (First of the Year). The children would also carry pourma, a corn puff to every house asking for entry into the house. Invariable one of the children would announce, “There is a stranger at the door.” The children would carry cardboard boats and decorated with an embroidered “Protochronias” (First of the Year). The children would also carry cardboard boats and decorate them, hoping to have the blessing to the house.

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Let’s Turn The Tide

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Thank You!
on New Year’s Day, not by St. thanasi, “I hope those dumpy presents are brought by St. Basilis gets here.”

Dad took us to after church every Sunday (that was before all parishes had coffee hours). “Yes, now, but we must put them away at night to the kikkanomia” (Greek Gremlins) don’t get them. “Oh hahm…” Dimitri finally reached the Connor of the songs of American Christmas. Our Uncle Jimmy, who lived in the States for years before retiring to Greece, asked Dad after church what his favorite carol was. “O-kam-ol-in-fa-thoo-less too,” he replied. When Uncle Jimmy chirped, “I love O-kam-ol-in-fa-thoo-less too,” we started laughing. In case you didn’t know, that is one of the English-speaking world’s favorite carols. In New York we would all sing it lustfully at the Radio City Music Hall Christmas show, the highlight of our year, the time we knew we loved our Dad, bagons or no bagons.

President John Manos and the National Board of the Pancretan Association of America

Wishing you a Merry Christmas & a healthy New Year

Ευλογήμενα Χριστούγεννα Καλή Χρονιά

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Peace on earth

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Wishes all our friends Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year

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I will begin by saying that although Dad spoke English fairly well, the Anglo Saxon “L” permanently evaded him—and was a nightmare for us.

What’s a bagon (pronounced “bay-gun”), you ask? Well, the Anglo Saxon “L” permanently evaded him—and was a nightmare for us.

I will begin by saying that although Dad spoke English fairly well, the Anglo Saxon “L” permanently evaded him—and was a nightmare for us.
In 1973 Christmas was still a largely religious affair, but there were some secular elements and the attempts to placate the Sun god were more than mere physical illumination, paused, and cast a wary glance across the street. The policeman was talking to her and said, “Look, it’s our church, the holiday was something different and exotic.” The waitress looked above the bar of Christ. The scene was nothing different and exciting; a native Christmas hymn to a pale white church with oil lamps and candles.

The main event of the week was filled with vain to solitudes and those dear relatives. One of the favorite songs, was the sound of that. He turned to my father and barked, “Dino is guttural disdain back home: ‘I am speaking Greek. He is the top student in his school and feigned laughter and declared, ‘Dimitri is speaking Spanish.’ He was the top marksman in his school this year. Jenia is the Spanish accent. Marina cupped her hands and whispered the phrase we heard every year. “Down with the junta!”” He said in his pitch-perfect Spanish accent. Marina cupped her hands and whispered the phrase we heard every year. “Down with the junta!”

The rest of the week was filled with vain to solitudes and those dear relatives. One of the favorite songs, was the sound of that. He turned to my father and barked, “Dino is guttural disdain back home: ‘I am speaking Greek. He is the top student in his school this year. Jenia is the Spanish accent. Marina cupped her hands and whispered the phrase we heard every year. “Down with the junta!”” He said in his pitch-perfect Spanish accent. Marina cupped her hands and whispered the phrase we heard every year. “Down with the junta!”

He seemed like a nice guy that he was, cupped her hands and whispered the phrase we heard every year. “Down with the junta!”

But when she approached my hand and said, “I have to keep my mouth shut.”

There was one song we never played. We were oriented because it had turned sour again, and she was bearing some of that wonderful Greek ice cream. When we turned to see her, she had a look of those terror consumer her. She studied me and saw a wary glance across the street. The policeman was talking to her and said, “Look, it’s our church, the holiday was something different and exotic.” The waitress looked above the bar of Christ. The scene was nothing different and exciting; a native Christmas hymn to a pale white church with oil lamps and candles.

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Just one of the thousands of perfect little churches, little ges- matics and spiritual gems in the Cyclades islands.

The New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill-Cornell Medical Center
Spyros G.E. Mezitis, M.D., Ph.D
Endocrinology, Diabetes and Thyroid Disease

May the New Year bring strength to Hellenic Education, unity in the Greek American Lobby, and synergy among the Greek-American societies!

Spyros G.E. Mezitis, M.D., Ph.D
Endocrinology, Diabetes and Thyroid Disease
The New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill-Cornell Medical Center Lenox Hill Hospital

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The President of the Federation of Hellenic Medical Societies of the United States & Canada

Spyros G.E. Mezitis, MD, Ph.D
wishes to all Hellenes and Philhellenes
a Very Merry Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year 2013

The President of the Federation of Hellenic Medical Societies of the United States & Canada

Spyros G.E. Mezitis, MD, Ph.D
Endocrinology, Diabetes and Thyroid Disease
The New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill-Cornell Medical Center

The National Herald, December 22, 2012

Christmas Special

A blessed and joyous Christmas and a peaceful, healthy and full of grace and progress New Year to all.

Peter & Aphrodite Skeadas

A Christmas Angel evokes Xristosgenia, Еривніка, Υγεία και πλήρες χάριτος και πρόσωπο Νέο Ετος για όλους
Πέτερ και Αφροδίτη Σκιαδά

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Continued on page 22

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tween the two festivals around 390. In one of his most significa-
tive speeches, St. John Chrysos-
抹us, a teacher and bishop of the Church, described the day on which “the goodness and
honor has appeared” (Titus 2:11)
and also for the event of the Holy
Spirit’s appearance at the bap-
tism of Christ.

Epiphany, which took place on
a day that was also an ancient
province of Alexandria, adopted the change about
6 was the day on which the birth
of Jesus Christ was born in Beth-
lehem of Judea, grew up in
Galilee, which due to its broad
Greek domain that Christianity
at its mission. It adapted to the
Greek-speaking in both the Greek
East and the Latin West of the
Roman Empire. As a rule, Chris-
tianity is based on divine
philosophy with numerous
essence of the Christian message.

Christmas, Happy Holidays Season,
a Healthy and Peaceful Year 2013,
and boundless additional blessings
from above for all of God’s Humanity.

From all of us
at “Alexander the Great Foundation Inc.”
to all of you!

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The TOM KOURKOUMELIS Family
wishes everyone
A Merry Christmas
&
A Happy New Year!
Ye Olde Greeke Christmas – A Nice Holiday Myth

Continued from page 19

was excited on New Year’s morn-
ing. The day before, the rest of the house and I set had up things to-wards the event, our Mom and her sisters. Seated at the school we were greeted by the principal and then by our Mom and her sisters. Seated there was the mayor with his wife to his left and the ministers to his right. The village police-
man was there too, smiling. The only other man we saw standing to his side, maybe 38 years old, he was the ‘evangelist’ in a male
makeup, I think, because his makeup was fantastic.

When coffee was served the Mayor welcomed everyone, and especially us. Our parents glowed when he said how proud we were of our wits to twice at the piano, and then turned down his baton. ‘O Papalia’ they ended to us, and the priest performed. Maybe it was us, maybe it was Theodor-
Continued from page 19

Ye Olde Greeke Christmas – A Nice Holiday Myth

YE OLDE GREEEKE CHRISTMAS – A NICE HOLIDAY MYTH

THE NATIONAL HERALD, DECEMBER 22, 2012

Merry Christmas &
A Happy and Healthy New Year

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A Merry Christmas TO ALL OF OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

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THE SAINT LOUIS GREEK AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Anchoum Filho is a researcher and producer of folklore pro-
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Karakash Associates
Karakash Family Foundation
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The Saint Louis Greek American Community

Wish you every Happiness...

May we all be blessed with Christian faith this Christmas and walk in love and wisdom through the coming year

********

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May we all be blessed with Christian faith this Christmas and walk in love and wisdom through the coming year

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Merry Christmas &
A Healthy and Happy New Year

The Foundation for Modern Greek Studies extends warmest appreciation and respect to the Hellenic Community for its support.

The Foundation is proud to work in partnership with the University of Michigan for the study of Modern Greek language, culture and history in the 21st century.

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May the joy and peace of the Infant Christ Child
dwell in your hearts now and evermore

A Blessed Christmas and A Happy and Healthy New Year

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