

faithful FOOD

by Kim Long

Enjoy the Goodness We Have Wrought

Be the Beneficiary of this Season's Bounty

It's summer, the season of growing. Vegetable gardens and fruit orchards are laden with produce, everything from tomatoes and corn to blueberries and peaches, each offering a special treat.



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Working in a parish for many years I thought I had "seen it all," or more delicately put, experienced parish life in all of its many facets. Not so. In this time of growth and productivity, we also have the season of weddings.

Recently our parish had a wedding celebration, and it was a celebration like no other I have been a part of. This particular bride and groom were known to us, really known to us. We, as a parish family, had seen them notice one another, begin to "date," and watched the man who would become groom and husband, go through the RCIA process and become a fully initiated member of the Catholic faith. That particular Easter Vigil, as his future father-in-law laid his hand on the man's shoulder and walked with him into this new part of his life, we smiled away

a tear or two as well as a bit of a chuckle as we also witnessed the woman who would become bride and wife photograph the entire event.

One Wednesday evening as I was saying goodbye to students and their parents after religion classes, the couple approached me with shy bursting smiles and an outstretched hand to display "the ring." Later still there was the purchase of a house and the work of making it ready, then a round of parties and showers, the selection of the scripture readings, the choosing of attendants, the dress, invitations, programs, pre Cana, and all the rest.

On the appointed evening and time as I walked to the ambo to give the second reading, I looked up and was so happy to see so many of our parish family present. As I read the "love chapter," it took on an enlightened meaning for me. As I read it, I mentally substituted their names and ours for the word love.

In the priest's wedding homily he spoke of them in an intimate and



wonderful way, a way that assured the nervous and excited young couple that just as we had all been with them up to this point, they could be assured of our continued presence throughout their married life. And it is true. This couple belongs to us and, for better or worse, we belong to them, a family.

So in this season of growing and coming to fullness, we enjoy the goodness of all that we have wrought, whether it is planted in the earth or in the heart. And we can be confident "that He who has begun a good work in you will see it to completion on the day of Christ."

I offer here a bit of a fancy and a unique recipe for cold blueberry soup. Have a little sip, serve it as a dessert on a warm summer evening and enjoy the fruits of your labor whether you have planted, harvested, or been the beneficiary of this season's bounty. Offer a little prayer of thanksgiving as you bring this to your table for your loved ones. •

Chilled Blueberry Soup

Ingredients:

- 4 cups fresh blueberries
- 1 cup orange juice
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 pint half and half
- Mint leaves for garnish

Directions:

1) Bring first five ingredients to a boil in a saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring often.

2) Remove from heat, and slightly cool.

3) Process blueberry mixture and lemon juice in a blender or food processor until smooth, stopping to scrape down sides.

4) Cover and chill until ready to serve.

5) Stir in half-and-half just before serving. Serve in stemmed glasses. Garnish, if desired.

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The Apple of God's Eye

Think of the Weight Your Words Carry

For weeks now we have been shifting our gears, turning our thoughts and actions toward “back to school and PSR classes,” hoping we would be favored with cooler days and all the things fall brings to mind. In all that time these scriptures have been running through my mind, “keep me as the apple of your eye” Psalm 17:8, and Psalm 119:103 “How sweet are your words to my mouth, they are sweeter than honey.”

Perhaps I have been influenced by the fall magazines along with their promises of apple pie, apple desserts and pumpkin-flavored everything. Have you ever considered that scripture can be a “diet” unto itself? Even though we are told that we don't live by bread alone, but on every word that issues from the mouth of God, we don't usually see those “words to live by” as literal sustenance.

Those scripture passages have a special meaning to me and this story is part of that reason: 15 years ago I decided to have my great nephew, two of my godchildren, and a little cousin over for a “play date



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and sleepover.” Well it was an experience. I witnessed the mentality of “two against one” many times throughout that 24 hour period. At one point one of the boys made another cry. I took the crying child aside and asked him if he realized how important he was in our family and did he realize that he was the “apple of our eye?” He stopped crying, looked at me and said “Really, Aunt Kim?” “Absolutely,” I said, “And not only that, but God sent you to our family to remind us how much He loves us.” Tears dried, all went off without a hitch the rest of the visit.

Why was this special or different? That young cousin has a form of autism and was very sensitive to words which others, including myself, can let roll off their back. To him, the words seemed to become part of him. In some ways it was as though he was the only one of us who heard, who listened, and in this he taught me words are important. Words, like actions, can have consequences. Seeing



him so hurt and feeling helpless I fell back on scripture.

Too often we are bogged down in news which is serious and overwhelming; too often we don't share good news, saving our communication efforts for more serious matters. Too often I begin a call with, “I have something to tell you,” and the person on the other end of the phone draws in breath, for I don't call often enough with wonderful news.

As we go forward with our classes, our groups, our clubs, and organizations which have reconvened now that our school year is in full swing, let us keep our words sweet. Employing the acronym THINK is helpful and keeps me on track. Is what I am saying **T**ruer, **H**onest, does it **I**mprove the silence, is it **N**ecessary, and is it **K**ind? We won't like everyone, that's just human nature, but we can treat people with kindness if we remember we are all the apple of God's eye in which He delights.

I want to offer you a very easy recipe for “adult” sweets for this fall season: Fancy Chocolate Covered Fruit. •

Fancy Chocolate Covered Fruit

Ingredients:

- Fruit! (I chose apples, pears and cherries but you use the fruits you like).
- 1 bag milk chocolate candy coating
- 1 bag white chocolate candy coating
- Sprinkles or dried fruit for additional pizzazz

Directions:

- 1) Wash and dry all fruit, set aside.
- 2) Melt the chocolate in small batches either in a microwave or using a double boiler.

- 3) Insert a wooden skewer (or chopstick or even a butter knife) into the top of the apple or pear.

- 4) Swirl the fruit in the bowl of melted chocolate. Set aside and let set (this only takes a few minutes). Once the initial coating of chocolate has hardened, use a spoon to drizzle the alternate chocolate over the coated fruit.

These are easy, look great, and taste delightful!

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Mercy Me!

A Recipe to Make Peace with Yourself and Family

I am not a person who relegates ghost stories to All Hallows Eve and then puts them away for a year. I love a good ghost story even at Christmastide. Of course the path has been well paved with Charles Dickens who wrote of Ebenezer Scrooge and his eventual redemption.



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Picture, if you will, a small child whose hand is firmly but gently caught in the hand of her mother on a small town street as afternoon gives way to evening and purple and deep orange skies seem to swirl around their feet. They are on the sidewalk in front of a store that no longer exists. The mother is young and vibrant as she smiles and speaks to a neighbor. Christmas trees are lined up like sentries against the walls of the store, stars begin to peep out with their own particular glow and the moon engages in its slow ascent in the sky. Christmas is coming, Christmas is being brought home and Christmas is falling on us like a gentle touch from a loving parent.

This is my favorite Christmas memory, one that time has altered very little. Memories fill this time of the year for me and for many. That memory evokes security as well as excitement, a cold evening and a warm home, a mother and a child, the Christmas Spirit all around us swirling and dancing with everyday chores until they seemed different somehow, no longer quotidian but unique and happening only at this time of year.

Our house smelled of the Scotch pine tree, a pot of stew on the stove and anticipation. Each year we would dress in our best clothes, long dresses for my

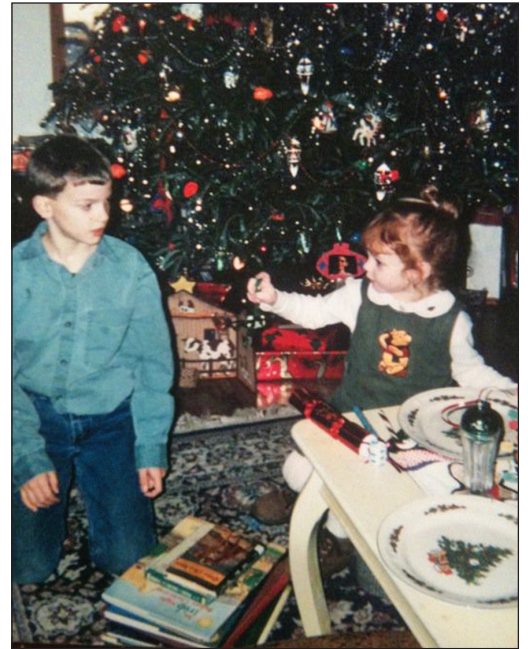
sister and myself and a miniature suit for our little brother and join the rest of our family who were gathered at my grandmother's house for a feast unrivaled and gifts wrapped in paper almost too beautiful and well creased to demolish. We returned to our house to await the spoils of Santa's visit and eat cinnamon rolls for breakfast.

Memories are wonderful but only tell a part of the story. When the Christmas spirit was not at its peak, harsh words and unkind acts peppered our world and perhaps apologies were left late, in some cases too late. Wounds can run deep, in some cases never heal and destroy

**"Wounds can run deep,
in some cases never heal
and destroy our future..."**

our future, even our future Christmas celebrations, magical as they are. My mother has long been in heaven so she can no longer be with me for a cup of coffee and a tearful conversation to "work some things out."

In this year of Mercy we are reminded that we always have recourse. Too often with the penitential nature of Advent not being as focused as it is during Lent, I confess I don't always attend that penance service or avail myself to the confessional. As I struggle to make peace with my past, as many of us do, this year, a year designated to remind us of God's mercy, may be the best Christmas gift I could hope for. But I don't want to trip as I look backwards. Lord lead and guide me as I learn to trust in You and as I attempt to walk in Your light. Help me take the best bits forward and offer them to You as I approach the stable.



Recipe for a Merciful Christmas

Make peace with yourself. Blend the tender forgiven self with family members loved and cherished. Gently fold in the love of the Holy Family for one another and keep it ever in your mind's eye. Add some favorite memories of the past, but avoid the temptation to "make this Christmas just like it was when you were a child." It won't be, so don't go there as doing so may curdle the mixture. Be open to new traditions with your adult children, friends, parish family and extended family. Attend the parish reconciliation service with an open heart and see it as a true moment for healing. Enjoy the lightness of actually laying down the painful burdens you have been carrying. Celebrate the reason for the season and don't feel pressured to buy, buy, buy.....what we need has already been purchased. Bake some cookies, sing some carols *loudly* and, when no one is listening, sing for the joy of it all. Don't travel too far from the stable. And lastly, remember that mercy extended is priceless. •

Kim Long is the Director of Religious Education at St. Mary of the Pines Parish in Shreveport.