

Christmas gift ideas stocked with local inspiration

It's that time of year again, when many shoppers scramble to the mall or big box retailer to pick up the latest "must-have" items of the season.

Why not skip the crowds and pick up a thoughtful, faith-filled gift your loved ones will be sure to cherish for years to come? Here are some local, inspirational suggestions for everyone on your Christmas list.

***Christ Bars None Lives Changed in Prison and the Chaplains Who Help Them Change* by Mark A. Vernarelli**

After 23 years of television news reporting in Baltimore, Emmy Award-winner Mark Vernarelli faced an unexpected layoff and had to switch gears, eventually developing a new career in public relations and writing.

His book, *Christ Bars None*, is a gripping tale of how inmates in Maryland's correctional institutions have learned to find God. Vernarelli gives readers an inside look at once-hopeless lives and the prison chaplains who bear the burden of guiding hundreds and even thousands of inmates on their spiritual journeys behind bars.

Available for \$11.99 plus shipping at www.markvernarelli.com.

***Baltimore Choral Arts at the Baltimore Basilica Christmas at America's First Cathedral* Tom Hall, Conductor Featuring Janice Chandler Eteme, Soprano**

Tom Hall leads the choral ensembles of Baltimore Choral Arts and orchestra in this glorious Christmas concert recorded in the resonant acoustics of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore.

The hour-long CD features new work by African-American composers Rosephanye

Powell and James Lee III, along with a bonus DVD. Tracks include *I Saw Three Ships*, arr. Robert Shaw & Alice Parker; *Precious Gift His Wondrous Birth*, Dave Brubeck; and Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* - perfect for Christmas listening.

Available for \$18 at www.baltimorechoralarts.org.

Monuments to Heaven: Baltimore's Historic Houses of Worship

By Lois Zanow and Sally Johnston

Photographs by Denny Lynch

In *Monuments to Heaven*, take an armchair tour of 23 Baltimore City churches and synagogues that date to the 18th and 19th centuries. Complete with beautiful color photographs and histories, readers will appreciate the architectural features - ornate stained glass, artfully designed barrel ceilings, intricately carved statues - that make each one unique.

Catholic church highlights include the ornate high altar of the Shrine of St. Alphonsus, the frescoes and murals at St. Leo the Great in Little Italy and the shimmering mosaics at St. Jude Shrine.

Available for \$22.10 plus shipping at www.monumentstoheaven.com.

Magnificat: A concert celebrating 50 years since the dedication of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen

The *Magnificat*, a two-CD set, was recorded live in October 2009 at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland, to commemorate its 50th anniversary. The CD set features the delightful sounds of the Cathedral Choir and the Peabody Concert Orchestra. All proceeds from sales of will benefit the Cathedral Music Series.

Available for \$20 at www.cathedralofmary.org.

Basilica Gift Shop

At the Baltimore Basilica Gift Shop, you'll find a great selection of books, music, Swarovski and Murano glass rosaries, and artwork featuring the nation's first cathedral. Christmas items include collectable Fontanini nativity sets and a 24 carat

gold tree ornament. To browse, visit baltimorebasilica.org and click "Gift Shop."

Items can be ordered by phone at 410-727-3565, ext. 44 or purchased in the shop at 409 Cathedral St. Its hours of operation are Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Service at Our Daily Bread

Perfect for someone who has everything - volunteer your time in the name of a loved one at Our Daily Bread's hot meal program, which serves more than a quarter million meals to those in need each year. Lunch is served daily, along with breakfast for seniors and people with disabilities each weekday, so there are many opportunities to serve.

Call 443-986-9031 or visit catholiccharities-md.org/our-daily-bread/odb-food-service/ for more information.

The Catholic Review

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