

Countdown to Christmas: Five days left: Holiday music on Pandora, memories of a dear departed friend, today's O Antiphon and prayer, and Marian Christmas music



Deserted hallways: School closed for Christmas Break at John Carroll yesterday at 11:30 with the end of semester exams. The kids were smiling from ear to ear as they made their way down the hallways to 17 days of vacation from class and studies. Their greetings of "Merry Christmas" and "Have a great vacation" amid hugs and handshakes were the best part of my day. (Photo by Patti Murphy Dohn)

Introduction:

In the last Advent days leading up to Christmas, I will share some reflections, prayers, and music for you to enjoy during this very hectic holiday season.

Christmas Music:

Have you been listening to Christmas music? It seems that seasonal music really helps to get people in a festive spirit for Christmas. Lite 102 has had their holiday music playing around the clock for some weeks now.

I usually do not listen to the holiday-only selections until December. There's a place and time for everything, and I appreciate it more as we get closer to the actual

celebrations.

My husband and I bought a wireless Sonos system this past summer and have been enjoying the crystal clear sound of its music throughout our house. You control the music selections, volume, and speaker locations with your iPhone or iPad apps.

We usually play our favorite genre music from Pandora. Our all-time favorite is the Frankie Valli station. It plays great tunes from the same era and style as Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. We love it year round.

Last week I thought to do a search to see if there was a similar station for holiday music and was delighted to find the Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons Holiday station. It is spectacular!! All the music is classic. You won't find any current artists there, but you will hear all the golden holiday classics that our grandparents listened and danced to. Such beautiful nostalgia will warm the hearts of all of us who are over 50, and will certainly delight young listeners who like older music as well.

Tune in and listen to golden-oldies like "Buon Natale" by Nat King Cole, "Love is a Christmas Rose" by Perry Como, "Here Comes Santa Claus" by Doris Day, "The Secret of Christmas" by Johnny Mathis, "Silver Bells" by Burl Ives, Frank Sinatra's "The Christmas Waltz," and such sacred classics as "Let There Be Peace on Earth" and "Remember Whose Birthday/ Happy Birthday, Gentle Savior" by Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, "Child of God" by Bobby Darin, and "Silent Night" by the Platters.



"Mistletoe and Holly (O By Gosh, By Golly)"

Some songs elicit a flood of memories.

Frank Sinatra's "Mistletoe and Holly/ O By Gosh, By Golly" is a perfect example. This great song brings us memories of one of George's dear friends, R.C., his former

neighbor in Texas, who passed away in July, 2012 after a tough battle with cancer. They were great friends when George lived near the town of Tomball in Houston in the 1980s.

Every year when those words “O By Gosh, By Golly” start sounding on the radio, we immediately think of this fun-loving man who loved to sing this equally-fun song. When George and I were engaged in 2002, I first “met” R.C. on the phone. He became a special friend to me as well, and embraced me into their “Texas family of friends and neighbors.”

My best memory of R.C. was when I was finally able to meet him in person in 2006 when I arranged for him to fly here to Maryland for our Christmas party as a surprise to George. It was so great to plan this surprise visit and plot our strategy to get him here to our house in Bel Air. My son Joseph, then 20, picked up R.C. from BWI airport with just a verbal description. By the time they arrived here at our home, R.C. and Joseph were best buds.

George was stunned and surprised, both of them had tears flowing as they laughed and talked over each other. R.C. was able to enjoy our holiday party, meeting my family and our neighbors, seeing again George’s daughter Tracy, then-expectant with Tyler, and meeting her husband Stephen. It was a fun time for everyone.

R.C. attended the Ravens game the next day with George. They were thrilled that the Ravens were victorious over the Cleveland Browns 27-17. Great day, great game. They came home smiling and happy.

We finished off the weekend with a family dinner on Sunday afternoon. The photos we took that weekend bring back great memories to our hearts.



*George and R.C. (right) were off to the Ravens-Browns game bright and early.
(December 17, 2006 Photo by Patti Murphy Dohn)*

The ones we have loved who are no longer with us are remembered as we share stories of years gone by and relive those wonderful memories.... May they rest in peace as we not only remember them, but honor their lives by how we live.



One of the many gifts R.C. brought from Texas that 2006 weekend included this ornament for our pug Daisy that R.C. “engraved” with his favorite self-made greeting “La Huda!!”

Today’s “O Antiphon”

***“O Key of David,
opening the gates of God’s eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness!”***

—Today’s Antiphon for December 20



Graphic by Look and Learn Catholic Visuals

Pope Francis urged the faithful in his homily yesterday at morning Mass to pray the “O Antiphons” to experience humility and experience God’s grace.

This minute-long video includes all seven O Antiphons sung in Latin Gregorian Chant by the Cantarte Regensburg. Closing your eyes, you can imagine the monks chanting this verses throughout the centuries.

Music for your Enjoyment:

The final days leading up to Christmas always bring to my mind our Blessed Mother and all that she went through from the Annunciation to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Some of the sacred music of the season that is devoted to her journey to the Nativity always brings tears to my eyes.

“Breath of Heaven (Mary’s Song)” Sung by Amy Grant:

Set with scenes from the 2007 film “The Nativity Story” by New Line Productions, Inc.

“Mary’s Boy Child” by Harry Belafonte.

This music video is also set to clips from “The Nativity Story”

One of my favorite songs of Christmas, I first heard “Mary’s Boy Child” when my daughter Meighan was in kindergarten at St. Margaret School, Bel Air. For their

Christmas show in the church on the last day of school that year, Meighan and her classmates were dressed in white robes and angel wings, and sang the chorus to this poignant song with their music teacher Candy Draksler playing the guitar and singing the verses. Each time I have heard the song over the years since, I am reminded of sitting there in church with tears running down my cheeks as those beautiful voices sang so angelically. I will never forget it. Never.

Prayer for December 20:

*Oh, Jesus, you hold the key
that will unlock my constricted heart.*

*It gives me great hope
that Mary said yes to you and your plan.
She was filled with the Spirit
and put aside her own doubts.*

*I know you are ready to answer my prayers,
ease my doubts and calm my fears.
Sometimes I don't hear your messengers
because they aren't what I expect.
They aren't wearing wings or halos
but are the people standing in front of me.*

*How many times have I not listened?
How often have I balked at your messages
and your messengers?*

*Fill me with the light of your Spirit
and enter, in all your glory
into my life.*

Let me rejoice!

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

Amen.

