

Defending the Faith



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December 2017

This Christmas Season

The Christmas season has become so commercial, hurried, and even stressful at times. There are so many things on our to-do lists. At the same time, it is the season to cherish family and friends, to experience joy by giving gifts and to enjoy the lights and Christmas music. Each year, as Christmas approaches, I become joyful, and at the same time, anxious. My senses bathe in the Christmas sights and sounds, and yet I fret over what I should buy everyone on my Christmas list, when I know they already have everything.

This year I thought about adding God to my Christmas list. Now, that is someone who definitely has everything He wants. What could I possibly give God? Naturally, the first thing that comes to mind is to give God thanks for all the blessings He has bestowed upon me. I have much for which to be thankful. I decided to Google Bible verses about giving gifts to God and what kind of gifts please Him. Do you know what came up? Lists of gifts God gives to us! There was one verse I remembered from Psalms 51:16-17:

*For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.
The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

A broken and contrite heart is when one experiences sorrow for the sins he has committed, a deep genuine sorrow causing one to become humbled. I have felt this many times, more than I can count. I pray that God will forgive me and guide me in the future. I know in my heart that all God desires is that we love Him and love our fellow human beings. He asks us to be kind and compassionate, generous and caring. In the hustle and bustle of this season of Christ's birth, I have decided to make it a priority to truly enjoy and appreciate those who He has placed in my life, my family, friends, co-workers and all the students He has entrusted in my care. I will enjoy even the passersby in my life, who I may only meet once in my life, my fellow shoppers, salespeople, drivers, everyone. I will slow down long enough to experience the joy of the Christmas season. This will be my gift to God.

This means that I will forgive the crazy driver who cuts me off, almost hitting my car, to take the parking space I was pulling in to. I will politely forgive the shopper, who jumps in front of me to

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This Christmas Season (cont'd)

hurriedly grab the last item on the shelf that I was reaching for. I will forgive the rude salesperson, who becomes impatient with me because I cannot find my credit card in my purse. Forgiveness is the greatest gift we can offer God, especially if we forgive those who have hurt us deeply without cause.

Christ is our example. He never sinned, which means He never hurt anyone. He was always kind and compassionate, full of love for everyone. Yet, He was rejected, mocked, beaten and crucified. Some were offended by the truth He spoke, but even the truth did not warrant such hostility and violence. He accepted rejection. He remained silent when mocked. He courageously allowed Himself to be beaten and executed for us. As Jesus hung dying on the cross, He forgave His executioners and all those who hated Him. His heart remained pure. This is the purpose of forgiveness. We forgive to keep our hearts pure, free from bitterness, resentment and hatred. Forgiveness cleanses our hearts, so that we may be able to love more fully.

Join me this Christmas season in giving a gift to God. Appreciate all those who He has placed in your lives. Spend quality time with your friends and family. Thank God and thank all those in your life who have blessed you. Show kindness and compassion to everyone you meet. Forgive everyone. Reconcile with anyone from whom you may be estranged. Put the bitterness and ill-feelings in the past. When you do, you will truly experience the joy of Christ and have greater cause to celebrate his birth. Christ died because He loves us. Pay it forward!



Have a beautiful Christmas filled with God's love and many of His blessings! May the joy of Christ's birth fill your hearts to overflowing!

Helen Kamenos
Readers' Favorite Author

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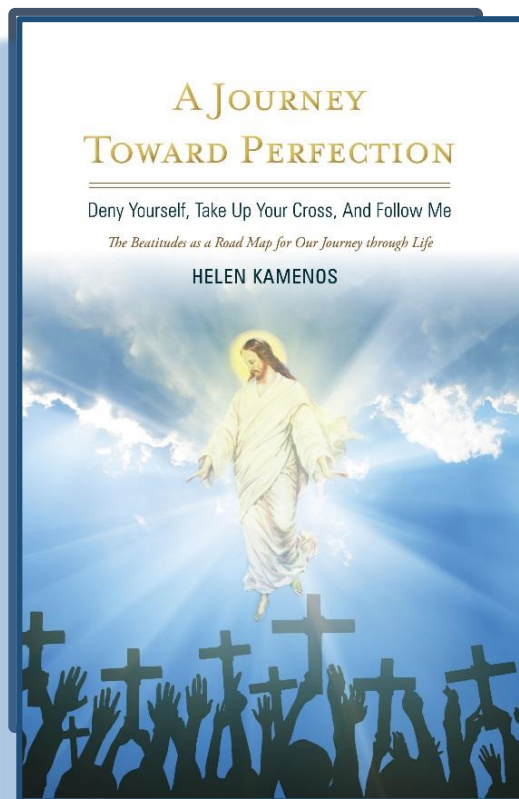
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Celebrating My One-Year Anniversary! Save Now!

To celebrate the one-year anniversary of publishing my book, [A Journey Toward Perfection](#), and in honor of Christ's birth, I am offering a discount through my publisher, BookBaby. Through December 31, 2017, you can purchase the **print version for only \$ 14.99** or the **eBook format for \$ 6.99**. Buy one for yourself and one for a friend. Go to

<https://store.bookbaby.com//bookshop/book/index.aspx?bookURL=A-Journey-Toward-Perfection>

and use the following **Coupon Codes**: Print version = **DFRY86** OR eBook format = **QC6BEW**.



Recent reviews

By Father Lawrence Farley, St. Herman's Orthodox Church in Langley, BC., Canada, author and contributor to Ancient Faith Ministry's blogs and podcasts

"Everyone needs a friendly neighbor who can speak to them in down-to-earth direct language across a cup of coffee in their kitchen and share their own experience of the Christian faith in terms they can easily understand. Books by professional theologians are complex, deep, scholarly, nuanced—and often hard to understand. Helen Kamenos speaks to us like the neighbor we need, and she has written a book about how to work out one's salvation, a sizeable meditation upon the Beatitudes and the virtues God calls us to acquire. Anyone who would like such encouragement should invite her into their literary kitchen and listen to her neighborly voice as she shares with them her own experience of the journey toward perfection."

By Rick Leeland, author: "I need this" posted on Amazon

"Helen Kamenos is a very gifted writer. She gave me a copy of her book *A Journey Toward Perfection* and asked me to share my thoughts on her work. I really connected with her writing and highlighted countless passages in the book.

Essentially, the book focuses on challenging the reader to become more Christlike as it examines the Beatitudes. I think it would be a worthy suggestion for every follower of Jesus to read a book a year on how to become more like our Master. This book would be a good one to fulfill that goal.

If you do choose *A Journey Toward Perfection* be prepared to spend some time—this is not a quick read. Also, Helen shares numerous snippets of her personal flavor of our common Christian faith. Many of these I didn't get. Some people find this distracting. I prefer to celebrate our differences, knowing fully that the same Holy Spirit that lives in me, has magnificently guided Helen."

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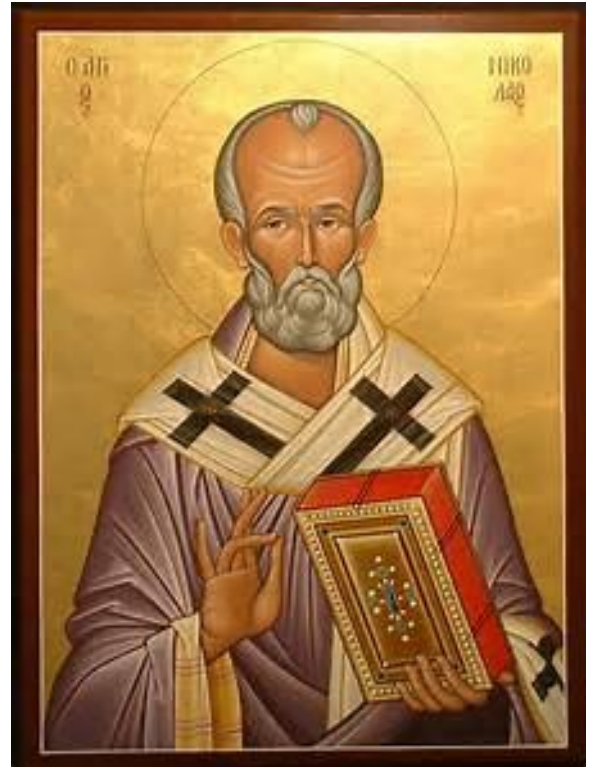
Good Ole St. Nick

We celebrate the feast day of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker on December 6. He is well-known as Santa Claus, but he does not have a sleigh with reindeers that fly throughout the world on Christmas Eve delivering gifts to children. In reality, he is a Saint who was the Archbishop of Myra in southern Asia Minor in the fourth century. He inherited his parents' estate and was known for his generous gifts to others.

"There was a certain formerly rich inhabitant of Patara, whom Saint Nicholas saved from great sin. The man had three grown daughters, and in desperation he planned to sell their bodies, so they would have money for food. The saint, learning of the man's poverty and of his wicked intention, secretly visited him one night and threw a sack of gold through the window. With the money the man arranged an honorable marriage for his daughter. Saint Nicholas also provided gold for the other daughters, thereby saving the family from falling into spiritual destruction. In bestowing charity, Saint Nicholas always strove to do this secretly and to conceal his good deeds" (from <https://oca.org/saints/lives/2016/12/06/103484-st-nicholas-the-wonderworker-and-archbishop-of-myra-in-lycia>).

St. Nicholas participated in the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 325, which was convened to discuss what is today known as the Arian Heresy. In his fervent zeal of the Lord, St. Nicholas is said to have assailed Arius with his words and even struck him in the face. At first he was stripped of his episcopal rank and placed under guard, but later the bishops of the Council agreed that Nicholas' response was pleasing to God and restored him to his rank. St. Nicholas died peacefully in his sleep.

St. Nicholas is the patron saint of travelers, victims of floods, poverty or other misfortunes. Many miracles have been attributed to the intercession of this beloved saint. Innumerable churches have been dedicated to him, including our St. Nicholas Church here in Northridge, where I grew up.



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